

# The Shropshire Bird Report 2020

## Shropshire Ornithological Society



*Dedicated to the memory of Peter Deans and Bill Edwards*

## 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.

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# The 2020 Shropshire Bird Report

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Cover picture:

Pied-billed Grebe, Chelmarsh Reservoir, 29 November 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)

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## **Acknowledgements**

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**Ringling Data:**

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

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## Abbreviations

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The following abbreviations are used in this report:

1cy	First calendar year	SBR	Shropshire Bird Report
2cy	Second calendar year	SF	Sewage Farm
3cy	Third calendar year	SOS	Shropshire Ornithological Society
ASL	Above sea level	SPG	Shropshire Peregrine Group
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan	SRG	Shropshire Ringing Group
BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee	SRSB	Shropshire Raptor Study Group
BBS	BTO Breeding Bird Survey	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
BoCC	Birds of Conservation Concern	SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
BOS	The Birds of Shropshire (County Avifauna)	TTV	Timed Tetrad Visit
BOU	British Ornithologists' Union	UC	Upper Clun
BT	Birdtrack	UK	United Kingdom
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	UN	United Nations
CES	Constant Effort Survey	UOCWG	Upper Onny Community Wildlife Group
CBC	Common Bird Census	VP	Venus Pool
CR	County Recorder	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
CSVFC	Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club	WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
CWG	Community Wildlife Group		
eB	eBird		
EEC	European Economic Community		
EGM	Ellesmere Group of Meres		
EU	European Union		
EU LIFE+	French:- L'instrument Financier pour l'Environnement		
GPS	Global Positioning System		
IOC	International Ornithological Congress		
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature		
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee		
MoD	Ministry of Defence		
NNR	National Nature Reserve		
NR	Nature Reserve		
NT	National Trust		
RAF	Royal Air Force		
RBBP	Rare Breeding Birds Panel		
RG	Ringing Group		
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds		
SBOG	Shropshire Barn Owl Group		

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## Editorial

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

An extraordinary year. 2020 has been unprecedented of course thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic. That birds and nature in general are important parts of our lives has been demonstrated by the expansion of interest in the natural world across the whole UK population. This is shown in a small way by the largest ever submission of bird records to the Society either via Birdtrack or directly, despite the lockdown. Over 80,000 records were submitted to Birdtrack this year and another 23,000 county records were logged on eBird. This must be in part testimony to the contribution an interest in the natural world has on our lives.

Sue Crichton is in the enviable position of having a rural garden in south Shropshire with a nestbox for Kestrels, and her lockdown diary with a pair of Kestrels in this report is an appropriate article for such an extraordinary year. It is also a slight step away from the more formal articles we usually publish in the report and I hope it will encourage similar contributions in future.

Also in this report, John Arnfield describes the decline of the Turtle Dove in our county. This is of course one of the species we seem to be losing; with Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Little Owl and Willow Tit also declining substantially, and are perhaps species which will disappear from Shropshire in the future.

More positively John and Wendy Lightfoot and Glenn Bishton use the ringing results from their county-wide nestbox scheme to illustrate how young Shropshire-reared Barn Owls move after fledging. This is a real contribution to our understanding of the species and shows how such a dedicated study can illustrate aspects of the biology and ecology of a species which are impossible to determine without such a commitment.

Allan Dawes describes the breeding success of Great Crested Grebes in the Ellesmere Group of Meres which Allan has been watching and surveying for the WeBS survey for many years. The Meres are one of the key sites for the species in our County but have significant demands on them from a human perspective for sailing, wild swimming and fishing too.

Bird records come in all shapes and sizes these days. But records for species which are not actually seen in Shropshire are unusual if not unprecedented. Tom Lowe and

Tim Mackrill describe the occurrences of two White-tailed Eagles from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme which overflowed the county without being seen.

Tom was also in the happy position of finding the first county record of Pied-billed Grebe in 2020 at Chelmarsh, and his Finder's Account is included in the report.

Our large record total for the year has been increased further this year by the inclusion of records from eBird, a web-based system provided by Cornell University in the US which is attracting birders to keep their records online. We have been able to access these records and use them in this year's report as well as those from Birdtrack and the society is keen to ensure we incorporate the observations of as many birdwatcher's as we can in our report.

The first ever published County Bird Report was in 1956. There was, however, a report compiled for 1955 and indeed typed out, but it was never published. Thanks to John Tucker's diligence and insistence, you will receive at last a published copy of the 1955 Bird Report with the 2020 Report.

On a sadder note, this report includes obituaries for two of the leading county ornithologists of the last half century. Bill Edwards and Peter Deans, in their different ways, both contributed greatly to Shropshire Ornithology; their enthusiasm and personalities encouraged and attracted many other people into the world of birds over those years. This report is dedicated to their memory.

Gerry Thomas

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# County Recorder's Report

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*John Martin*

## Introduction

My first full year as recorder was memorable, and in part at least for all the wrong reasons. The Covid pandemic was an international tragedy for millions of people, so focussing on its effects on Shropshire bird recording might seem trivial. Nonetheless, it meant that many observers were limited to very local birding for significant chunks of the year, especially in spring and some long running monitoring schemes such as BBS were effectively abandoned. This clearly impacted on many aspects of recording. Some species (those of towns and villages) enjoyed a big increase in records whereas other groups would have been less well recorded than usual. This should be borne in mind while looking at the species accounts in this report.

## Changes to the Rarities Committee

Both Martyn Owen and Stuart Thomas stepped down from their roles on the committee and I would like to thank them for their hard work and support. We were delighted that Anthony Griffiths agreed to join the committee along with James Grundy, Tom Lowe and myself. We finally 'met' in the inevitable Zoom call in spring 2021 and as well as pondering over various tricky submissions, a number of changes were agreed to the county rarities list (the full list is included in the county checklist in this Report).

## Changes to the County Rarities List (from 1 January 2021)

The following taxa now require descriptions or other supporting evidence (such as photographs or sound recordings) accompanying submitted records:

<b>Barnacle Goose</b>	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
<b>Turtle Dove</b>	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
<b>Blue-headed Wagtail</b>	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>
<b>'Channel' Wagtail</b>	<i>Motacilla flava flava x flavissima</i>

The following taxa have also changed in the way records will be assessed:

<b>Nightjar</b>	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
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No longer requires a description from breeding localities but we may ask for

supporting evidence of migrants away from these areas

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*

Currently too numerous to qualify as a county rarity, and with a very high acceptance rate (mainly due to the activities of a few “larophiles” who find nearly all of them), so we no longer require descriptions for this species. Nonetheless, its identification has not got any easier and we urge observers to take great care this, which remains challenging. It is still worthwhile trying to properly document all sightings with photographs and to assign every bird to an age class.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

Now only requires a description for sightings between May and August (September sightings being almost expected now).

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Considered currently too numerous to be considered a county rarity.

**New species for the county**

The highlight of the year in terms of rarities was undoubtedly the Pied-billed Grebe that stayed at Chelmarsh from 26 Nov until just before Christmas. It was the only addition to the Shropshire list this year.

**‘Noc migging’**

Sound recording during the hours of darkness, typically from one’s house or garden, and analysing the resulting recordings later using computer software is a new but growing field of bird recording. It might well revolutionise our understanding of the status of some species in the county, which are rarely seen yet more regularly move over at night and can be detected when they call. Common species such as Redwing (long listened for by birders on autumn nights), Song Thrush and Blackbird can be expected, but waders such as Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper, Whimbrel and water birds such as Water Rail and Little Grebe have proved to be regular at some inland sites, even in urban areas. Common Scoter is a species that has been found to pass over some inland sites in good numbers in the right conditions. Their nocturnal calls are likely to be unfamiliar but many have now listened to recordings of them flying over at night. Some other wildfowl, such as Pintail, have similar calls, so we are currently requiring sound recordings before we accept records of what is a still a county rarity. This hopefully shouldn’t be too onerous as most birders recording

this species at night will already have a recording that they can use by way of documentation. The year's only record of Bittern concerned a nocturnal migrant recorded over Cantlopgrove in spring, so who knows what else might be flying over your house at night?

### **Undocumented and unproven records**

The records listed below were either considered unproven on the evidence provided to the committee or remained 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 may 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. We usually tried to chase observers about these records, but can't always find the source, for example if they arrive via bird news services.

**Bewick's Swan**, 1, 18 Jan, Molverley Green\*

**Scaup**, 1, female, 30 Jan-3 Feb, Cole Mere

**Scaup**, 1, male, 1 Dec, Ellesmere\*

**Common Scoter**, 2 Apr, Wyke\*

**Common Scoter**, 4 Apr, Much Wenlock\*

**Common Scoter**, 5, 7 Dec, Chelmarsh\*

**Red-breasted Merganser**, 2 Feb, Ellesmere\*

**Diver sp.**, 1, 27 Nov, Chelmarsh \*

**Curlew Sandpiper**, 1, 6 Sep, Park Farm floods

**Wood Sandpiper**, 2, 9 May, Northwood\*

**Kittiwake**, 1, 20 Feb, Wood Lane\*

**Little Gull**, 1w, 14 Jan, Ellesmere\*

**Caspian Gull**, 2w, 28 Jan – 2 Feb, Priorslee Lake

**Caspian Gull**, 1w, 28 Jan – 1 Feb, Wood Lane\*

**Caspian Gull**, 2, 7 Nov, Edgerley\*

**White Stork**, 1, 27 Aug, Colemere\*

**Cattle Egret**, 2, 1 Mar, Newport Canal\*

**Short-eared Owl**, 1, 26 Jun, Weston Wharf\*

**Short-eared Owl**, 1, 13 Oct, Berriewood\*

**Short-eared Owl**, 1, 20 Oct, Bank House Farm\*

**Hoopoe**, 1, 18 Jun, Steele Heath/Prees Heath

**Great Grey Shrike**, 1, 16 Jan , Battlefield, Shrewsbury\*  
**Yellow-browed Warbler**, 1, 12 Oct, Argoed, Kinnerley  
**Siberian Chiffchaff**, 1, 11-18 Jan, Wood Lane\*  
**Siberian Chiffchaff**, 1, 11 Jan, Harmer Hill  
**Firecrest**, 1, 1 Apr, Shifnal  
**Black Redstart**, 1, male, 16 May, Shifnal  
**Black Redstart**, 1, 26 Jun , Long Mynd  
**Black Redstart**, 1, 22 Jul, Myddlewood  
**Black Redstart**, 1, 12 Dec, Battlefield, Shrewsbury\*  
**Golden Oriole**, 1, 16 Apr, Ford  
**Hawfinch**, 1, 20 Apr, Constantine\*  
**Hawfinch**, 1, 6 Jun, Aston on Clun  
**Hawfinch**, 1, 29 Mar , Benthall Hall NT\*  
**Hawfinch**, 1, 14 Feb, Burwood\*  
**Common Redpoll**, 1, 12 Dec, Walcot\*  
**Common Redpoll**, 2, 15 Dec, Boreatton\*  
**Common Redpoll**, 1, 6 Feb, Venus Pool\*  
**Lapland Bunting**, 1, 19 Nov, Woolston Bank nr Maesbury  
**Snow Bunting**, 1, 18 Sep, Long Mynd, near Portway\*

### **Acknowledgments**

Many thanks to all who have given me help and support over the last year, especially to past and present members of the Rarities Committee and past County Bird Recorders Ian Grant and Geoff Holmes. Martin George and Glenn Bishton via their Shropshire Ornithology Facebook page were a great help through the year, and thanks too to John Arnfield, Gerry Thomas and Graham Walker. But special thanks to all who send in their records and contribute to county ornithology.

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## Obituary – Thomas William (Bill) Edwards (1934-2020)

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*Allan Dawes*



Bill Edwards at Crose Mere in 2009 (*Sue Swindells*)

Bill spent his early years living in Middleton Road, at that time in countryside to the east of Oswestry. One of his childhood memories was of his schoolteacher who used to open the classroom window and identify the birds and their calls. This may have sowed the seed that was to shape Bill's life. During National Service he spent some time in Cyprus and began to take an interest in the birds he saw there; after returning home and feeling at a low ebb he filled his spare time by walking in the countryside around Oswestry observing the local bird life. He later moved a short distance to Maesbury Marsh, a home which he shared with his sister, Joan.

Bill was not quite a founder member of the SOS, joining on 1 January 1961, his first observations appearing in the 1961 SBR. His first dated record was of a Grasshopper

Warbler heard at Pant Glas on 2 July. Further comments from Bill in that report include; Kestrel – common, Barn Owl – occasionally seen, Little Owl – 1 adult, 2 young and Tree Sparrow – frequent flocks, all from the Oswestry area. It was at a SOS meeting that he met Reg Harrison and Frank Gribble; meeting others with an interest in birds spurred Bill on and added purpose to his birding as did joining the BTO at about this time. In 1962, Bill took over the heronry census at Halston from Frank Gribble and he continued to count this colony until 2013 when mobility problems meant he could no longer access the site. In 1962, along with Peter Start, he also began to survey four sites around Oswestry, one of which was The Racecourse. Four sites proved too much and after reading about the BTO Common Bird Census (CBC) Bill decided to take part and chose The Racecourse as his survey plot. After his first CBC visit on 16 April 1964 he continued to survey the site for 37 years, finally finishing in 2000 when the CBC was superseded by the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) as the national monitoring scheme. In 1969, Bill noticed a sudden drop in Whitethroat territories, which concerned him. When the national results were published this fall was also evident and proved eventually to be caused by drought conditions in the Sahel region of Africa. Detecting this change on The Racecourse confirmed Bill's enthusiasm for the CBC and collecting scientific data. He was subsequently given the President's award by the SOS for this achievement. Bill also had a long involvement with Wildfowl counts originally for the Wildfowl Trust, starting at Aston Hall Lake in 1964, followed by Oerley Reservoir from 1966 and the Ellesmere meres a few years later. He took a break from this in 1979 before returning to help with this survey (now the Wetland Bird Survey) at Melverley in 1995. In 2007, when he started to find the terrain too arduous he returned to helping with the WeBS at the Ellesmere meres once more until finally hanging up his telescope in 2010. Bill could also be relied on to take part in the one off BTO surveys which take place most years and was a great help during my time as the BTO Representative for Shropshire. He contributed to the first two BTO Breeding Bird Atlases, the Winter Atlas and the later combined Bird Atlas 2007–2011.

In addition to watching birds, Bill was also keen on conservation. He became a local representative for the RSPB in 1968 and set up a local RSPB group in Oswestry in 1971. He started giving talks about the RSPB and birds in general and was a regular speaker at venues throughout the local area for over 30 years. He ran bird courses for the Field Studies Council at Preston Montford and extra mural courses at Oswestry College. Bill was keen to encourage the younger generation and put on field meetings for the RSPB Young Ornithologists Club. He always assisted with the annual RSPB film show, the RSPB stand at the Shrewsbury Flower Show and the Ellesmere Heronry Watch, which was set up initially by the RSPB, he continued helping at the Heron Watch even when he could no longer take part in more strenuous activities. In 2011, Bill was invited to a RSPB Cymru meeting at

Bridgend where he was awarded with a gold Curlew badge and a limited edition signed photograph of the Glaslyn Ospreys, which he was proud to display in his home. Lara Hallett, RSPB Cymru communications officer said, “Bill has recently retired from volunteering following an amazingly consistent and dedicated 50 years”.

Bill liked to take a ‘hands on’ approach and volunteered for many projects. He was proud to be the first voluntary warden to stay at the Ynys-hir RSPB reserve (in an old caravan) and help Bill Condry, the first reserve warden. He assisted with Osprey protection at Loch Garten on several occasions; on his first visit a former sentry box was the only shelter. Bill assisted with many projects over the years, including Little Tern protection schemes at Towyn (now abandoned) and Gronant in north Wales, and stays at Coombes Valley and Newborough Warren.

Bill passed on his enthusiasm for practical tasks to the newly formed Oswestry RSPB group and they ran a monthly programme of working party events through the winter months; at first occasional trips to Ynys-hir and some local sites, including digging out the pools on The Racecourse. After the RSPB reserve at Lake Vyrnwy was established it became the regular venue. In those days the reserve wardens were short of equipment and volunteers provided their own tools. Bill’s old blue A35 van was often put to good use transporting tools and materials to site. Later at Lake Vyrnwy after Bill’s old van had been replaced by a Lada, this was brought into action when a new hide, constructed by the visitor centre, needed to be taken to site on the hillside below the dam. The sections were to be carried by the volunteers but after contemplating the logistics Bill decided they could go on his roof rack; this resulted in a slow drive with volunteers walking alongside holding on to steady the cargo as Bill drove the 1km to the nearest access point. The task was completed successfully without a hitch. On one occasion at Ynys-hir the group was wheelbarrowing gravel to surface a new path to a hide on the estuary, Bill decided the wheelbarrow tyre was a bit low so he fetched his foot pump and enthusiastically inflated the tyre; on the next load the tyre burst with a loud bang putting all the wildfowl within earshot to flight.

As a change from birds, Bill also assisted Barbara Jones and Peter Williams with Otter surveys along the River Tanat and a few other sites in north Shropshire in the late 1970s when Otters were very scarce and helped to build one of the first artificial Otter holts by the Tanat.

Bill was employed as a mechanic for most of his working life, originally at Queen’s Head garage before moving to Gittins at Oswestry. As well as recalling the names of the owners of the cars he worked on he could also remember their registration numbers. Before bird watching holidays became popular, Bill, along with several

SOS members visited Romania and The Camargue. On the latter trip his skills as a mechanic came in useful when their car broke down in France. Much later, on the shores of Lake Myvatn in Iceland, they were put to good use again when the gear stick came off a new Land Rover that had been hired for the trip. After being made redundant, Bill took a job as a caretaker at the then Walford Agricultural College. He soon put his birding knowledge to good use by giving talks to the students; at that time conservation was still an alien concept to some of them. Along with a colleague he undertook regular bird surveys at the Nesscliffe MoD Training Base. Shortly after his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday Bill was surprised on one of their survey visits to find that arrangements had been made for him to be taken on a helicopter flight. He was able to fly over his home at Maesbury Marsh and thoroughly enjoyed the occasion.

Bill was very sociable and always keen to learn. He became a member of Shropshire Wildlife Trust in 1963, just missing out on being a founder member. He was also a member of the Montgomery Wildlife Trust, and the Oswestry Branch of The British Naturalists Association (later the Border Field Club). Along with his sister Joan, he was a regular attendee at both indoor and outdoor meetings of these organisations, in addition to those of the SOS. Bill regularly assisted the Wildlife Trusts with practical tasks on their reserves; he was particularly keen on hedge laying and took on a section of hedge at Prees Branch Canal reserve which he would go and work on when he had any spare time. He was often called on to lead field meetings, including dawn choruses. One of his favourite trips was along the Montgomery canal near Queen's Head to the only regular site for Reed Warblers locally.

After Joan passed away in 2016, Bill lived alone. Arthritis began to restrict his mobility and after a serious fall at home requiring hospitalisation, Bill was dependent on home care and finally had to move into a care home in Oswestry. Birds were the driving force of Bill's hard working and very full life and he introduced many others to this world. Bill was extremely popular, well respected and had great people skills. His natural modesty belied his many achievements.

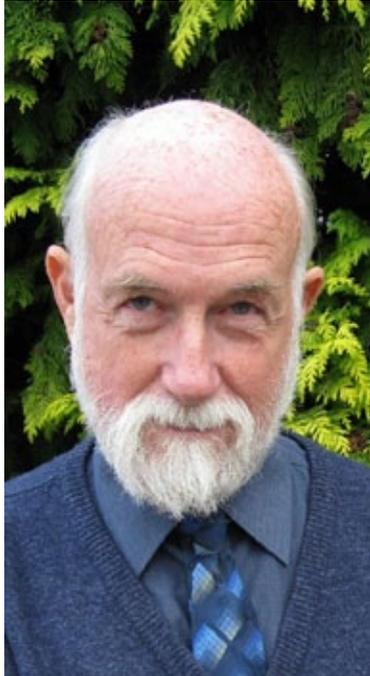
With thanks to Bill's friends for their contributions.

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## Obituary – Peter Deans (1941-2021)

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*Chris Whittles*



Pete was born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, and, after schooling, went on to train as a refractory engineer. He then worked for Gibbons of Dudley as a technical salesman and rose up the ranks to become sales director, remaining in this position until the company was taken over and eventually closed down. He then joined C J Wildbird Foods as sales manager until his retirement.

I first met Pete in 1969 at his home in Shifnal, with his wife Jan and daughter Melanie. We started ringing together that autumn, catching 13,500 Swallows in a passage roost in Dawley. He had obtained his 'A' ringing permit in 1968 and had a very active ringing career. He was involved with Operation Seafarer, run by the BTO to survey and determine the state of our seabird colonies. This led to several years of seabird ringing on the Treshnish Isles off the west coast of Scotland, of which he used to talk fondly, although the living conditions were grim.

As a hobby, he worked for the Extramural Department of Birmingham University, running birding courses, where he recruited many new members for the SOS.

He was very active in many BTO studies, particularly the Sand Martin Enquiry, for which he ringed many thousands of that species.

He became Chairman of the SOS in 1979 and served the Society in this role for 37 years. He guided the Society from being a struggling organisation to a very well managed group with its own reserve, Venus Pool, and adequate funds to enable it to continue and expand in the future. On stepping down as Chairman he became President in 2015.

Whilst working for CJ's he played a major role in helping to research and promote the native Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornus*) as a useful insect that can be kept in domestic gardens and can become a potential major pollinator in commercial orchards. He had a network of friends rearing bees for the project. He also became a very keen moth catcher in his garden, as part of the national monitoring scheme to determine the state of British moths. He discovered several new species for Shropshire.

On hearing of his passing, several ex-colleagues remarked that it had been a privilege to work with Pete. He was great company and his knowledge of birds, and wildlife in general, was extraordinary.

Pete was one of a kind and will be sadly missed by his family and friends.

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## Review of the Year

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### *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 60-year mean values from 1961-2019.

Meteorologists' forecasts of more extreme weather events as climate change takes hold, continue to be upheld. This year, weather patterns swung from very dry months (March to May) to unusually wet ones (February, June, August, October and December). A number of significant storm events especially in February and August affected the whole country.

### January

Average Daily Maximum Temp	9.2°C	(60 year mean 6.9°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	3.4°C	(60-year mean 0.7°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	4.0	(60-year mean 12.4)
Rainfall for month	43.8mm	(60-year mean 57.0mm)
Sunshine Hours for month	47.6	(60-year mean 49.5)

Much warmer than usual with very few frosts for the average January.

At the start of the year the **Whooper Swan** flock in the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence remained in place with up to 30 birds seen at Edgerley. Increasingly scarce in our county, a **Bewick's Swan** attracted many observers to VP from 16 Jan till 1 Feb. Also in the wildfowl mix was a female **Scaup** at Cole Mere on 30<sup>th</sup> which stayed into February and more unusually a pair of **Red-crested Pochard** at Middle Pool Telford from on 1 Jan and at VP on 29 Jan.

Also on 1 Jan a solitary **Black-tailed Godwit** at Priorslee Lake was the only record of this species this winter. A particularly early **Oystercatcher** turned up at VP on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Gulls are, quite reasonably, a winter favourite with many birdwatchers. Amongst the scarcer species single **Caspian Gulls** were seen on two dates at each of The Mere Ellesmere and at Priorslee Lake. The latter site held **Yellow-legged Gulls** in its pre-roost gathering throughout January with a maximum of six on 7<sup>th</sup>. Wintering **Herring Gulls** peaked at 500 at The Mere on 10<sup>th</sup> and again 17<sup>th</sup>.

Those enigmatic **Short-eared Owls** appeared, with singles on the Long Mynd and at the Stiperstones perhaps being the same bird. Two **Merlins** were at Whixall Moss on

3<sup>rd</sup>.

The first over-wintering **Yellow-browed Warbler** for Shropshire, first found at Shifnal SF in 2019 remained till 2 Feb. Of the more usual winter visitors, maxima for **Redwing** and **Fieldfare** were respectively 450 at Annscroft on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 580 near Harper Adams University at Newport on 20<sup>th</sup>. A large flock of 70 **Corn Buntings** was found at Shrawardine on 20 Jan whilst the roosting **Reed Buntings** at Chelmarsh peaked at 100 birds in the month.

## February

Average Daily Maximum Temp	9.7°C	(60 year mean 7.3°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	2.7°C	(60-year mean 0.6°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	4.0	(60-year mean 11.9)
Rainfall for month	119.2mm	(60-year mean 41.5mm)
Sunshine Hours for month	70.5	(60-year mean 65.8)

A warm and very wet month with significant storms Ciara and Dennis early and mid-month respectively, Storm Ciara on 9<sup>th</sup> included winds in excess of 50mph at Shawbury. Torrential rain during Storm Dennis left much debris around the countryside and by the end of the month floods at Shrewsbury and Ironbridge were at record levels.

The stormy weather probably accounted for the sighting of an adult **Kittiwake** on 16<sup>th</sup> at The Mere and perhaps also for the lone **Dunlin** which was found with **Lapwings** at Ternhill on 18<sup>th</sup>. A lone **Snow Bunting** at Titterstone Clee from 22<sup>nd</sup> into March may also have been weather influenced.

Perhaps the outstanding birds for February, though, were a flock of **Hawfinches** found at Horderley, which peaked at 15 on 7<sup>th</sup>. Apart from the **Dunlin** above the only waders of note were the flock of **Golden Plover** at Ternhill/Smythemoor which exceeded 1,000 birds on two dates. A count of 55 **Goldeneye** at EGM was the largest count there for several years. A female **Scaup** was at The Mere Ellesmere on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The scarcer gulls declined in numbers in February, presumably as they started to move back to their breeding ranges. **Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked at four at The Mere on 8<sup>th</sup> but declined thereafter.

The warm temperatures probably encouraged the **Chiffchaff** at Shifnal SF on 12<sup>th</sup> to start singing whilst a pair of **Grey Wagtail** at Adstone Hill on 23<sup>rd</sup> were 'already breeding'.

## March

Average Daily Maximum Temp	10.6°C	(60 year mean 9.7°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	1.6°C	(60-year mean 1.9°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	10.0	(60-year mean 8.7)
Rainfall for month	31.8mm	(60-year mean 46.4)
Sunshine Hours for month	142.9	(60-year mean 103.0)

March 2020 began a long period of unusually dry weather. After 10<sup>th</sup>, temperatures were typically reasonably warm days but colder nights than is usual, often with a brisk north to north-easterly, especially towards the month's end. Coronavirus lockdown started on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Rather amazingly the last **Common Gull** record of the winter period at The Mere was recorded on 1<sup>st</sup>. Amongst the wildfowl, a remarkable count of 991 **Pintail** was made at the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence this month, far exceeding the previous county record. This is a significant count size for **Pintail** in the UK. A male **Green-winged Teal** appeared at Wall Farm from 5<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup>.

**Oystercatchers** arrived in the county in significant numbers from 5<sup>th</sup> while a large (in recent years) flock of 201 **Curlew** at Ponthen may have been migrants. The last **Hen Harrier** for the spring passage or winter period was seen at Whixall on 15<sup>th</sup> while three **Waxwings** at Market Drayton on 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> were fattening on berries before their move north.

As usual, **Little Ringed Plovers** were among the first spring arrivals, with a single at Whixall Canal Floods on 15<sup>th</sup> and two at Leighton/Buildwas on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Also on 15<sup>th</sup> a **White Wagtail** was found at Whixall Canal Floods. 16<sup>th</sup> brought a **Wheatear** to Ternhill with another on 20<sup>th</sup> at Whixall. 21<sup>st</sup> too was an arrival day with five **Sand Martins** over VP, the first **Ring Ouzel** at Titterstone Clee and an unusually early **Yellow Wagtail** at Whixall Canal Floods. Another **Ring Ouzel** appeared next day at All Stretton. The first **Swallow** of the year was found at Bayston Hill on 25<sup>th</sup> whilst the first **Osprey** at Plaish on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Furtive is not a word you'd normally use with **White-tailed Eagle** in mind, but the first of 2020 traversed the county on 23<sup>rd</sup> without being seen from the ground.

## April

Average Daily Maximum Temp	16.0°C	(60 year mean 12.5°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	4.2°C	(60-year mean 3.5°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	3.0	(60-year mean 5.1)
Rainfall for month	24.2mm	(60-year mean 47.2)
Sunshine Hours for month	223.6	(60-year mean 139.9)

Continuing dry, sunny, and unusually warm.

A good breeding season for many species was heralded by the dry, warm conditions in April.

This proved a good birding month with lots of ornithological interest around the county. The last of the wintering species were single **Redwing** at VP and three at Adderley on 7<sup>th</sup>; 14 **Fieldfare** at Lyth Hill on 14<sup>th</sup> and four **Brambling** at Belton Farm (Whitchurch) on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The pick of wader observations was single **Greenshank** on 22<sup>nd</sup> at Cockshutt; a **Whimbrel** overflying Cantlopgrove on 23<sup>rd</sup> and a male **Bar-tailed Godwit** at Polemere on 26<sup>th</sup>.

A **Bittern** was an extraordinary nocturnal record at Cantlopgrove on 7<sup>th</sup> while four **Black Terns** were rather early at The Mere on 18<sup>th</sup>. Also amongst the more unusual species in the county, two **Hoopoes** were found with one seen from 17<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> at Wem and another on 29<sup>th</sup> at Shrewsbury showground. A **Wryneck** was found in a Berrington garden on 21<sup>st</sup> whilst an **Osprey** at Shrewsbury on 1<sup>st</sup> preceded one or two birds being seen at various locations on 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

**House Martins** were the last of the hirundines to arrive and were first reported on 4<sup>th</sup> from Cantlopgrove. Also on 4<sup>th</sup> the first **Tree Pipit** of the year was at Meaton Lane with another arrival here resulting in a count of eight on 11<sup>th</sup>. Five **Ring Ouzels** at Ashes Hollow on 5<sup>th</sup> were the highest count of the spring with 1-2 at various sites to 26<sup>th</sup>. The first **Whitethroat** sang at Isombridge on 6<sup>th</sup> whilst new birds on 7<sup>th</sup> included **Reed Warbler** (at Shifnal SF) and **Garden Warbler** (at Whixall Moss). The main arrival of **Yellow Wagtails** was from 8<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> while a strong passage of **White Wagtails** this spring saw 15 records between 13 April and 19 May.

Two **Sedge Warblers** at VP on 11<sup>th</sup> were the first this spring, as was a **Lesser Whitethroat** at Adderley, whilst on the same date the first **Cuckoo** was calling at All Stretton. A decent passage of **Grasshopper Warblers** this year was heralded by one at Cantlopgrove on 12<sup>th</sup> with four others in April. **Swifts** arrived from 20<sup>th</sup> when more than one bird was seen at each of Newport (two), Shrewsbury (eight) and VP (three).

Other first migrant dates included **Whinchat** at Wall Farm on 19<sup>th</sup>; **Wood Warbler** on 24<sup>th</sup> in the Wyre and the first **Hobby** on 27<sup>th</sup>.

## May

Average Daily Maximum Temp	18.2°C	(60 year mean 15.9°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	6.3°C	(60-year mean 6.4°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	2.0	(60-year mean 1.0)
Rainfall for month	8.4mm	(60-year mean 55.6)
Sunshine Hours for month	263.1	(60-year mean 179.8)

If April was drier than normal, May was positively arid. 8.4mm of rainfall for the whole month at Shawbury was 15% of the average over the last 60 years. Continuing warm and sunny most of the month.

Another spring **Hoopoe** was found at Enchmarsh on 4<sup>th</sup>. The first **Spotted Flycatchers** of the month were seen on 5<sup>th</sup> at Woodseaves Market Drayton and Whitcott Keysett. **Quail** were reported from 7<sup>th</sup> and **Nightjars** were recorded at Kempton on 26<sup>th</sup> and Black Hill on 30<sup>th</sup>.

Waders were in short supply, with a few **Whimbrels** reported from Cantlogrove between 2<sup>nd</sup>–10<sup>th</sup>, a single **Dotterel** on Long Mynd gliding range on 13<sup>th</sup> and single **Grey Plover** at Northwood on 24<sup>th</sup> and **Ringed Plover** on 25<sup>th</sup> at Chelmarsh.

The almost annual male **Montagu's Harrier** typically was briefly seen on one day on the Long Mynd on 14<sup>th</sup> with a passage **Honey Buzzard** spotted over Market Drayton on 25<sup>th</sup> in an anticyclonic period notable for an influx of **Red-footed Falcons** to eastern England. The second unseen **White-tailed Eagle** soared over Shropshire at altitude on 31<sup>st</sup>.

## June

Average Daily Maximum Temp	19.9°C	(60 year mean 18.8°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	11.1°C	(60-year mean 9.3°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	0.0	(60-year mean 0.0)
Rainfall for month	108.4mm	(60-year mean 55.2)
Sunshine Hours for month	136.5	(60-year mean 178.3)

June started relatively cool and dry but from 16<sup>th</sup> a major change took place with a westerly airstream taking over. The remainder of the month was warm and extremely wet with torrential rain on 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> and again on 26<sup>th</sup> whilst temperatures rose to 30C on 24<sup>th</sup>.

A quiet month bird-wise though. Perhaps the most interesting record was of 15 **Crossbills** at Cefn Coch on 4<sup>th</sup> including several fledged juveniles. 28+ of this species were counted at Lordshill near Snailbeach on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Another **Honey Buzzard** was a good find at Dothill on 23<sup>rd</sup> but wasn't seen again. An **Osprey** at Melverley on 21<sup>st</sup> may have been a non-breeder, as may a **Short-eared Owl** at Whixall Moss on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Nightjars** were found at Whixall Moss and the Stiperstones NNR although breeding was not proven. Four **Common Terns** were at Priorslee Lake on 18<sup>th</sup>.

The largest **Mistle Thrush** flock of the summer was 25 birds at Titterstone Clee on 15<sup>th</sup>.

## July

Average Daily Maximum Temp	19.5°C	(60 year mean 20.7°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	11.5°C	(60-year mean 11.1°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	0.0	(60-year mean 0.0)
Rainfall for month	36.0mm	(60-year mean 56.8)
Sunshine Hours for month	118.3	(60-year mean 176.9)

July was unexceptional weather-wise and overall slightly drier than normal.

The only wader record of note was of four **Black-tailed Godwit** at Pepperhill Pool on 9 Jul.

The first migrant gulls to re-appear after the breeding season were a **Caspian Gull** at Chelmarsh on 26<sup>th</sup> (3cy) and **Yellow-legged Gulls** at Northwood (23<sup>rd</sup>) with two at Chelmarsh on 24<sup>th</sup> and five on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Good breeding records included fledgling **Little Owls** at Meadowley, ringed juvenile **Cetti's Warblers** at Chelmarsh and a roding **Woodcock** on Black Hill on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## August

Average Daily Maximum Temp	21.5°C	(60 year mean 20.3°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	13.0°C	(60-year mean 11.0°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	0.0	(60-year mean 0.0)
Rainfall for month	137.6mm	(60-year mean 60.0)
Sunshine Hours for month	112.9	(60-year mean 159.4)

Some very wet spells again in August with thunderstorms and heavy rain on 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> and again around 18<sup>th</sup>. On 25 Aug, Storm Francis produced some of the strongest winds ever recorded in Wales with 50–60 mph gusts in central England.

Confirmation of breeding is sometimes difficult until rather late in the season, but

**Shoveler** juveniles eventually confirmed that the species was likely to have bred at a pool near Chirbury after adults had been seen most of the summer. Other juveniles were found at Whixall Moss on 31<sup>st</sup>.

A count of 116 **Gadwall** at Park Farm Floods Newport on 19 Aug was almost double previous record count. **Wigeon** first returners were six birds at Northwood Pool on 31<sup>st</sup>.

The floods at Park Farm proved to be a magnet for waders with six **Ringed Plovers** on 16<sup>th</sup> and one on 29<sup>th</sup>, a **Black-tailed Godwit** from 18<sup>th</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> and three **Ruff** on 29<sup>th</sup>. Overflying **Whimbrel** were reported from Shrewsbury on 24<sup>th</sup> and Cantlogrove on 28<sup>th</sup>. Up to six **Green Sandpipers** were reported from Bridgwalton Quarry this month with just a single **Greenshank** at Chelmarsh on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Tern numbers were good in particular after Storm Francis when 32 **Arctic** and 6 **Common Terns** were found at White Mere. Juvenile **Arctics** were found at The Mere on 4<sup>th</sup> (two) and Chelmarsh on 21<sup>st</sup> (one) whilst single **Common Terns** were at Priorslee Lake and Chelmarsh on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> respectively. A juvenile **Kittiwake** was found in the gull roost at Chelmarsh on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked here at six this month, with up to four at The Mere. A juvenile **Caspian Gull** at Chelmarsh on 19<sup>th</sup> was the first here for several years.

Single **Ospreys** were reported from VP, Coundlane, Chelmarsh and Leighton whilst more fledgling **Little Owls** were found at Cantlogrove.

Good counts of commoner species included over 100 **Goldfinches** at Wall Farm, while 17 **Grey Wagtails** was a high number at Shifnal SF on 27<sup>th</sup>.

## September

Average Daily Maximum Temp	18.4°C	(60 year mean 17.8°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	8.8°C	(60-year mean 8.9°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	0.0	(60-year mean 0.1)
Rainfall for month	41.2mm	(60-year mean 60.8)
Sunshine Hours for month	156.4	(60-year mean 125.2)

A more equitable month in September with a generally calmer spell of weather. Only a few wet days.

Park Farm Floods continued to be attractive to waders most of the month as the flood gradually dried. **Ringed Plovers** were found between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> and peaked at 10 birds on 13<sup>th</sup>. **Dunlin**, too, passed through from 3<sup>rd</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> with up to eight birds, whilst

a juvenile **Little Stint** was an unusual autumn record for the county on 9<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup>. Three **Greenshank** here on the first were followed by a single from 14<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> and a single **Ruff** were present too from 9<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>. VP had a singled **Ringed Plover** on 5<sup>th</sup>, one **Dunlin** on 27<sup>th</sup> and a **Ruff** also on 27<sup>th</sup> while Wood Lane recorded one **Dunlin** on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Yellow-legged Gull** numbers continued to increase with maxima of eight at Chelmarsh on 25<sup>th</sup>, 10 and The Mere on 11<sup>th</sup> with 18 here on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Caspian Gulls** were picked out at Condoover on 18<sup>th</sup>, Chelmarsh on 25<sup>th</sup> and Cantlopgrove on 29<sup>th</sup>.

Overnight **Common Scoter** passage was recorded via nocmiggig at Adderley on 1<sup>st</sup>. The first returning wildfowl of the winter included earlier than usual arrivals of **Pochard** at Monkmoor STW on 20<sup>th</sup> and at The Mere on 21<sup>st</sup> whilst the latter site held three **Goldeneye** on 30<sup>th</sup>.

The first returning **Hen Harrier** on 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> was around Wildmoor on the Long Mynd, whilst the last **Osprey** of the autumn was also seen on 5<sup>th</sup>. Six **Cattle Egrets** flew into roost at The Mere on 17<sup>th</sup> for one night only. A **Redwing** at Wem on 22<sup>nd</sup> was unusually early.

A large influx of **Siskins** this month was typical of much of the UK, with some bird observatories having unusually large counts. 70 were at VP on 10<sup>th</sup> and 50 were counted at Market Drayton on 15<sup>th</sup> both counts much higher than normal for so early in the autumn period.

## October

Average Daily Maximum Temp	13.4°C	(60 year mean 14.0°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	7.0°C	(60-year mean 6.4°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	0.0	(60-year mean 1.9)
Rainfall for month	93.0 mm	(60-year mean 62.5)
Sunshine Hours for month	53.9	(60-year mean 91.0)

October opened wet with torrential rain again brought by Storm Alex on 3<sup>rd</sup>. Thereafter, the weather reverted to a largely average pattern for the remainder of the month.

Of the remaining summer migrants a late **Swift** was at Cold Hatton on 10<sup>th</sup> with a **Dotterel** flying around Pole Bank on 12<sup>th</sup>, a good autumn record. A **Wheatear** was at Leebootwood on 1<sup>st</sup> whilst **Ring Ouzels** were reported from Cantlopgrove on 9<sup>th</sup> and at Titterstone Clee on 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. A **Rose-coloured Starling** was a good find in a garden in Whitchurch on 17<sup>th</sup>. This bird stayed till the end of the month. Other notable records were a **Yellow-browed Warbler** on 20<sup>th</sup> at Shifnal SF and a juvenile

Shag at Priorslee Lake on 25<sup>th</sup>.

A second winter **Caspian Gull** was new at Priorslee Lake from 20–24<sup>th</sup> and **Yellow-legged Gulls** continued to visit the main gull roost sites. Three **Short-eared Owls** were found at well spread sites around the county and a **Hen Harrier** on 25<sup>th</sup> at Whixall Moss preceded regular records of one or two birds for the remainder of the year.

Of the winter visitors, a **Brambling** at VP on 7<sup>th</sup> was the first record with two on 9<sup>th</sup> at Cantlopgrove. 14 **Fieldfare** at Shifnal also on 9<sup>th</sup> preceded a large influx across the county on 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>. **Chaffinch** numbers were modest and a passage of 170 on 26<sup>th</sup> at Cantlopgrove was the only significant count.

A **Hawfinch** at Cantlopgrove on 17<sup>th</sup> accompanied **Redwings**. A first winter **Lapland Bunting** was a nice find on Titterstone Clee on 25<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup>.

## November

Average Daily Maximum Temp	11.7°C	(60 year mean 9.8°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	4.6°C	(60-year mean 3.0°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	5.0	(60-year mean 7.4)
Rainfall for month	36.2 mm	(60-year mean 62.5)
Sunshine Hours for month	49.1	(60-year mean 60.2)

A relatively warm month but rather drier than average. A cold snap from 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> although the first significant frosts did not come until 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Pride of place for November has to be the **Pied-billed Grebe** at Chelmarsh on 26<sup>th</sup> (into December). Perhaps this is a species a little overdue in the county.

Other nice records this month were a juvenile **Great Northern Diver** which stayed at Chelmarsh till the year end. A **Snow Bunting** was found on the Long Mynd on 10<sup>th</sup>; a drake **Red-crested Pochard** at Priorslee Lake on 26<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup> and two **Firecrests** trapped for ringing at Shavington Park on 4<sup>th</sup> were found in the same net, albeit a few hours apart.

Wildfowl numbers built up significantly this month for many species. **Whooper Swans** arrived in the Severn Valley and peaked at 32 on 21 Nov. A large flock of 300 **Pink-footed Geese** at Adderley on 12<sup>th</sup> surprisingly stayed for the rest of the year rather than moving through. They remained in the Adderley-Shavington area, with higher numbers occasionally recorded. The count of 80+ **Mandarin** at a pool near Meaton Lane was only matched by a similar number at the same site in December. A few sea-duck appeared this month with six female/immature **Common Scoters** at

The Mere on 12<sup>th</sup>, staying to 16<sup>th</sup>. Two **Scoters** were found at Chelmarsh on 19<sup>th</sup> and three on 29<sup>th</sup>. A female **Scaup** at The Mere on 13<sup>th</sup> stayed to the end of the year.

Use of a thermal imager at night proved its worth with the highest counts of **Woodcock** (20), **Jack Snipe** (eight) and **Common Snipe** (120) found at Soulton near Wem on 25<sup>th</sup>.

A large passage of **Woodpigeons** occurred in early November with 6,000 over Adderley on 4<sup>th</sup>; 26,000 at Cantlopgrove on 11<sup>th</sup> and 10,000+ here on 12<sup>th</sup>. A high count of 50 **Bramblings** was at Wart Hill on 5<sup>th</sup>. Unusually late migrants were a **Swallow** at Queens Head on 21<sup>st</sup> and a remarkably late **Whinchat** on 22<sup>nd</sup> on the Long Mynd.

## December

Average Daily Maximum Temp	7.6°C	(60 year mean 7.5°)
Average Daily Minimum Temp	1.8°C	(60-year mean 1.2°C)
Number of Days with air frosts	8.0	(60-year mean 11.6)
Rainfall for month	113.6mm	(60-year mean 63.8)
Sunshine Hours for month	39.0	(60-year mean 46.1)

Yet another very wet month.

Wildfowl and gulls normally dominate the winter months. 2020 was no exception. **White-fronted Geese** have been scarce in recent years. Just two singles this December at Chelmarsh on 6<sup>th</sup> and at Adderley in the **Pinkfoot** flock on 31<sup>st</sup>. A **Brent Goose** was with **Canada Geese** at Leighton on 9<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>. Another female **Scaup** was found at Oerley Reservoir on 12<sup>th</sup> while **Pochard** peaked at 13 at Shavington Park on 5<sup>th</sup>.

Our ‘summering’ gulls were seen still at Chelmarsh, Priorslee Lake and The Mere in mixed roosts while a third winter **Caspian Gull** at Priorslee Lake on 28<sup>th</sup> was considered a new arrival for the site. Our wintering gulls as usual built up significantly in December with 550 **Common Gulls** roosting at The Mere on 29<sup>th</sup> and 300 **Herring Gulls** at Chelmarsh in December. Priorslee Lake held most **Great Black-backed Gulls** with up to nine here in pre-roost gatherings on four dates.

Of other species, a flock of over 1,000 **Golden Plover** were at High Ercall on 20<sup>th</sup>. A single **Short-eared Owl** was found on the Long Mynd on 24<sup>th</sup>. Wintering **Chiffchaffs** were found at seven sites, including four birds at Eardington on 17<sup>th</sup>. A **Firecrest** was also found here on the same date. A second winter record for **Yellow-browed Warbler** was accepted - a bird at Maesbury Marsh on 5<sup>th</sup>.

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## Finder's Account – Pied-billed Grebe at Chelmarsh

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Tom Lowe

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November dawned clear and frosty in Shropshire, and only -2°C when I walked out of the door, but a brief thaw during the night meant my car was encased in ice and a challenge to get into. The journey to work was a mix of clear skies and foggy patches, and the morning's Staffordshire bird survey was a joy, crunching through frosty fields and icy marshes in the company of Woodcock, Snipe and at least six Jack Snipe.

I headed back to Shropshire early afternoon, and as I was passing, I swung into the layby at Priorslee Lake for a quick scan in the hope of one of the recent Caspian Gulls dropping in for a lunchtime bathe. A smattering of Black-headed Gulls and just half a dozen Lesser Black-backs didn't fill me with hope, and I was about to start the engine again when an oddly white-flanked duck caught my eye – a smart drake Red-crested Pochard! Maybe not high on many people's wish-lists, but less than annual in the county. You can't deny their handsome looks, and on a crisp wintry day you could almost imagine a cold weather continental movement ... almost.

Jack Snipe and Red-crested Pochard, I was on a roll! So, with a couple of hours of light left, I decided to make the detour to Chelmarsh Reservoir before heading home – surely the recent Glaucous or Azorean-type from Belvide would grace the roost?! A layer of cloud slid across as I arrived, meaning I shouldn't be staring into the setting sun – it was all dropping into place. The first bird I saw was the long-staying juvenile Great Northern Diver fishing along the edge of the reeds by the causeway, a really smart and unusually showy individual. I walked on, eager to be in position for the gull roost before the light started to fade, with a couple of Kingfishers on the way, and then a Great Crested Grebe flew the length of the reservoir. I lifted my bins just to double check it, and in the process noticed a small grebe swimming away from me, out in the centre of the water. Funny place for a Little Grebe ...

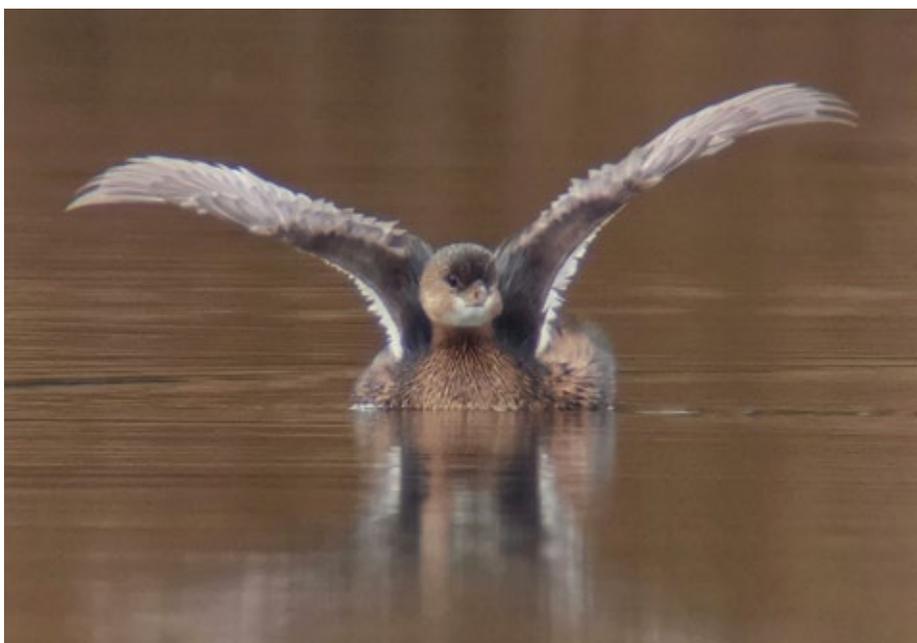
In the scope, and always swimming away from me, it never quite looked right for the common option, a bit too broad-beamed maybe, too big-headed? But what do Little Grebes *actually* look like?! I attempted to get a few phone-scoped record shots, but the distance and the light were against me, so I kept on walking, trying to catch it up. Another stop, another distant view, still silhouetted, but now the bird stopped and began to preen, occasionally lifting its head, and suddenly there was the profile – a long, oval head with a steep forehead, front-heavy, and the bill, stout and chunky and ... pale?

My brain was reluctant to agree with my eyes, but I messaged John Reeves: “90% sure I’ve got a Pied-billed Grebe at Chel”. Two minutes later the grebe swam into darker water, and I could finally see some colour on it – the creamy-white bill with a hint of a dark mark across it, a white chin and white spot just behind the base of the lower mandible, and generally warm, non-contrasty plumage. John got another message: “It is!”. A Pied-billed Grebe in the middle of open water, in Shropshire!?!

As the bird and I continued towards the dam, I noticed three birders setting up to scope the gull roost from near the sailing club. “Have you seen the grebe?” I spluttered, to which they looked perplexed. Surely I meant the diver? “There’s a Pied-billed Grebe swimming towards the dam!”. Within seconds they were on it, and I’d got some back up, I wasn’t going mad, and I put the news out. It was 3.19pm, less than 45 minutes from sunset. We rushed around the dam, but by the time we were in a position to see the water again, the grebe was starting another lap of the reservoir, so after grabbing a few more record shots, I set off back again.

By the time the sun dropped below the horizon, half a dozen locals had seen the new arrival, back at the other end of the reservoir, fishing off the causeway with the Great Northern Diver (often in the same scope view). Much closer views were now possible, although the light was fading. It was essentially shades of chestnut brown all over, darkest on the back and across the top of the crown and forehead, whilst the sides of the head and the neck were almost rufous. A tiny, spiky tail stood above the fluffy white rear, and when it briefly flapped, the upper wings were seen to be completely dark. The stout, blunt bill varied from creamy to greyish white, depending on light and angle, and a ghost of a black band ran across both mandibles 2/5 back from the tip. On the best views, a thin, whitish eye-ring could be seen, boldest in front of the eye.

Over the following days Pied-billed Grebe was added to many Shropshire lists, and as well as being a county first, it was the first to be found in the Midlands in the autumn/winter and away from the eastern counties of Northamptonshire (at Ravensthorpe Reservoir on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1997) and Rutland (at Rutland Water 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> April 2014). Interestingly, a bird on the Severn Estuary in Gloucestershire on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015 was relocated at Leighton Moss RSPB in Lancashire the following day, and the straight-line route between the two sites would have taken it within a few miles of Chelmarsh Reservoir.



Pied-billed Grebe, Chelmarsh, 29 November 2020  
(Tom Lowe (top left and bottom) Jim Almond (top right))

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## White-tailed Eagles in Shropshire in 2020

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*Tom Lowe and Tim Mackrill*

With a 2.5m wingspan, a heavy body, and a huge, hooked bill, the oft-described “flying barn door” that is a White-tailed Eagle might be considered hard to miss. But that is unfortunately what happened in Shropshire during the lockdown spring of 2020. Twice.

White-tailed Eagles (or “Sea Eagles”) have a huge global breeding range, from Greenland in the west to northern Japan in the east, but across a wide swathe of it numbers have declined markedly. This has led to the establishment of various reintroduction programs to restore these populations, such as those currently ongoing in Spain, Ireland, and the UK.

As early as 1968, Roy Dennis, then warden of Fair Isle Bird Observatory in Shetland, introduced four young eagles to the island, but that attempt sadly failed. Lessons were learnt, however, and further, larger-scale releases followed on Rum National Nature Reserve in 1975-1985, Loch Maree in 1993-1998, and in both Fife and Co. Kerry in 2007-2012. There are now 140 breeding pairs in Scotland and nine or ten in Ireland.

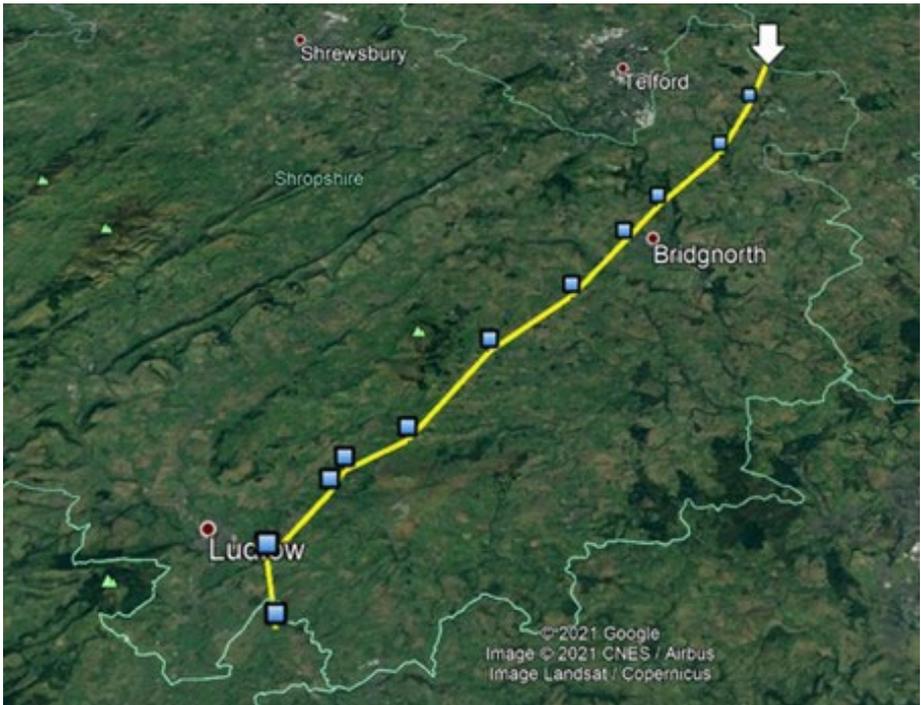
At least 1,500 years ago, the species’ range encompassed much of England, including Shropshire, as determined from archaeological and place-name evidence (*Evans et al 2012*). One of the last English strongholds was the Isle of Wight, where White-tailed Eagles bred until 1780. In spring 2019, the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation was granted licences by Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage to permit the return of eagles to the island. In late June, six two-month-old juveniles were translocated from Scottish nests to secluded release pens on the Isle of Wight, and fitted with solar-powered GPS transmitters. They made their first flights into the wild on their release in mid-August, and a further seven eaglets followed in the summer of 2020.

After several months around the natal territory/release site, juvenile White-tailed Eagles typically begin to wander further afield. As such, when one of the first release cohort, a male known as G393 (due to the code on its leg-ring), set off north across the Solent on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2019, it came as no surprise to Roy Dennis and his team. Tracked via minute-by-minute updates from his transmitter, G393 was seen to travel north to a flooded river valley on the border of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, where he settled for the winter feeding on Rabbits and various birds and carrion.

In mid-March G393 became restless and on 20<sup>th</sup> began a month-long, 1,500 km tour of western, central, and north-eastern England. Having roosted near Malmesbury in Wiltshire that first night, the 21<sup>st</sup> saw G393 travel north-west to Herefordshire via

a two-hour stopover at Slimbridge WWT reserve, and the following day was spent meandering up the Wye and Lugg valleys. Then, on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, as the prime minister announced the first “stay at home” lockdown, the young eagle flew 97km north-east from Herefordshire, through Shropshire and into Staffordshire.

At 1.48pm on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, G393 was circling 275m above the Iron Age hillfort at Caynham Camp, just south-east of Ludlow, and 15 minutes later was directly over the village of Bitterley, a few miles to the north-east. The north-easterly track then took the bird between the hills of Titterstone Clee and Brown Clee at an altitude of between 150m and 240m and a speed of over 50kmh, and at 3.18pm it crossed the A458 at the livestock market on the western edge of Bridgnorth. The River Sever was apparently ignored as G393 crossed it south-east of Apley Park, and it went over Beckbury half an hour after passing Bridgnorth. Just after 4.00pm, a visitor to the RAF Museum at Cosford could have glanced up to see a White-tailed Eagle pass over just a couple of fields to the west, just 60m up, before it made its way across the M54 and into Staffordshire at Weston Park.

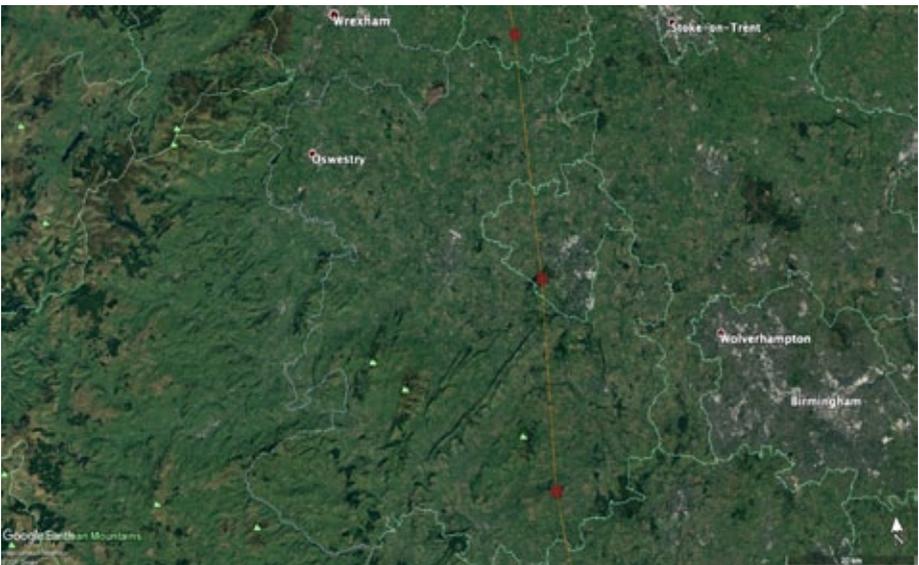


Track of G393 over Shropshire on 23 March 2020

G393 went on to spend a couple of months in North Yorkshire (where it was joined in June by G318, an eagle from the same Isle of Wight release pen!) and then a further five months in north-west Norfolk. He finally returned to the Isle of Wight on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, 17 months to the day after leaving.

In just over two and a half hours, a young White-tailed Eagle had crossed the county, apparently unseen by anyone on the ground. As the news filtered out, Shropshire birders stuck at home under lockdown realised what they had missed, and optimistic scans of the skies produced the odd Osprey over the following weeks, but no eagles.

However, at the other end of lockdown, it happened again. Following a relatively sedentary winter on the Isle of Wight, with just a couple of wanders onto the mainland, on 31<sup>st</sup> May, young female White-tailed Eagle G324 took advantage of a strong southerly tailwind to suddenly venture north. Having crossed the Solent just before midday, by 2.30pm she was just west of Gloucester, and at 4.00pm was cruising north over Catherton Common, to the east of Titterstone Clee Hill. Averaging around 35 km. per hour, G324 passed to the east of Brown Clee and made a beeline for the Wrekin, crossing it just east of the summit at 5.00pm, at a staggering height of 870m above the hill. The eagle maintained this altitude as it passed over the westernmost fringes of Telford, following the A442 and then the Tern Valley before leaving the county over Shavington Park, still at over 1000m above the ground. By



Track of G324 over Shropshire on 31 May 2020

6.00pm G324 was in Cheshire, where she roosted after a flight of 280km in just seven hours. Remarkably, the following day's flight was even longer, taking the eagle to the north-east of Northumberland National Park.

Since the lockdown spring of 2020, more young White-tailed Eagles have been released on the Isle of Wight, each with a taste for adventure. So in future springs, as Shropshire birders cast their eyes to the south in the hope of glimpsing that first Swallow, Swift or Osprey, maybe they should lift their binoculars a little higher, in case there's a barn door up there ...

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# The Decline of the Turtle Dove in Shropshire

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*John Arnfield*

## Background

The (European) Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) has the unenviable distinction of being the fastest declining bird in the UK. Between 1995 and 2011, summer populations declined by 95% according to BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey data: the change is 98% for the period 1967-2018 (*Robinson 2005*). These huge population losses are not confined to the UK but are characteristic of the whole of Europe and adjacent areas of Asia. As a result, its conservation status is “Vulnerable” in Europe (*IUCN Red List of Endangered species*), and it is on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern both in the UK and in Shropshire.

The Turtle Dove is a bird of the UK lowlands, largely found in the south and east of the country. It eschews upland areas, such as central Wales and the Pennines, and can be considered to be on the north-western edge of its range in the County. Habitats favoured by the species include open woods, woodland edges, hedgerows, open land with scattered bushes, orchards, well-wooded parks, scrub and gardens. It is Europe’s only migratory *Columbid* and winters in the semi-arid regions of the Sahel in sub-Saharan Africa. In both its summer and winter range, its food comprises the shoots and seeds of weedy plants, cereals and wildflowers and it is reputed to have a particular fondness for Fumitory although its diet is far wider than this. It has 2-3 broods each year, usually of two eggs (*Robinson 2005*).

This article will describe the history of the species’ decline in Shropshire as well as exploring possible reasons for it.

## The Nineteenth Century

The nature of ornithology in this period did not favour accurate quantitative estimates of abundance but most anecdotal statements suggest that Turtle Dove was abundant over the County. Leighton (*1836*), Eyton (*1838*), Ward (*1841*), Rocke (*1866*), Beckwith (*1878, 1879-81, 1893*), Paddock (*1890, 1897*) and Forrest (*1899*) report its presence at various locations, noting that it bred, was “fairly common”, “plentiful”, “abundant” or “very numerous” and that large flocks (of up to 50) were observed in late summer and autumn on stubbles and fallow fields. Forrest (*1899*) and Beckwith (*1893*) observed that numbers appeared to be increasing. That the species was well-

distributed was noted by Paddock (1897) and Beckwith (1893), although areas of concentration were noted around the Wrekin (Forrest, 1899) and the strip between Shrewsbury and Ludlow (Paddock, 1897).

### 1900 -1969

While evidence remains anecdotal in the early twentieth century, both Paddock (1904) and Forrest (1908) remark on the abundance and even increasing numbers of Turtle Doves in the County. The latter source suggests that the presence of large flocks during the breeding season may indicate that a significant number of migrants may be non-breeding birds. The Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club (CSVFC, 1951-1960) were still reporting flocks up to 30 strong in 1952 and 1955. A measure of the commonplace nature of this species at this time was a series of observations (from CSVFC) of Turtle Doves feeding with domestic pigeons in a garden in Bicton Heath from before 1928 until 1942. The garden count was up to 24 in the period up to 1936 but declined steadily thereafter to only two by 1942. Whether this reflects regional population change or a result of local factors cannot be ascertained.

The year 1955 marks the appearance of the SOS Annual Bird Report (although that year’s issue was never formally published) which lent somewhat more rigour to the reporting of the County’s birds. It also marks the first reports of declining numbers in the County, although these were usually described as localised – these are summarised below:-

Year	Report
1956	Fewer than normal in Wellington district
	Unusually scarce in Clun Forest area
1957	Scarce in the Ellesmere area
	Drayton area – only one pair all summer
	Apley Park – none this year
1958	Very scarce in the Wellington area
1959	Only small numbers in Leighton-on-Severn (below normal)
1960	Not so numerous as in recent years in Morville

Turtle Dove numbers are prone to large year-to year variations, so it is not clear whether these reports are precursors of the disastrous declines to come or merely “statistical noise” brought about by an inherently high-variance time series. Rutter *et al* (1964) describe the Turtle Dove as a breeding visitor in small numbers that is rather local but found throughout the County, but also warns that there is some evidence of a decline (while noting that numbers are prone to inter-annual fluctuations).

Certainly, SBRs during this period report good numbers elsewhere in the County and a measure of the continuing commonness of this species is that many SBRs in this period record only the first and last dates of observation. The species was also frequently described as “well-distributed”, confirmed breeding was observed in many locations, and large flocks (40+) were recorded at Polemere in June.

Gibbons *et al* (1996) described the period from 1880 to 1969 as a period of stability in the population of Turtle Dove in the UK. However, Shropshire’s data suggest that there may have been some precursors apparent to the forthcoming collapse in numbers, perhaps because of the County’s position on the edge of the species’ range.

### 1970-1991

Gibbons *et al* (1996) identified the years from 1970 to 1995 as one of “moderate decline” for Turtle Dove in the UK. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, accounts in the *Shropshire Bird Report* show a subtle but perceptible shift towards observations of both population and range loss for the species. Statements suggesting abundance and a wide distribution, for example, are restricted to the 1970s and, by the mid-1980s, account authors were explicitly identifying both an overall decline in numbers and a shift from widespread to local distribution. By 1990, only 15 sites were occupied, mostly in the central part of the County and north and east of the Severn Valley. A report from Bucknell (with a record of the species going back into the 1920s) yielded no Turtle Doves after 1980.

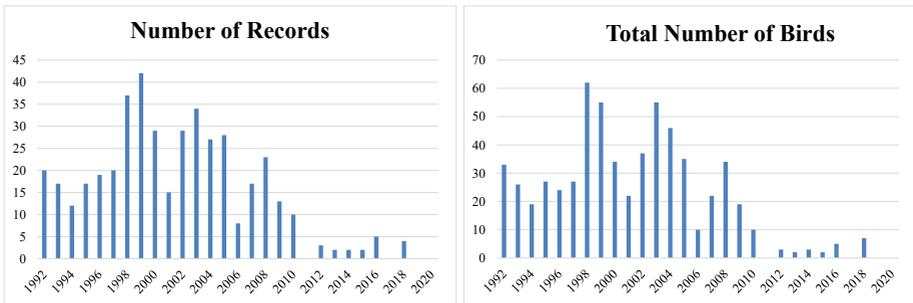
These changes are reflected in the more rigorously assembled data from 1985-1990 that provide the basis for **The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Shropshire** (Deans *et al* 1992). This showed a patchy distribution largely skewed to the east of the County with outliers in the river valleys of the south-west and around Ellesmere. Comparison with Sharrock (1976) suggests a contraction in range from the north-west “consistent with a severe decline since the 1970s” which confirms the anecdotal evidence from previous SBR reports. Confirmed and probable breeding were found in only 14% of Shropshire’s tetrads, consistent with the very sparse breeding records in the SBRs during this period, which report confirmed breeding only at Apley Castle, Brown Clee, Ellesmere, Hinstock, Leegomery, Lightmoor, Loamhole Dingle (Telford), Malehurst (near Pontesbury), and Venus Pool (with probable breeding at four other locations). There was no confirmed breeding reported for 1984, 1990 and 1991. The Atlas account concludes with the statement that “Turtle Dove population of 250-600 pairs seems reasonable, with actual numbers probably at the lower end of this estimate in most years.”

The period up to 1982 was the last to report sizeable flocks, largely in August, with maximum numbers of 39 (Allscott SF), 26 (Polemere), 25 (Shifnal) and 20 (Much Wenlock).

## 1992-2020

The year 1992 saw the beginning of the digital archiving of the County’s bird records and a shift towards more standardisation of the format of those records. Hence, from this year onwards, it became easier to compare years and identify trends in population data, despite data quality issues such as uneven sampling and duplication of records.

The figures below show the total number of Turtle Dove records from 1992 until 2020 (left) and the total number of birds reported in those records (right)<sup>1</sup>. As one might expect, these two variables are highly correlated and show the large year-to-year variations that have been noted for this species. It is notable that the period of enhanced fieldwork in the period 2008–13, for **The Birds of Shropshire (Smith, 2019)** ) does not show up on these graphs as a local maximum, which might have suggested that Turtle Dove was an under-recorded species.

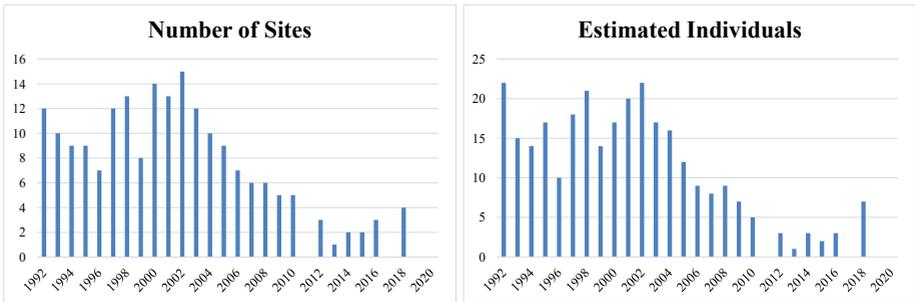


### Number of records and total number of birds reported in these records for Turtle Dove (1992–2020)

The following graphs present somewhat more discriminating variables over the same period. To the left is the number of distinct sites occupied by the species: to the right is an estimate of the likely number of birds present in the County by eliminating what appear to be repeat observations of the same bird or birds at the same location over a breeding season. This is a subjective process, of course, but it is hoped that this gives

1 A few of the numbers depicted in the following graphs differ slightly from those reported in the SBR accounts for Turtle Dove owing to the addition of records not previously available.

a more reliable indication of fluctuations in the actual Shropshire population than the total count which is inflated by multiple observations at sites with either a regular observer or which is visited frequently by several different observers.



### Number of sites and estimated total count of individuals for Turtle Dove (1992–2020)

In both graphs, numbers show that from a period of stabilisation even slight recovery from 1992 to 2002, thereafter there was an almost approximate exponential decline from the peak in 2002 to counts of zero in 2019 and 2020. (No observations were also recorded in 2011 and 2017.) These data suggest that, since 2009, not more than seven birds have been seen annually at no more than five sites in the County.

These data are quite consistent with anecdotal accounts of the disappearance of Turtle Dove, including from such traditional sites as Rea Farm (Upton Magna), Haughmond Hill, Roddington, the Severn Valley Country Park and Henley.

Evidence of breeding status is equally alarming. From the estimate of 250–600 pairs reported by Deans et al (1992), possible breeding was reported in Granville Country Park and at Isombridge in 1995 and five to seven possible breeding pairs were reported for 1999–2001. There have been no records of confirmed breeding since 1990 and it seems likely that this species is no longer breeding in the County.

*The Birds of Shropshire (Smith, 2019)* summarises most of these trends and confirms that, between 1985–90 and 2008–13, tetrads with confirmed breeding declined by 100%, those with probable breeding by 95% and those with possible breeding by 91% (giving an overall decline in the range for all types of breeding evidence of 216 tetrads or 94% of the early period tetrad count).

## **The Causes of the Decline**

The causes of the precipitous fall in Turtle Dove numbers are not certain and are almost certainly multifaceted, involving factors in the species' summer range, winter range and along the migration route between the two. These factors include the following.

### ***Changes in the Environment in the Sahelian Wintering Grounds***

The countries of the African Sahel are experiencing two types of environmental change that may have an impact on the Turtle Dove in its wintering grounds. The first of these is climate change – more specifically, desertification. The climate of the region is tropical steppe, but repeated droughts are pushing large areas towards true desert conditions. Such changes reduce the availability of the grasses and other seeds on which the species feeds. However, the species' abundance in the UK does not show any correlation with severe drought years in the Sahel wintering grounds (Marchant *et al*, 1990). Moreover, several species which are known to be affected by drought in the Sahel (such as Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler) showed strong increases in population during the 1990s in response to wetter conditions in the Sahel. This suggests Turtle Dove numbers are not determined directly by rainfall in the winter quarters.

In addition, and related to it, environmental changes in the region have also had an impact on the species' food supply, including the effects of overgrazing, overcultivation, soil erosion, salinisation and other forms of land degradation, all driven by human population increase.

### ***Agricultural Intensification in the Breeding Grounds***

Intensification of agriculture has brought about an increase in the use of herbicides and fertilisers which have reduced plant diversity and decimated the weedy edges to fields that provided much of the vegetation that is a food source for Turtle Doves. These have been replaced by crop monocultures that are not useful for the species.

Unlike the other *Columbids* in the UK, Turtle Doves are obligate granivores – their diet consists exclusively of seeds. Reduced food availability and lack of nesting sites is believed to lead to a shortened breeding season which has reduced the number of nesting attempts and reduced their overall productivity (Browne *et al*, 2005). This is probably the primary demographic driver of the species' decline and it is noteworthy that the mid-1970s onset of the population crash correlates more closely with the onset of intensive agriculture than with any of the other potential drivers.

Browne & Aebischer (2004) demonstrate that the number of nesting attempts for each pair was significantly lower in the late 1990s compared with the early 1960s, showing that the importance of productivity in the decline of the species is largely a result of a reduction in nesting attempts. In the UK, the breeding season seems also to be shortened by eight days, the production per pair being half the number of clutches and young than formerly.

Additional factors might be hedge removal, which deprive the birds of suitable nesting sites, changes in the timing of agricultural operations and the switch from haymaking to silage production.

### ***Competition with the Collared Dove***

The Collared Dove colonised the UK in 1953 and bred for the first time in 1955 with the first Shropshire breeding record in 1963. There is some evidence that competition between this species and Turtle Dove may be partially responsible for the latter's decline. The Collared Dove benefits from important advantages over the Turtle Dove, including its sedentary nature, larger size, aggressiveness, and a high reproductive success (several broods throughout a year, with 66% success, versus fewer broods and 35% success for the Turtle Dove). Hunting pressure is also much lower on the Collared Dove (*European Commission, 2007, 2018*).

### ***Hunting***

Between two and four million birds are shot annually in Malta, Cyprus, France, Italy, Spain and Greece. Spring hunting in Malta (the only country with an EU derogation to shoot birds during their spring migration to breeding grounds) is particularly damaging to population numbers as each bird killed in spring means one less breeding pair and therefore no offspring. Recent modelling studies make it clear that “current levels of legal hunting along the western flyway are unlikely to be sustainable” (*Lormée et al, 2020*).

### ***Disease***

The disease trichomonosis may also be a factor. Lennon *et al* (2013) draw attention to the high level of infection by the parasite that causes the disease in Turtle Doves and Stockdale *et al* (2015) suggest that this may be a result of “parasite spillover” from game birds where food is provided for the latter and numbers are high. It was not clear, however, whether infection rates have led to population declines, whether due to mortality or poor breeding condition.

## ***Urbanisation – Telford***

In the Shropshire context, loss and modification of habitat in the Telford area may play a role. Historically, Turtle Dove was very abundant in this area (so much so that a regional name for the species was “Wrekin Dove”) and the distribution map in Deans et al (1992) depicts this hotspot. Urban development in and around Telford would have deprived the species of breeding habitat during the creation of the New Town. Undoubtedly, local habitat changes of this type have played a role elsewhere.

## **Afterword**

Remedial action to counter the precipitous decline in Turtle Dove is hampered by uncertainty about the relative significance of the role of the various factors listed in the previous section. Operation Turtle Dove (a collaborative project involving four organisations with the objective of halting the loss of this species) seeks to ascertain the importance of each factor operating in the winter and summer habitats and on the migration between the two (*Operation Turtle Dove, 2021*) and to devise methods of alleviating their negative effects. Research suggests the loss of suitable habitat on the UK breeding grounds and the associated food shortages are the most important factor driving Turtle Dove declines and it is noteworthy in this respect that the timing of the population decline correlates well with the rise of mechanised and chemical-based agriculture. This factor can be dealt with at the national and County level.

British agriculture requires a complete rethink, with an enhancement of schemes to prioritise conservation over food production in all areas where intensive agriculture is unfeasible. Practices such as set-asides, creation of food-rich landscapes for Turtle Doves, changes in hedge maintenance and the rewilding of areas that are marginal for intensive agriculture must become part of a national philosophy of conservation.

Human population increase in Africa, and related environmental degradation, loss of wooded landscapes there, and climate change in the Sahelian region can only be addressed at an international level, by global organisations (like the UN, BirdLife International etc) and by collaborative work by national conservation and other types of bodies. Reform of hunting laws largely falls within the scope of the EU and its constituent national governments. It is encouraging that the Spanish government has banned Turtle Dove hunting for 2021 as an aid to population recovery. This is consistent with the EU LIFE+ funded project (*European Commission, 2018*) to develop an International Species Action Plan for Turtle Dove which began in 2015 and launched a flyway-scale strategy to conserve this species in May 2018. These are good starts but more of the same is needed!

Nevertheless, the status of the Turtle Dove is dire in Shropshire. It is likely that Turtle Dove is now no longer a breeding species here and equally likely that its numbers will be sparse as passage migrants for years to come, even with progress on local, European and international conservation efforts. We must believe that this is reversible!

## Acknowledgements

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# Post fledging dispersal in Barn Owls *Tyto alba* in Shropshire and its implications for the sustainability of a breeding population

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Glenn Bishton, John Lightfoot and Wendy Lightfoot



## Introduction

The prime aim of the present study was to determine the dispersal distance of chicks from their natal site to their first breeding site and juvenile dispersal distance from ringing recoveries in the first and second years of life. Differences in dispersal according to sex were also examined. It was envisaged that the findings would facilitate an assessment of the sustainability of the Barn Owl breeding population in Shropshire and inform conservation measures.

Barn Owls are non-migratory in the UK (*Pringle et al 2016*), defending home ranges and hunting within 2 km. of the nest (*Cayford 1992, Taylor 1994*). Adult males are highly site-faithful and females more frequently move to new nest sites, usually after losing their mate and no further than to an adjacent nest site (*Taylor 1994*). Post-fledging dispersal begins around 98 days old (*Bunn et al 1982*) and radio-tracked fledglings were first found to be absent from the nest area at 83-116 days old, mean 96.6 days (*Barn Owl Trust 2012*). The median dispersal distance for ringed-recoveries is 12 km and dispersal is largely completed within the first five months of fledging (*Wernham 2002*). Female chicks disperse further than male chicks (*Pringle 2016*).

Shropshire Barn Owl Group (SBOG) has been installing nestboxes for Barn Owls in Shropshire and promoting the conservation of their habitat since 2002. Four-hundred and forty-two nestboxes have been erected and 1895 chicks produced in nestboxes monitored. An additional 304 chicks have been produced in natural sites (*SBOG 2020*). This has led to an increase in the Barn Owl breeding population from an estimated 140 pairs in 1992 (*Deans et al 1992*) and 121 in 2002 (*Bishton and*

*Lightfoot 2004*) to 200-220 pairs in 2013 (*Smith 2019*). This intensive conservation effort to provide new breeding opportunities for Barn Owls in Shropshire has produced a large dataset of chicks ringed under BTO licence and subsequently recaptured live (hereafter “live-recaptures” or recovered dead (hereafter “dead-recoveries”). There has been no previous detailed analysis of ringing recoveries and the dispersal from natal sites in Shropshire.

## 2 Methods

Ninety-one Barn Owls ringed as chicks in Shropshire and recaptured live or recovered dead between 10 August 2007 and 26 May 2020 were available for analysis. Ringed nestlings found dead in the nest and young owls recovered dead close to the nest site and which clearly had not attempted to disperse were excluded from the analysis. Injured birds subjected to treatment and ringed then released from a site were similarly excluded from the analysis as the link to the natal site had been compromised.

Dispersal movements were categorised into different types according to the age at which the chick was ringed and subsequently recovered. Natal dispersal is defined as the movement of chicks from the nest site to recovery locations in any subsequent breeding season. The breeding season is defined as 1 April - 31 October following Wernham et al (2002). SBOG has recorded Barn Owl chicks from second or late broods in the nest in October and which would subsequently fledge as late as November but the range dates applied here will include most breeding attempts in Shropshire.

Juvenile dispersal is defined as the movement of chicks from the nest to recovery locations within 12 months of ringing. For the purpose of this study Barn Owls recovered over 12 months after ringing are termed young adults. Median and mean dispersal distance were calculated for each dispersal type among live-recaptures and dead-recoveries.

The sex of the chicks was routinely determined on ringing using criteria defined by the Barn Owl Trust and British Trust for Ornithology. Identifying recoveries according to sex was also undertaken on dead Barn Owls retrieved by SBOG or bought to their attention. The sexing of juveniles allowed for comparisons to be made in the dispersal distances of male and female birds. Analysis of the data for the cause of death and evidence of seasonality was undertaken.



A brood of four (*Glenn Bishton*)

### **3 Results**

#### **3.1 Natal dispersal**

The median natal dispersal distance for juvenile live-recaptures and dead-recoveries was 7.0 km. ( $n=35$ , mean  $18.00 \pm 4.85$ , Table 1). Females dispersed 9.0 km, further than males, which dispersed 6.0 km. One recovery was not identified according to gender. Live-recaptured female Barn Owls dispersed greater distances than live-recaptured males. This gender difference was also found to hold for dead-recoveries. Live-recaptured males, females and both sexes combined dispersed further than the equivalent birds found dead on recovery, which suggests that live-recaptures provide a more precise measure of dispersal and that birds recovered dead might still be in the process of dispersing when recovered.

**Table 1. Natal dispersal distance (km) of live recaptures and dead recoveries****Means are presented with standard errors (se)****N=number of birds in each category**

Sex	Live recaptures			Dead recoveries			Live recaptures & dead recoveries		
	N	Median dispersal	Mean +/-se	N	Median dispersal	Mean +/-se	N	Median dispersal	Mean +/-se
M	4	7.00	6.25 +/-1.55	4	6.00	7.00 +/-2.12	8	6.00	6.63 +/-1.22
F	21	9.00	20.95 +/-6.46	5	7.00	26.20 +/-16.81	26	9.00	21.96 +/-5.99
M&F	25	9.00	18.60 +/-5.52	10	6.00	16.50 +/-8.59	35	7.00	18.00 +/-4.58

The minimum natal dispersal distance for a male live-recapture was 2 km. for an individual ringed at Attingham on 18 July 2016 and recovered dead at Berwick on 26 June 2017. The maximum for a male live-recapture was 9 km. ringed at Sleaf on 7 July 2012 and recaptured at Ellesmere on 23 June 2016. The minimum natal dispersal distance for a female live-recapture was 2 km. by an individual ringed at Sleaf on 28 August 2014 and recaptured at Burlton on 6 June 2017. The maximum natal dispersal distance for a female live-recapture was 114 km., ringed as a chick at Longden on 3 August 2015 at and recaptured at Fenny Compton, Warwickshire, on 15 June 2017.

The maximum natal dispersal distance for a dead-recovery was 92 km. for an individual ringed at Ellesmere on 25 June 2009 and recovered 628 days later on 26 April 2011 at Weston Underwood, Derbyshire.

### 3.2 Juvenile and young adult dispersal

Juveniles dispersed 6 km. (n=52, mean 13.65 +/- 3.13) in the first 12 months (Table 2). Young adults over 12 months dispersed 10 km. (n=35, mean = 22.26 +/-4.66), further than juveniles in the first 12 months and indicating that the dispersal of young Barn Owls continued in their second year of life. Both juvenile and young adult females dispersed greater distances than juvenile and young adult males.

**Table 2. Dispersal distances (km) of live recaptures and dead recoveries of juveniles in the first 12 months and of young adults in the second 12 months.**

Means are presented with standard errors (se)  
N=number of birds in each category

Sex	First 12 months			Second 12 months		
	N	Median dispersal	Mean +/-se	N	Median dispersal	Mean +/-se
M	18	5.0	6.83 +/-1.78	5	9.0	20.20 +/-11.26
F	28	7.5	16.50 +/-4.63	25	14.0	29.32+/-7.15
M&F	52	6.0	13.65 +/-3.13	35	10.0	22.36 +/-4.66

The maximum juvenile dispersal was 99 km. for a Barn Owl ringed at Ellesmere on 9 June 2007 and recovered dead at Trefechan, mid-Wales, on 10 August 2007. The large dispersal distance in 62 days suggests that it may have been vehicle assisted.



Fitting a ring to a nestling Barn Owl (*Tim Preston*)

### 3.3 Cause of death of juveniles and young adults

Seventy-four dead-recoveries were available for analysis. Cause of death was not always recorded or apparent and some recoveries referred to a place of recovery only. The predominant location or cause of death was road casualties 60% (n=41). Other causes of death referred to a field 13% (n=9), dead in a building 7% (n=5). No record of location or potential cause of death occurred in 7% (n=5) of cases and birds found dead on a yard or track, where collision with a vehicle or wires was feasible, predation, drowning, railway and garden accounted for 2% or less each (n=8).

Data for dead-recoveries must be treated with some caution as it may be subject to some bias in favour of road casualties. Road victims are conspicuous and in places frequented by people and other deaths will probably go undetected in more secluded locations, such as natural tree sites, where the cause of death may be starvation or poisoning. In addition, without direct observation of the cause of death, most descriptions will inherently contain assumptions about the cause of death. 75.6% (n=56) of juvenile deaths occurred within the first 12 months of their lives.

Chicks were routinely aged on ringing using the BOT's growth and development chart (*Barn Owl Trust 2012*) and this is extrapolated to calculate an approximate (maximum) age of chicks at death. For those surviving beyond 12 months the average maximum age at death was 1,158.08 days (+/-202.01 n=12). The oldest juvenile was an individual ringed at Peplow on 9 June 2012 and found dead 2,455 days later at Admaston, nearly seven years of age. 66% (n=45) of casualties occurred in the winter period October-March.

## 4 Discussion

Juvenile Barn Owls in Shropshire move away from their place of birth soon after fledging. Dispersal distance from the natal site to their breeding site and juvenile dispersal from the natal site to the place they settled in their first twelve months of life was less in males than females: the median natal dispersal distance for males was 6 km. and for females 9 km., whilst the median juvenile dispersal distance was 5 km. for males and 7.5 km. for females (data for live-recaptures and dead-recoveries combined).

The point at which dispersing juveniles opt to settle will be dependent on a range of factors – the availability of an adequate food resource, suitable roost and nest sites and the presence of a potential mate or competitor. By the end of November most juveniles have settled in their home range (*Wernham, et al 2002*) and most of the sites occupied are where a vacancy exists due to the death of a resident, new arrivals pairing

up with the resident bird (*Taylor 1994*). It is feasible to assume that dispersing juvenile Barn Owls in Shropshire will move the minimal distance required to secure suitable feeding habitat, roost sites, a mate and a nest site. Environmental conditions prevailing during dispersal – prey abundance and nesting sites – are more important factors in determining how juveniles disperse than the conditions of the individual (*Roulin 2020*).

Natal dispersal as measured by live recaptures is most definitive as it records juveniles in situ on breeding sites and therefore the precise distance from the natal site to the first breeding site. For birds found dead, recovery distances and timeframes contain an element of presumption that the birds were breeding or attempting to breed in the location where they were recovered rather than killed prematurely whilst still in the process of dispersal. However, the fact that such recoveries appeared to disperse shorter distances than birds recovered live suggests that biases inherent in determining dispersal distances from dead birds, such as vehicle assisted travel, might not significantly influence the outcome.

The short dispersal movements performed by Barn Owls in Shropshire has implications for SBOG's nestbox programme. Based on a tentative understanding of home ranges in Shropshire, SBOG has previously attempted to create and subsequently expand core breeding populations in areas of good feeding habitat but where the absence of suitable cavities existed in trees or buildings for nesting and roosting purposes. For example, the number of breeding pairs on The Weald Moors, north of Telford, increased from one to nine pairs between 2002 and 2005 following the installation of 29 nestboxes. The present study would suggest that a programme of linked nestboxes, with some as close as 220 metres apart in cases to provide roost sites as well as nest sites, might act as a stepping-stone for juveniles dispersing from their natal site and attempting to move the minimal distance to find suitable nest and roosting cavities.

Most juvenile deaths in Shropshire Barn Owls occurred in the first 12 months of their lives and most occurred in the winter period. The Barn Owl population is probably at its post-breeding peak at this time and this seasonality of deaths is consistent with SBOG data on road casualties which shows that 63% of road deaths between 2002 and 2019 occurred in the winter period (*SBOG 2019*). This seasonality has been observed elsewhere in the UK (*Percival, 1990, Taylor 1994, Shawyer and Dixon 1999*), with high juvenile mortality throughout the dispersal phase and a peak in late October, early November. The increased foraging ranges of adult Barn Owls in winter probably results in a greater chance of encountering vehicles. A second mortality peak in late winter due to an increase in the adult die-off rate is apparent from SBOG road casualty data and, again, is consistent with studies elsewhere (*Percival 1990, Taylor 1994*).

Road traffic casualties accounted for most juvenile deaths in Shropshire. SBOG recorded 201 road deaths between 2002 and 2019, an average of 11.1 each year (SBOG 2019). Ninety-two percent occurred on A roads. The A5 is the most serious threat, accounting for 34% (69) of the casualties. In the UK, road traffic accounted for 6% of mortality between 1910-1954 rising periodically to 52% in 1982-1986 (Roulin 2020) and with constantly increasing traffic volumes this threat is likely to persist in Shropshire. Mitigation to reduce road kills might include tree planting on road embankments and close to roads which would force Barn Owls to fly high above roads, but any mitigation is unlikely to be implemented on a large scale. SBOG policy of ensuring that nestboxes are not installed within 1 km. of a major road is possibly the most prudent option at present.

Are there any geographical and topographical impediments to the dispersal of juvenile Barn Owls in Shropshire which might restrict their breeding range? Barn Owls move further through better habitat (Pringle 2016) and are impeded by large natural barriers such as large expanses of water (Shawyer 1994, Seel, et al 1994) but there is no evidence that they disperse along linear features such as waterways or road verges. The movement of radio-tracked juveniles appeared to be unrelated to habitat features, juveniles flying over hills rather than following river valleys (Barn Owl Trust 2012). Possibly the greatest natural geographical barrier that might impede their movement and restrict their breeding range in Shropshire is the Shropshire uplands of the Long Mynd and the southern Cleve Hills in south Shropshire, rising to 540 metres asl. Around 90 tetrads (33% of the total occupied breeding tetrads) in the uplands were occupied by breeding pairs between 2008-2013 (Smith 2019) and sites occupied in the south are generally located along the lower ground of river valleys and catchment areas. Here, SBOG has been assisting the community wildlife groups in the Upper Onny, Upper Clun, Kemp Valley and Cleve Hills where nestboxes have been installed and are now occupied by breeding pairs. Given that SBOG has recorded a pair nesting as high as 357 metres asl at Black Marsh, Chirbury, the limiting factor in further breeding range expansion in the southern uplands is probably the lack of tree cavities and buildings rather than the hills acting as a physical barrier to movement.

The mean number of chicks produced per successful brood in Shropshire for the eighteen years 2002-2019 is 2.9 (Lightfoot and Bishton 2020), ranging from 2.1 in 2010 to 4.1 in 2014. An average of 3.2 young per pair is required to maintain a viable population (Taylor 1994). Seventeen recoveries in the period analysed related to Barn Owls ringed as chicks outside the county which indicates that there is some immigration of Barn Owls in Shropshire. Given the small dispersal distance of juvenile and the acceptable breeding productivity it appears that the population in Shropshire is presently viable, self-sustaining and not reliant on the immigration of Barn Owls.

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# Great Crested Grebes at the Ellesmere Meres. Breeding numbers and success

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*Allan Dawes*

## Background

The BTO Wetlands Bird Survey (WeBS) formerly Winter Wildfowl Count was a source of much valuable data for the species account writers of *The Birds of Shropshire* (Smith, 2019). These surveys focused primarily on wintering birds from September to March, so consequently there was little data available from these wetlands during the breeding period. An option to extend WeBS coverage throughout the summer months was added later but take up during this period is not as good as that achieved during the winter months.

Breeding season fieldwork for Bird Atlas 2007-11 (Balmer *et al.* 2013) and *The Birds of Shropshire* enabled distribution maps to be plotted and provided some detail of numbers present but estimating the Shropshire breeding population of wetland species was often difficult. For this reason, I decided to continue with the WeBS at the Ellesmere meres throughout the summer months in an attempt to fill some of the knowledge gaps.

## Method

A single WeBS visit was made each month to the six main meres; Blake Mere, Cole Mere, Crose Mere, The Mere at Ellesmere, Newton Mere and White Mere. In addition to the standard count, I estimated the number of Great Crested Grebe pairs present between March and September. On early visits, two birds in close proximity were judged to be a pair, as the season progressed some 'pairs' were sometimes seen together and single birds were assumed to be the mate of an incubating bird. On the larger meres they often favoured discrete areas. Both early and late in the breeding period high numbers would occasionally occur; these were assumed to be late migrants in the spring and failed breeders later in the summer. The final number of pairs was based on the total present during each month, discarding the occasional peaks in numbers. No attempt was made to find nests but they were sometimes seen during the WeBS and this helped to confirm the number of pairs.

Broods and young were noted; if the young survived they were often seen on two or even three successive visits so successful broods are unlikely to have been missed. Only those young that fledged successfully are included in the final total. April and

May visits were not possible in 2020, but this is unlikely to have affected the number of pairs calculated and any young surviving to fledging would have been seen on later visits.

## Results

The table shows the combined totals from the six meres:-

	<b>Max pairs</b>	<b>Min Pairs</b>	<b>Fledged young</b>	<b>Successful pairs</b>
<b>2016</b>	17	11	4	2
<b>2017</b>	15	9	1	1
<b>2018</b>	10	6	5	2
<b>2019</b>	17	12	0	0
<b>2020</b>	12	9	4	2

## Conclusion

Newton Mere and Blake Mere, the smallest of the meres, usually held a single pair, and five at The Mere, Ellesmere in two seasons was the highest number. The number of pairs present was not unexpected but the low number of successful breeding pairs and total of fledged young is concerning.

Great Crested Grebes normally have a single brood with 11% of pairs having a second brood; after the loss of eggs or young replacement clutches are often laid (*Cramp 1977*). No pairs raised two broods during this survey period but replacement clutches were thought to have been made due to the very late appearance of some juveniles and the casual observation of nests through the summer.

The BTO Nest Record Scheme gives 0.88 fledglings per breeding attempt (*Woodward et al 2020*). Only in 2018 did the number of fledglings produced at the meres approach this number.

The table shows the fledglings per pair for the six meres:-

	<b>Fledglings per pair</b>	
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Min</b>
<b>2016</b>	0.36	0.23
<b>2017</b>	0.11	0.06
<b>2018</b>	0.83	0.5
<b>2019</b>	0	0
<b>2020</b>	0.44	0.33

Following on from the publication of *The Birds of Shropshire*, a list of Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire was published in SBR 2019. This places the

Great Crested Grebe in the Amber category due to a reduction in range of more than 25% of occupied tetrads and a reduction in population of more than 25%. The results from the Ellesmere meres suggest that poor breeding performance may be a contributing factor. However, they are based on one small part of the county and may not reflect the situation elsewhere.

Whether the nests fail at the egg stage or once the young have left the nest is unknown, although few small young were seen, suggesting that the problem may be at the egg stage or before the young become easily visible. More detailed fieldwork at the Ellesmere meres could help to shed some light on this by following the outcome of individual nesting attempts but the large size of the meres and the difficulty of access are a problem.

## **Future**

I would like to encourage all existing WeBS participants to continue counting throughout the year and to make additional notes, particularly of the scarcer breeding birds such as Little and Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Mandarin, Shelduck and Egyptian Goose etc and submit these as comments on either the WeBS online form, or Birdtrack, or send them to the county recorder. Estimating the number of breeding pairs and the success or otherwise of any breeding attempts would extremely useful.

In addition, if anyone lives near or regularly visits a waterbody with any of these species present and could follow the birds activity over the course of the breeding season, that would also be really useful. Things to note would be total number of pairs, any sign of breeding such as nests or broods and importantly the number of young that survive to maturity, reporting negative outcomes being as important as positive ones. This information can be entered in the comments column on Birdtrack at the end of the season or submitted to the county recorder.

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## A Lockdown Diary with a Pair of Kestrels

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*Sue and Dave Crichton live in the Shropshire hills and were fortunate enough to have a pair of Kestrels nesting (as they have done for several years) in their garden during the lockdown period in 2020. Sue kept a diary of the goings on. The narrative style is very different from our usual report accounts but as 2020 was an unusual year for us all I felt Sue's diary perfectly illustrated the importance of the natural world for our well-being. Ed.*

### Shropshire Hills 2020

**January 14<sup>th</sup>.** A mild morning found me cursing the rabbits in the garden, when I spotted a female Kestrel sitting on the edge of the Kestrel box. It was mounted in an ash tree, in full view from our kitchen window. The box had been used by a pair of Kestrels for the past eight years, usually successfully rearing five chicks, but in 2018 the box wasn't used, so I was excited to see a female perching on the top, so early in the season.



*(Sue Crichton)*

**25th** A woodpecker was drumming most days and for two days she regularly flew back, perching on the top of the box.

**31st** The male hovers over the paddock, she flies into the Ash tree and begins calling to him.

**February 1<sup>st</sup>**. For the next 5 days, the pair circle around, calling to each other, sometimes hovering over the top paddock wildflower meadow. Stormy weather brings Bullfinches into the garden to feed.

**16th** There had been no sightings of the pair for a few days. We start to get the uneasy feeling that they have left. But today, one flies briefly through the meadow.

**March 13<sup>th</sup>**. A pair of Buzzards and a pair of Red Kites are often in the sky, but no further sightings of the Kestrels. Curlews return, with their beautiful call. But apart from a glimpse of one Kestrel flying north, nothing.

**April 1<sup>st</sup>**. Warm, mild days, Dogs Mercury, Marsh Marigolds, Cowslips and Blackthorn, are all in flower. She's back!

**3<sup>rd</sup>**. She has hunted regularly over the field for the past few days, sometimes perching in the Ash tree, regularly circling near the house. Exciting! Blackthorn flowering, while the Hawthorn comes into leaf.

**8<sup>th</sup>**. Early in the morning, both the male and female visit the box, female perches on the edge, male sits close by, lots of calling between them. Kee-Kee-Kee. At 2pm they leave together and soar to a height of about 300 ft. individually they make tight circles, about 10 metres in diameter. After three minutes the male makes dramatic swoops at the female. After each swoop, they revert to the circular movements. The whole display lasted about 10 minutes, before they both flew north. Superb courtship behaviour.

**9<sup>th</sup>**. 7am, Hen and cock are active in and around the box. They return to a Beech tree and both fly back to the box every couple of hours for the rest of the day. Butterflies begin emerging, numerous Red Admirals.

**10<sup>th</sup>**. Same behaviour as yesterday, but with no aerial displays.

**11<sup>th</sup>**. Midday, female popping in and out of the box. Male sits calling. A male rival appears!! Lots of agitation, displays by both resident birds. Male engages in aerial combat. The intruder is chased off into an Oak tree with much annoyed calling. Intruder repeats the invasion another two or three times, before being rebuffed and leaving.

**12<sup>th</sup>**. Lots of birds are mating and using our nest boxes this morning. The Curlews were mating in a nearby field too. Our resident Kestrels join in the ritual. They spent most of the day posturing and mating on the telephone wires.

**13<sup>th</sup>**. For the next few days, both the male and female birds are in and out of the nest box, several times a day. This behaviour quite is different from what we have seen in previous years. They are more restless, sometimes being in the box together, then both flying out and heading south. Are these two-year olds, mating for the first time, we wonder?

**18<sup>th</sup>**. Everywhere is turning spring green, Cow Parsley flowering, Violets in the hedges, Cuckoo Flowers are attracting the honeybees and pond skaters flee on the pond. The second male returns!! 12.30pm ... commotion as he enters the box, but he is flushed out by the female. All three fly off, chasing and buffering. An anxious time with the binoculars. At 1.05pm, female returns and sits on the edge of the box for most of the afternoon.

**19<sup>th</sup>** 6.45am, female in the box, but she leaves and sits with the male on the telephone wires, briefly mating again. She returns to the box in the afternoon, the male remains on the wire and often calls to her. Overhead the Red Kite is circling most days. Late in the afternoon the second male appears again, he is quickly chased off by both birds.

**20<sup>th</sup>**. A very settled pattern for a week or so. Female is generally at the nest site, making occasional forays. The male is out and about most of the time, mating still takes place most mornings. Cuckoo is heard in a distant valley. Six ducklings hatch on the pond; Holly Blues, Bluebells and black patches of tadpoles, confirm the new season is well underway.

**29<sup>th</sup>** Much to watch today. 10am the male is mobbed repeatedly by three crows close to the nest tree. He makes three attempts to leave, but each time is driven to a nearby oak. The three crows now perch above the female, who has left the box and is sitting in the lower branches. They edge closer, about a metre away, and act very menacingly towards her. The male dives in, screeching and the crows leave. Both of them spend the rest of the day, sitting together on the edge of the box and life returns to normal.

**30<sup>th</sup>** Cold, wet day and it's been hard to locate the Curlews again; we are beginning to think they have left our area. Our lawn is a runway between 72 vole holes, you often get a fleeting glimpse of one, darting from one hole to another. But today, one pauses and sits back on its haunches, seeming to sniff the air. Wham! Its struck by the female Kestrel, 10 seconds later she rises with the vole between her talons and she

flies back to the nest box. A catch right outside our kitchen window. Amazing.

**May 2nd** Two Swallows flying in and out of the porch, hope they stay. Male Kestrel is away for most of the day, female often sitting on the edge of the box. We are beginning to wonder, if she is laying eggs, will she sit? This is not the settled behaviour of our previous Kestrels, this year they spent so much time around the nest box, but not IN it !!

**4th** Quiet day at the nest site, 10.30pm a moonlit night, it's almost a full moon, both birds are outlined on the edge of the box. During the night, there is a such lot of noise from the tree, screeching and calling, seems like a lot of disturbed activity going on. Unable to see what's happening.

**5th** No sign of either bird. Were the crows back or was the nest getting invaded by something else? Worried.

**6th** 1pm. Relief both birds are back! Female takes her position on the edge of the box and male calls frequently to her from the nearby Beech. May blossom is out.

**10th** Wondering if there have been any eggs laid. She spends so much time on the edge off the box, we don't think she is sitting. Wondering how to find out, without disturbing her. So, my son comes up with the idea of attaching my iPhone onto a long cane, setting the camera on delay mode, then lifting it up to the nest box opening and then wait for the click! Brilliant idea. We wait for her to leave, rush in, carry out the camera trick. Two eggs!!

**16th** It feels like the female is now sitting. Just see her head occasionally appear above the opening. Seen nothing of our local Curlews; we find two eggs in a scraping, both cold.

**18th** Sparrowhawk flies through the garden and takes a duckling. I find a broken Kestrel egg on the floor under the nest box.

**31st** Common Spotted Orchids are flowering, Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies emerge and the second male Kestrel is back, flying over the tree. He is quickly attacked and chased by the resident male. intruder leaves. That is the last we see of him. Female continues to sit.

**June 14th** Female is sitting on the edge of the box. joined by the male, they spent much time flying south and coming back to the nest. Thinking the eggs have hatched and they are starting to feed the fledglings.

**16th** The fields are buzzing and fluttering, it's the meadows at their best, overhead

the Kestrels are busy, returning to the nest about 10 times a day with a kill. We decide to repeat the photographing pole activity. There are three fluffy chicks huddled together at the back of the box. Success.

**21st** Leo Smith has put us in touch with Gerry Thomas, an experienced Kestrel ringer. When we knew there were chicks, we contacted him and he was keen to come and ring them. We felt confident that the experience would not disturb the birds. They were very used to us being in the field with dogs and horses. we are able to walk under the Ash tree while they sit on a branch, just giving us a momentarily glance, but they never fly away.

**22nd** It was exciting to see the chicks and to learn so much about them from a Kestrel expert. Two of them were about two weeks old, wing length 80mm and 68mm and they weighed in at 178 grams and 155 grams. The third chick was much smaller, about week old, wing length 40mm and weighted just 85 grams Gerry felt the small one was too young to ring, as it was much smaller than the others and may not survive. The ringing was done with the utmost care and the chicks placed back in the nest. As we moved away, the parents flew back in. Normal life resumed.



*(Sue Crichton)*

**24th** A chicks head appears at the nest opening. Rain and the fields are intensely green and flourishing.

**25th** A second head appeared today, wondering how the third small chick is doing, so pole camera came out again. It's still alive.

**July 1st** Parent birds very busy hunting. We feel sure that these are a new pair, as in previous years, the male always flew northeast to hunt and the female hunted southwest. This year, the pair are very noisy, rather chaotic hunters, often flying back to the Beech tree or Oak tree, rather than going directly to the nest box. Sometimes it felt like a morning or afternoon could pass without either bird returning to the nest.

**6th** Two well-feathered fledglings were sitting together on the edge of the box at 8am this morning. Occasionally you could see little, grey, fluffy chicks' head in the background. Still three! We have field mushrooms for breakfast.

**9th** A wet few days, but the two young Kestrels persevere with sitting on the ledge. Lots of preening, calling and flapping of their wings. Parents feeding them on the ledge frequently. We notice a family of Redstarts in the hedge. Late afternoon and a youngster can be seen on the top of the box.



*(Sue Crichton)*

**10th** One bird flutters to a branch in the Ash tree and remains there; the first flight! No sign of second youngster all day. Photograph inside the box with camera on a pole. Just feathers, no sign of the younger bird either. Concerned that there is now only one fledgling left.

**11th** Early morning finds both youngsters together on a branch. Early afternoon one is found on the floor. Unsure what to do but walk away and keep a close eye with the binoculars. Parents do a lot of calling and after an hour, it gets itself back onto the lower branches of the Ash tree. All is well.

**12th** The next two days sees the youngsters flying from branch to branch, back to the nest box roof and then higher in the tree. The Ash tree has lots of seed keys on it now.

**14th** One of the youngsters flies across the meadow to a hedgerow, the second one follows it an hour later. The day is spent flying across the meadow. Three Broad-leaved helleborines are flowering under the bird table.

**16th** When I walk up to the horses in the morning, I'm surprised to see both young birds flying over our seven-acre field and landing on two fence posts. In the eight years we have been watching Kestrels we have never seen them leave the nest tree so



*(Sue Crichton)*

quickly. Usually, they spend a week in the nest tree and a second week flying around their meadow. Is it because they have hatched later in the season?

**22nd** This week has seen them flying around as a group of four, often soaring together, other times sitting in hedges, on fence pots and balancing on telephone wires. Always calling to each other, but we have not witnessed any feeding by the parents. Sneezewort and Yarrow decorate the fields.

**31st** Our last sighting of them was flying over our house as we drank our morning cup of tea in the garden. We hoped they have flourished and that we get news of them in the future, identified by their rings.

**8th January 2021** A new Kestrel box should be arriving soon, we hope the Kestrels have stayed safe and will return to delight us this year.

***Postscript** Thanks to the second Covid-19 lockdown the second box did not arrive until March 2021 by which time a pair of Tawny Owls had occupied Sue's box. They bred successfully.*

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## Research Reports List and Summaries for 2020

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*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 2020 Bird Report are:

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

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](http://www.shropshirebirds.com).

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

Apart from the above, there were no Research surveys with published reports undertaken in 2020. The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project started a repeat multi-annual survey of several species in 2017. Monitoring was undertaken in some valleys in 2020, those not well covered in previous years, but most work was suspended because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A summary of the Community Wildlife Group surveys for 2020 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 “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 Clew.

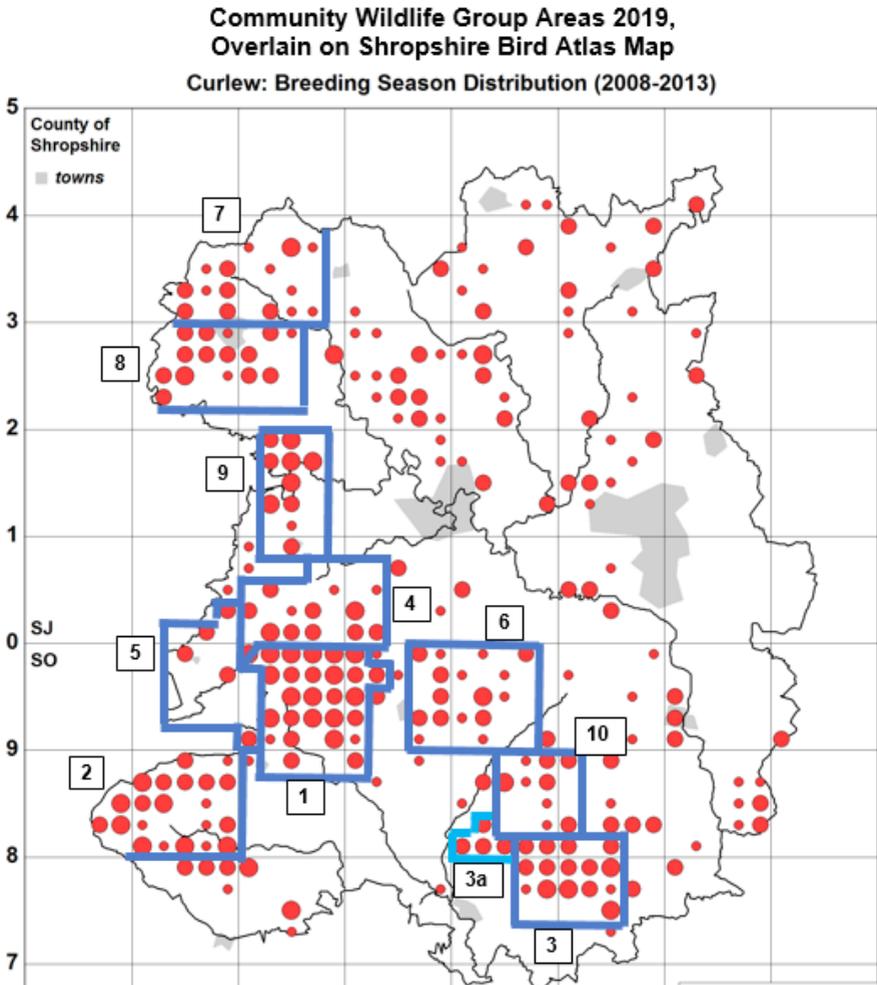
The resulting areas covered by CWGs in 2020, overlain on the Curlew distribution map, are shown on Map 1.

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 2020, and the approximate percentage declines since CWG monitoring began. The figures for the Camlad area relate only to the 11 tetrads mainly in Shropshire.

However, it must be stressed that the number of participants in 2020 was less than 2019 (267 compared to 320), and some of the participants weren't able to carry out surveys between late March and mid-May, while Covid-19 lockdown restrictions were in force, so the thoroughness and reliability of the surveys was less than usual. Curlews are generally site faithful, whereas Lapwings have to move each year to suitable habitat created by arable farming crop rotation. Systematic coverage of the whole area is therefore needed to monitor Lapwings, and gaps in coverage as a

**Map 1. Curlew Distribution 2008-13, and Community Wildlife Group areas, 2020**



result of the covid-19 restrictions has particularly affected the figures for Lapwing. Conversely, Curlew calls are far carrying, and people were exercising from home, so in cases where homes were close to Curlew habitat the monitoring of Curlews actually improved. It is considered that Curlew monitoring in the seven CWG areas in the southern half of the County was at least as good, and probably better, than in 2019, but that in the three areas in the north-west was much poorer.

**Table 1. Community Wildlife Groups – Lapwing and Curlew Surveys 2020**

Community Wildlife Groups - Lapwing & Curlew Surveys 2020										
Group	Area		First Year	Lapwing			Curlew			No. of Participants
	Survey squares (tetrads)	(sq. kms.)		Breeding Pairs (2020)		% decline since First Year	Breeding Pairs (2020)		% decline since First Year	
				Min	Max		Min	Max		
1 Upper Onny	31.5	125	2004	11	31	32	28	31	30	24
2 Upper Clun	31	110	2007	0	0	100	6	8	67	51
3 Clee Hill	20	80	2012	1	1	67	8	8	38	26
3a Clee Hill (extension)	4 *	16	2019	0	0	n/a	6	6	n/a	1
4 Rea Valley	25.5	102	2014	1	1	82	10	10	13	14
5 Camlad Valley	11 **	44	2014	0	0	100	5	7	20	18
6 Strettons area	30	120	2017	1	1	n/a	7	9	10	25
7 Three Parishes	28	107	2017	?	?	n/a	1	2	n/a	10
8 Tanat to Perry (Oswestry south)	43	172	2018	40	44	n/a	9	17	n/a	65
9 Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence	27	108	2018	6	6	n/a	3	4	n/a	13
10 Abdon	16 *	64	2018	12	17	n/a	10	10	n/a	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>1048</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>93</b>	<b>112</b>		<b>267</b>

Orange highlight = 3 CWGs incorporating "Curlew Country" area (76 tetrads)

\*\* Area also includes 9 tetrads mainly in Wales (Camlad CWG = 20 tetrads), with 2-3 pairs of Curlew

Green highlight = 3 CWGs established in 2018

+ In 2019, Clee Hill took on an additional 4 tetrads to the west, and Abdon took on an additional 7 tetrads to the west and

Notes

- 1 Kemp Valley CWG does not appear on the map, as no Curlews have been found during its surveys. No Lapwing surveys were carried out in 2019 or 2020, and this group is now inactive.
- 2 Orange highlight = three CWGs in "Curlew Country" area (76 tetrads)
- 3 \*\* Camlad Valley CWG comprises 20 tetrads, 11 mainly in Shropshire, and nine mainly in Wales. The latter had 2-3 pairs of Curlew in 2014
- 4 Green highlight = three CWGs established in 2018 to extend coverage of Curlew
- 5 In 2019, Clee Hill took on an additional four tetrads to the west, and Abdon took on an additional seven tetrads to the west and south, to close the gap between the two areas, and cover additional squares with known Curlews
- 6 Some CWG areas include part-tetrads, so the total area is less than the numbers of (whole or part) squares X 4
- 7 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 4-5 farms in the whole area. There was an increase found in 2020.

The Curlew population has steadily declined from 38 pairs in the core area of 30 tetrads, by almost one-third since 2004. Even so, losses elsewhere in Shropshire have been much quicker, and the Upper Onny may now hold a quarter 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 2 – 4 pairs in 2017 and 2018, and five pairs at one site in 2019. There was only one pair at that site in 2020. 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 five pairs (38%) 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 again located in 2020.

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 to 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 to the under-recording in the first year, more thorough surveys in the next two years found 9-10 pairs in 2016, with a subsequent decline. Detailed analysis of Curlew records in the Rea Valley CWG annual report shows that one long-established pair has disappeared from the area, a minimum loss of almost 10% in only 5 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.

In the Strettons area, a review of the Curlew distribution maps from 2017 to 2020 established that 7 – 9 pairs have probably been present throughout that period, but at least one pair has been lost, a decline of 10% since 2017.

The other four CWGs formed in 2017 or 2018 are still establishing baselines for their areas, and it is too soon to work out the 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%.

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 2020.

It will be seen that between them, the CWGs found an estimated 93-112 pairs of Curlew in 2020, the vast majority of the County population.

There was an unconfirmed report that one pair raised a brood, but all the other pairs went quiet well before fledging could have occurred. Virtually the whole breeding population failed again.

All the CWGs produce an Annual Report, which includes a list of participants. Each Group 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.

Upper Clun, Clee Hill and Strettons area CWGs planned to work with the SOS Save our Curlews campaign on a nest finding and protection project. However, it was postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic. Further details of the work carried out in 2018 and 2019, and plans for the campaign in 2021, can be found on the SOS website [www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/](http://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](http://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.

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## Venus Pool Nature Reserve Report 2020

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*Helen J Griffiths*

As everyone will be aware, 2020 was a year like no other with every aspect of everybody's life being touched by the Covid-19 Pandemic. In line with most national conservation organisations, including RSPB, Wildlife Trusts and Natural England, Venus Pool was closed as soon as the national lockdown began on 23 March; the hides were locked, the entrance gate padlocked and "closed" notices displayed on site, in accordance with Government regulations. This remained the case until 13 June when regulations eased a little and allowed us to re-open the car park, as well as walks around the perimeter of the arable field and across the causeway to the far side of the pool, although the hides and paths to them had to remain closed beyond the end of the year. We all know of the huge benefits spending time with nature brings to people's physical and mental health and it is good to know that SOS has been able, in a small way, to provide respite to many by allowing access to Venus Pool during the year, as soon as Government regulations allowed. The only other event remotely comparable with the Covid-19 Pandemic was the huge countrywide Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001; the actions which had to be taken and the impacts of which are well-recorded elsewhere.

Regular checks and some essential maintenance of the reserve were carried out during 2020 and, given the number of people visiting, few problems were encountered. There were a few issues with people bringing dogs onto the reserve, climbing fences into the fields, and leaving rubbish in the car park, but generally, both regular visitors and those visiting for the first time were very respectful and thankful to be able to have access to the reserve and its wildlife after weeks of being told to "Stay at Home."

In spite of the restrictions during the year, plenty of records were received from the reserve, although the nature of them is different: overall, there are fewer casual records this year, and fewer observers, and with the majority of records reported by those doing the security checks and maintenance jobs, who took the opportunity to report observations made whilst they were on site. Breeding records are particularly low in number this year but this is almost certainly largely due to fewer observations during the first lockdown, which coincided with the height of the breeding season.

Breeding success was reported for Pheasant (two pairs each with five chicks on 4 May), Canada Goose (seven pairs produced at least four broods of five, five, eight and nine), Greylag Goose (one brood of six), Shelduck (two pairs, one of which

produced six young}, Mallard, Coot, Little Grebe, and Nuthatch (family party of four at the feeders on 7 Jun). A family party of four Green Woodpeckers was sighted in the adjacent quarry, believed to have bred just off the reserve. Breeding attempts were made by Oystercatcher and Little Ringed Plover but they are not thought to have been successful. Suspected breeding was reported for singing Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Sedge and Reed Warblers, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, and Lesser Whitethroat. There were two records of Cuckoo, on 24 Apr and 4 Jul, both from near the reedbed, but no indication of a breeding attempt.

Sand Martin was first recorded on 21 Mar, followed by Swallow on 6 Apr, House Martin on 17 Apr and Swift on 20 Apr. Although not breeding on the reserve, hirundines and Swifts are all present throughout the summer, feeding over the fields and the pool, and breeding in nearby buildings and sandy banks. The reserve is a significant resource for these birds, both during the breeding season and as a 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, on which they feed. The highest counts recorded this year were as follows:

Sand Martin: 120 on 18 Apr and 450 during drizzle on 28 Apr, with the last record being of one on 4 Oct;

Swallow: 80 on 11 May and 110 on 5 Aug, with the last record being of one on 11 Oct;

House Martin: 50 on 11 May, with the last record being on 4 Oct;

Swift: 60 on several dates in May and 100 in early Jul;

Highlights and more unusual sightings reported during the year included reports of 12 Pink-footed Geese on 27 Sep, a Black Swan for two days in mid-March, a single Bewick's Swan from 18 Jan until the end of the month and possibly the same bird for one day on 6 Dec, a single Whooper Swan on three days in January and March, a Blue-winged Goose on five days in January, and one or two Egyptian Geese on 13 dates throughout the year. Twelve species of duck were recorded, including two Mandarin on 18 Mar, a maximum count of 70 Shoveler on 20 Jan, Gadwall present in all months except July with the highest count being of 25 on 20 Jan. Wigeon were present from January to mid-April (max count 55 on 19 Jan) and from October to December (max count 50 on 14 Nov). One Pintail was recorded on 23 Jan; a pair of Red-crested Pochard in late January; 15 Pochard (just two females) on 13 Feb, and Tufted Duck in all months, with a max count of 30 on 12 Jan.

Twelve species of wader were also recorded; these included a pair of Oystercatchers

which made three breeding attempts (last reported on 24 Jul). Lapwing were present in all months with maximum counts as follows: January 200, February 313, March 54, April 2, May 2, June 5, July 23, August 45, September 80, October 160, November 75 and December 120. There was one record each of Ringed Plover (5 Sep) Golden Plover (20 Sep) and Ruff (27 Sep). One Curlew was present on only four days during the year, a single Dunlin on only two days, a maximum count of 70 Snipe on 20 Feb, and a single Redshank for one day in June and October, with two present on one day in late June. Caspian, Mediterranean and Yellow-legged Gull were recorded, but no terns this year.

Other highlights included Great White Egret (one of several days in October) with Ospreys on 4 Aug and 5 Sep and Marsh Harriers on 23 Mar and 26 Sep. There were Red Kite and Kestrel sightings in every month, just one Short-eared Owl (on 6 Mar), and five sightings of Hobby. A huge flock of an estimated 3,000 Jackdaws was seen (from VP) towards Eaton Mascott during January and an impressive roost of approx. 15,000 roosting Starlings in late December. A long-staying Cetti's Warbler was not thought to have bred.

This was the year that we lost the last of our little flock of Hebridean sheep ... RIP 103 who died of natural causes in October, almost 13 years after the original six sheep (wether lambs) arrived on the reserve from The Stiperstones in October 2007. Hebridean sheep are a very hardy native breed, able to withstand the extremes of weather in the UK and are largely trouble-free to look after. They browse on leaves, bark, rough vegetation, and especially on willow and brambles, which makes them ideal for conservation grazing on a nature reserve. As well as providing extra interest for the visitors to VP, they did an excellent job of controlling tall vegetation and scrub in areas of the reserve over the years, although a larger flock would have been even better! They remained fairly wild, in spite of daily checks, as is their nature, but rattling a bucket of sheep nuts usually did the trick when a closer inspection was needed!

It has become clear over the last few years that visitors to Venus Pool are taking far more notice of and interest in all the other species present on the reserve in addition to the birds, especially butterflies, dragonflies, bees, flies, and the plants. My hope is that future VP reports will include more information on more of the species for which Venus Pool is of interest.

**PETER DEANS (1941 - 2021):** Whilst this report was in preparation, we were all shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death, in July 2021, of Peter Deans. Pete was the well-known and well-respected Chairman of SOS for 37 years, before becoming President in 2017. Many SOS members will have good memories of

time spent with Pete; several have commented on the birdwatching classes he held in Newport quite a few years ago, which inspired a number of people to discover a love of birdwatching. He almost certainly signed-up more new members to SOS than anyone else, over the years, often after chatting to visitors to VP, and had a very effective way of persuading them that they should join because “it costs a lot of money to run this reserve”(!).

Pete made a huge contribution to the operation and management of Venus Pool, for which we are so grateful; he was involved with the acquisition and planning of the reserve right from the very start of the project and he helped with site management work parties, as well as holding ringing demonstrations at the reserve. As time went by, he would work hard all morning at a work party, before getting changed in the car park and going off to meet his family for Sunday lunch. Pete’s good humour, friendly manner and enthusiasm were infectious and he could always be relied upon to create a jolly atmosphere at a meeting or a VP work party. Whenever I think about Pete I always see him enjoying a VP work party, in his wellies, with loppers in his hands, bins around his neck and a big smile on his face; we will miss many things about him.

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# The Shropshire Ringing Report 2020

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*Martin George*

## 1 Introduction

The rise of group ringing in the county, a positive development that encourages collaborative work and training, is making it hard to access meaningful data on the number of ringers registered here every year. There are also several ringers who live outside the county but who ring within it, both from neighbouring areas and also from further away but who retain family ties to Shropshire. Six ringing groups ringed birds in Shropshire, of which two, the Chelmarsh and Shropshire RGs, ring almost exclusively within the county. In total 18 groups or individuals submitted ringing data in 2020, but some ringing groups will have several members. The highest number of birds ringed was an impressive 6,709 by the Shropshire RG, 48.7% of the county total.

A total of 13,735 birds of 82 species were ringed for the first time in 2020 (*Table 1*), of which 1,808 were pulli (nestlings). A further 3,642 birds were retrapped or recovered. This compares with the 2019 total of 13,776 birds of 87 species (2,632 nestlings) and 3,366 retraps/recoveries.

### **The five most ringed species in 2020 (2019 data)**

Blue Tit	2,990	(3,190)
Great Tit	1,236	(1,631)
Goldfinch	1,021	(667)
Pied Flycatcher	1,011	(1,008)
Blackcap	469	(506)

### **Species for which only one bird was ringed in 2020 (2019 data)**

Coot (5)

Black-headed Gull (0)

Tawny Owl (0)

Green Woodpecker (2)

Carrion Crow (1)  
Willow Tit (4)  
Wheatear (0)  
Brambling (75)

From the 2019 Shropshire Bird Report onwards we have included details of interesting recoveries, such as birds that are unusually well travelled or long lived, in the individual species accounts. Highlights for 2020 include:

- a colour ringed Mute Swan ringed in Market Drayton and seen alive 253km away in Norfolk seven years later;
- a Woodcock ringed in Clun Forest that was hit by a car and killed 2,362km away in Russia just two months later;
- a Cetti's Warbler that moved 49km from Marsh Lane Nature Reserve in the West Midlands to Chelmarsh Reservoir;
- a Chiffchaff originally ringed as an adult in Market Drayton that was recaptured five years later within 1km of the original ringing location;
- a Sedge Warbler and a Reed Warbler, both ringed as adults at Chelmarsh Reservoir, and recaptured there six years later;
- a Redwing ringed in Denmark and caught 1,015km away near Shrewsbury a year later;
- a colour-ringed Grey Wagtail from Middleton Nature Reserve in Lancashire that had its rings read at Priorslee Flash in Telford, 152km away, and another that was colour-ringed at Shifnal Sewage Works and was then seen 144km away in Cardiff;
- a classic movement of a late winter Siskin that was ringed in Market Drayton and retrapped by another ringer 635km away in the Scottish Highlands.

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](http://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. (2021) *The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2020*. BTO, Thetford (<http://www.bto.org/ringing-report>).

**Table 1. Birds ringed during 2020.**

(Species for which more than 15% of the total for Britain and Ireland were ringed in this county are highlighted in bold).

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2020 Total	Retrap	Recoveries
Mute Swan	7	32	6	0	45	0	14
Mallard	2	0	0	0	2	0	1
Grey Partridge	0	2	0	2	4	0	0
Sparrowhawk	0	3	2	0	5	0	0
Red Kite	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Coot	0	0	1	0	1	2	6
Lapwing	7	0	0	0	7	0	0
Golden Plover	0	11	11	0	22	1	2
Little Ringed Plover	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
Curlew	3	0	1	0	4	10	3
Woodcock	0	2	16	0	18	0	1
Jack Snipe	0	4	1	0	5	0	0
Snipe	0	0	3	0	3	0	0
Black-headed Gull	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Stock Dove	6	1	4	0	11	0	0
Woodpigeon	4	3	6	0	13	0	0
Barn Owl	118	0	9	0	127	6	14
Tawny Owl	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Little Owl	2	0	0	0	2	1	0
Swift	3	0	3	0	6	0	0
Kingfisher	0	9	3	0	12	0	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	62	16	0	78	54	1
Green Woodpecker	0	0	0	1	1	0	0

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2020 Total	Retrap	Recoveries
Kestrel	30	0	1	0	31	0	1
Peregrine	10	0	0	0	10	0	0
Jay	0	1	4	0	5	0	0
Magpie	0	3	1	0	4	0	0
Jackdaw	0	1	8	0	9	10	1
Rook	0	2	5	0	7	22	0
Carrion Crow	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Coal Tit	0	155	55	2	212	119	0
Marsh Tit	10	19	5	0	34	32	16
Willow Tit	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Blue Tit	228	1,623	1,135	4	2,990	1,408	10
Great Tit	130	778	318	10	1,236	647	6
Skylark	0	2	8	76	86	3	0
Sand Martin	0	101	134	0	235	4	1
Swallow	82	29	16	0	127	0	1
House Martin	0	0	44	0	44	0	0
Cetti's Warbler	0	4	2	0	6	6	0
Long-tailed Tit	0	44	85	183	312	123	0
Willow Warbler	0	48	38	0	86	9	0
Chiffchaff	0	397	104	5	506	36	3
Wood Warbler	30	2	3	0	35	0	0
Sedge Warbler	2	40	27	0	69	44	0
Reed Warbler	0	90	45	0	135	58	1
Blackcap	3	427	128	0	558	19	1
Garden Warbler	0	75	19	0	94	6	0
Lesser Whitethroat	0	5	5	0	10	0	0
Whitethroat	0	27	7	0	34	2	0
Firecrest	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Goldcrest	0	230	28	2	260	17	0
Wren	0	167	41	6	214	47	0
Nuthatch	13	18	25	17	73	61	0

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2020 Total	Retrap	Recoveries
Treecreeper	0	14	12	10	36	9	0
Starling	6	253	76	11	346	4	3
Blackbird	0	142	104	3	249	75	8
Fieldfare	0	20	25	0	45	1	0
Redwing	0	258	199	1	458	0	0
Song Thrush	2	37	18	1	58	2	1
Robin	3	252	86	1	342	124	2
Pied Flycatcher	894	1	116	0	1,011	37	24
Redstart	126	4	14	0	144	0	0
Stonechat	11	1	7	0	19	6	0
Wheatear	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Dipper	23	44	18	0	85	87	29
House Sparrow	18	142	81	65	306	28	2
Tree Sparrow	23	0	0	0	23	0	0
Duncock	2	214	56	20	292	148	2
Grey Wagtail	3	2	2	0	7	0	1
Pied Wagtail	3	18	4	0	25	0	0
Meadow Pipit	0	33	10	2	45	0	0
Chaffinch	0	109	111	1	221	6	0
Brambling	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Bullfinch	0	47	23	0	70	8	0
Greenfinch	0	259	224	7	490	34	3
Linnet	0	3	8	0	11	1	0
Lesser Redpoll	0	277	107	6	390	14	7
Goldfinch	0	659	353	9	1,021	105	2
Siskin	0	6	6	0	12	1	1
Yellowhammer	0	3	5	1	9	0	0
Reed Bunting	2	156	64	0	222	31	2
Grand Total	1,808	7,376	4,105	446	13,735	3,470	172

## 2 Pied Flycatcher Nestbox Scheme in the Gatten Valley, south Shropshire

*Lizzie Hulton-Harrop*

Earlier this year we met with Andy Spencer, a licensed ringer with The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Andy looks after the passerine nest boxes for the Upper Clun and Upper Onny Community Wildlife Groups in Shropshire and is involved in private schemes around Bettws-y-Crwyn, Llanfair Waterdine, Colebatch, as well as the Whinchat Long Mynd Project.

Target migrant species under the BTO's Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) scheme are Pied Flycatcher and Redstart. All data collected are submitted to the BTO for processing to monitor movement, migration, longevity and postnatal dispersal etc.

At the beginning of 2020, Andy was awarded a grant by one of the Shropshire Community Wildlife groups to put up 55 nest boxes on a local farm and we were kindly asked to be involved. We are based in the Gatten Valley, South Shropshire.

Andy visited us a couple of times in February to identify the best locations for the boxes and to help us put them up. Criteria for a good habitat included: near water, in an open wooded area, easy to access in May/June to monitor. The boxes needed to be erected at chest height or a little lower, tilted forward or upright (not leaning back) and the rope had to be stretched up and down. We preferred to use rope rather than nail the boxes to the tree in order to protect the trees' health.



Each box was numbered with *Tippex* (so it didn't wash off in the rain!) and its location recorded so we could be sure to find them again later in the year. We did this with our GPS device and added it to a Google Map.

Then came the time to check the boxes. This needs to be done from the last week in May to the first week in June as this is when the birds are nesting.

While we were walking to the first set of boxes, Andy explained the differences between the nests of a Pied Flycatcher and Redstart to help me to identify them.

Here's what to look out for:

- **Pied Flycatcher nest** - Female on pale blue eggs, no red tail! No feathers in honeysuckle bark/straw nest.
- **Redstart nest** - Mossier with some inner straw, always lined with feathers. Turquoise eggs are a deeper blue than the Pied Flycatcher.

Andy and I carefully approached each box, undid the ties at the side, and slowly opened the lid. The excitement when we saw a bird nesting in the box was unbelievable! I'd never seen so many nests this close up before and it was a truly amazing experience. What we saw at this stage was a female sitting on a clutch of eggs.

We also saw lots of Blue Tits and Great Tits that had already hatched!

When we found one of the target species nesting, Andy carried out the following steps to record the required data:

- Weighed the female
- Measured the wing-span
- Ringed the female on its right leg



Out of our 55 boxes, 51% of the boxes were occupied. Here are the results:

- 4 Pied Flycatchers
- 1 Redstart
- 18 Blue Tits
- 4 Great Tits
- 1 Hornet

The incubation period for Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts is 13-15 days, so we arranged for Andy to come back to check the nests for chicks two weeks later. To save time, we just checked the boxes where the Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts were nesting. All the nests had successfully hatched, which was incredible to see! As we were processing the chicks, we could often hear and sometimes see the male sitting close-by, keeping an eye on what we were doing!

It was interesting to see the different behaviours between the Pied Flycatcher and Redstart - the Pied Flycatchers were so calm; we were able to hold them safely and process them without risk of them flying away. You had to be much more careful with the Redstarts, they were a bit more unpredictable!

We are absolutely delighted to have had the opportunity to participate in this nest box scheme and we can't wait to see who takes up residence here next year. We have



plans to move some of the empty boxes to better locations now we have a better idea of their preferred habitat. We also thoroughly enjoyed [this webinar](#) and would recommend it to anyone interested in these fascinating species.

### **3 Garden CES (Constant Effort Site) Project in Market Drayton**

*Gerry Thomas*

The 2020 Covid-19 lockdown meant that almost all amateur and professional bird surveying work ceased, including ringing and nest recording. The BTO's Garden Bird Survey was the sole survivor of the existing projects. However, prompted by ringers and the Ringing Committee, the BTO was quick to arrange a new ringing project which could be done from gardens, the Garden CES (Constant Effort Site).

The existing CES on selected sites across the country is designed to be a standardised capture methodology using mist-nets in the same location for the same time period over 12 capture days between May 1 and 31 August each year. The standardised capture methodology removes the variable of ringing effort from the factors which affect capture rates of birds and therefore better allow the comparison of captures within and between years.

The methodology is used to assess the variation in population sizes, survival and productivity across years by assessing how many birds are caught each year, how many of each species are re-captured in years after ringing or original capture, and what proportions of adult and juvenile birds are caught each year. Obviously the number of birds caught at one site is too small to be able to assess these factors with statistical confidence across multiple species, so the data from multiple sites across the country is merged nationally and regionally.

The Garden CES started in 2020, uses the same protocol except that bird feeders are allowed to be used. The only constraint is that ringers are asked to put out the same amount of feed regularly through the summer and between years. This project is hoped to provide demographic data for species not well covered by the existing CES, species like House Sparrow and Starling.

I started the Garden CES in 2020 at my (rural) garden on the outskirts of Market Drayton and managed successfully to capture the minimum of 300 individual birds across the 12 ringing days. Each ringing day is done within designated 10-(or 11-)day periods within the month, i.e., three capture periods per month during the four-month long project. 36 metres of mist-net were used to capture the birds and as usual all birds were aged and sexed according to criteria in Svensson (1992) and/or Demongin (2016).

The species and numbers of individuals caught in 2020 were as follows (Adults = birds definitely not hatched in 2020; Full-grown = free flying birds which may or may not have been hatched in 2020; Juveniles = free-flying birds definitely hatched in 2020):

Species	Adults	Full-Grown	Juveniles	Total	Proportion Juveniles to Adults
Blackbird	3	0	10	13	3.3
Blackcap	3	0	9	12	3.0
Blue Tit	14	0	78	92	5.6
Chaffinch	1	0	7	8	7.0
Chiffchaff	1	0	7	8	7.0
Coal Tit	0	0	1	1	
Dunnock	6	0	29	35	4.8
Goldfinch	8	0	5	13	0.6
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	2	2	
Great Tit	7	0	60	67	8.6
Greenfinch	6	0	14	20	2.3
Kingfisher	0	0	1	1	
Long-tailed Tit	0	2	2	4	
Nuthatch	0	1	2	3	
Robin	5	0	31	36	6.2
Song Thrush	1	0	4	5	4.0
Willow Warbler	0	0	1	1	
Woodpigeon	2	0	0	2	
Wren	3	0	7	10	2.3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>333</b>	

The proportion of juvenile to adult birds for all Garden CES sites is merged to give a measure of productivity for the year. As with all such projects it is only when several years data has been collected that patterns start to emerge, so it's early days for this project as yet.

Its not entirely surprising that Blue and Great Tits topped the list of birds caught but the large number of individual Robins shows just how many individual birds use gardens and how important this habitat is to a wide variety of our commoner species. The rural nature of the garden is shown by the small number of warblers and the Kingfisher capture is a giveaway that the site is not too far from the River Tern!

## References

- Demongin L. 2016.** Identification Guide to Birds in the Hand. Beauregard-Vendon.  
**Svensson L. 1992.** Identification Guide to European Passerines, Fourth Edition. Stockholm.

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## Introduction to the Systematic List

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### 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 adhoc 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 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.

***Due to Covid-19, coverage in 2020 was insufficient to calculate trends in our county.*** Therefore, no BBS data is presented this year.

Full details of the BBS can be found at: [www.bto.org/bbs](http://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) 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. The number of non-zero

counts of a species at all WeBS locations for the year are given in the species header details.

### ***eBird***

For the first time in 2020, records submitted to the eBird system (Cornell University) were extracted and used in this report. Nearly 30,000 records were extracted, so this is a popular recording system used by a number of birdwatchers in the county. Basic observation data is the same as that in BirdTrack, though there are a few differences in detail e.g., eBird locations are defined by Latitude and Longitude coordinates rather than using the British Grid Reference system.

### ***Rare Bird Alert, blogs, web pages and social media***

Selected records have been extracted from Rare Birds Alert and various social media sources and input into BirdTrack if not lodged there by the original observer(s). These are generally records of the scarcer species and is by no means comprehensive. Observers, especially those who record regularly at specific sites, are urged to submit their records to the County Recorder either directly or via BirdTrack.

## **Nomenclature and order**

The British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) maintains the official British list. 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.

From 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 the BOU list now follows the latest IOC World Bird List. Version 11.2 of this list was published in August 2021. (Reference:- **Gill F., Donsker D., Rasmussen P. (eds.).2021. World Bird List (v 11.2). doi: 10.14344/IOC.ML.11.2).**

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](http://www.bou.org.uk/british-list). As of August 2021, the latest version is *BOU\_British\_List\_9<sup>th</sup>\_post52\_v5-IOC11\_2\_13-August-2021* and this version has been used in this report. Species are listed in the sequence used by the IOC.

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 Rarities Committee Report.

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 e.g., 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 statuses. The author

for each species account is also given. From 2020 the number and source of records for that species is listed.

### **Shropshire Status**

The county status and abundance assessments from “**The Birds of Shropshire**” (*Smith 2019*)” are included in the heading summary for each species and definitions of these are given below:-

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 Breeding Birds 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 51 1km 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 Birds of Shropshire*, 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 "**The 2019 Shropshire Bird 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(s)**

The full name of account authors are included within the species account heading data.

## Number of Records

The number of records received in the year for each species is given in the Species Account header information. The accounts are written from this record set. The source of records too are given; BT = records submitted by observers to Birdtrack or otherwise loaded into this system e.g., by Birdguides; CR = records submitted directly to the county recorder; eB = records submitted to eBird. Additionally, but separately the number of wetland survey (WeBS) counts for each species is also given. This does not include zero counts for a species.

## 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 2020 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):*

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## The 2020 Systematic List

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### **BRENT GOOSE** *Branta bernicla*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Graham Walker
Number of Records:	5 (BT=5)

A single first-winter bird of the dark-bellied race *B. b. bernicla* was seen on the Severn floodplain at Leighton on 9 and 17 Dec in association with the local flock of Canada Geese (*TC Lowe, JP Martin*). This species has not been reported since 2013 when a bird of the same race was in the Alberbury/Edgerley area in early January. It has never been common, with just eight historic and 24 post-1950 modern records.

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

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon naturalised resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Graham Walker
Number of Records:	1,113 (BT = 763, CR = 0, eB = 350). WeBS Counts=152

Although this goose may not appear to be uncommon when a large, post-breeding, flock flies to a small pool such as VP, but the overall numbers across the County are not particularly high. Nevertheless, it is the most reported of the geese and, in any mixed flock, usually outnumbers the Greylags.

In the early part of the year there were 17 three-figure counts, the majority in January and early February, with the highest being 425 on the Severn Floodplain between Atcham and Wroxeter on 8 Feb. VP had three counts of three hundred or more, all in January, with 350 on 5th, 300 on 25th and 314 on 31st. Given the proximity of these two sites it is very likely that birds moved between them.

While pairs were frequently reported from suitable habitat, breeding was only confirmed at 18 sites. It was, however, from across the County, including from Wildmoor Pool on the Long Mynd and on the Stiperstones. Generally, broods of less than 10 were reported, but creches of 18 and 28 goslings were seen, respectively, on

a large garden pool at Dodecote and at Benthall Hall.

By far the largest counts were recorded in the second half of the year, including eight of over 500 birds. Five hundred and twenty were on the Severn Floodplain between Atcham and Wroxeter on 23 Aug, with 650 at VP the next day. An outstanding 1,120 were at VP on 5 Sep with 760 at the same site on 12 Dec. The Atcham to Wroxeter floodplain also hosted 680 on 7 Sep while 678 were on Whixall canal floods (Sinker’s Fields) on 18 Oct, 550 at Bank House Farm/Bawhill Wood on 6 Dec and 746 at Cressage Bridge on 28 Dec.

Canada x Greylag Goose hybrids were reported regularly from both VP (often one, but with two on 5 Sep) and from Park Farm floods (SJ7717) (with 1–3 birds between 16 Aug and 22 Aug).

**Ringling Recoveries:**

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**5163140**

Ringed Full-grown	12-02-2011	Ellesmere: 52°54’N 2°52’W (Shropshire)	
Caught by ringer	09-03-2013	Ellesmere: 52°54’N 2°52’W (Shropshire)	0km 2y 0m 25d
Alive (ring read in field)	07-10-2020	Ellesmere: 52°54’N 2°52’W (Shropshire)	0km 9y 7m 25d
Caught by ringer	29-12-2020	Ellesmere: 52°54’N 2°52’W (Shropshire)	0km 9y 10m 17d

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**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon naturalised resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed (naturalised)
Author:	Graham Walker
Number of Records:	807 (BT = 476, CR = 1; eB = 330). WeBS Counts=81

Again, the records reflect this goose’s preference for the habitats and landscape of the north of Shropshire, a mixture of intensively-farmed agricultural land, including both arable and grassland, interspersed with numerous pools and larger waterbodies. Over the year, the majority of records were of 20 or fewer birds, but with 52 records of 200 or more. Of the latter, only one record was from the first part of the year with the remainder from August through to the year’s end.

At the start of the year, it was clear that the large autumn and early winter flocks of the previous year had already started to disperse prior to breeding (a pair were observed mating at VP on 17 Jan) and the only significant count was a flock of 230 at

VP on 20 Jan. One hundred at Bank House Farm/Bawhill Woods, Adderley on 6 Jan was the only other three-figure count during this period.

As usual, evidence of breeding was grossly under-reported with breeding confirmed at only five sites: Crose Mere, Tern Fishery (Market Drayton), Tittenley Pool, Polemere and VP. Where they do breed, productivity can be high as evidenced by the crèche of 41 goslings on Crose Mere on 8 Jun.

Post-breeding, flock size gradually increased from the end of June onwards, although the first report of 200+ wasn't until 24 Aug with a count of 320 at VP. Interestingly, the observer got to the site at first light to count the geese as they left from their overnight roost only to find that 310 actually arrived to join the ten already on the Pool – they had obviously roosted elsewhere or the observer was too late leaving his roost and they had already departed! This site continued to host large numbers throughout the remainder of the year with 520 on 5 Sep, 440 on 20 Sep, c500 on 1 Oct and 520 on 15 Nov. No other site had as many 200+ counts as VP, but Bank House Farm/Bawhill Woods, Adderley had five including 300 on 6 Dec and 350 on 11 Dec and Chelmarsh had nine with the highest being 320 on 5 Sep and 312 on 27 Nov. Elsewhere 480, in three flocks of 200, 180 and 100, were at Cae Howel on 10 Nov, 460 on Chetwynd Pool on 13 Nov, with 427 at the same site on 15 Nov, and 370 on Shavington Big Pool on 14 Nov.

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

Shropshire Status:	Scarce winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not Assessed
Author:	Graham Walker
Number of Records:	72 (BT = 25, CR = 6, eB = 41). WeBS Counts=2

An exceptional year for this species. Although it has been reported annually in recent years, occasionally in quite large numbers, most sightings related to birds passing over the County or displaced stragglers. 2020 was different, however, with a substantial flock or flocks present for several weeks to the north of Market Drayton near the border with Cheshire.

Birds were first recorded in this area on 17 Oct using nocmig equipment. It is not clear whether this was birds transiting over the County or the first report of the Adderley/Shavington Park flock because the next report was not until 12 Nov with birds flying high to the south. Subsequently, although not always easy to find and count, the presence of this flock of some 300 birds was firmly established; they were

regularly seen until the end of the year and into 2021. They frequently roosted on Tittenley Pool, heading south towards their daytime feeding grounds when they left their roost in the morning.

On 30 Dec a flock of 700 were seen in ley grass at Corra Common just to the west of Shavington Park and local sources suggested that they may have been present for some time. It is not clear, however, whether this was a separate flock to the Adderley birds or whether the latter had joined up with another large flock also wintering in the area.

Elsewhere, in the first part of the year, the adult reported from Middle Pool, Trench in 2019 was again reported on 2 Jan and four were on Chetwynd Pool on 12 Apr.

The first bird of the autumn was a single at VP on 20 Sep with probably the same bird also reported on 1 Oct and 7, 14 and 15 Nov. Twelve were at the same site on 27 Sep and it is almost certain that these birds were recorded on nocmig equipment flying over nearby Cantlopgrove at 21:08hrs that night; they were not at VP in the morning. Finally for VP, three were present on 29 Nov.

Sixty-one flew north-east over Cantlopgrove towards the Severn Valley on 17 Oct and between six and seven hundred flew over Market Drayton and, assuming they were the same birds, Welshampton on 17 Nov. Seventy-five were also reported from Kynnersley Moor on the same day. These birds almost certainly coincided with a cross-country movement.

Finally, in December, 45 were at Chelmarsh on 2nd with two on 7th, recorded as present on 16th with three on 22nd. A large flock were recorded on nocmig equipment flying over Cantlopgrove on 28th at 20:30hrs (recording lasted 2.5 minutes in still, freezing conditions under a nearly full moon), 59 were at Cressage Bridge on 28th, with two at the same site on 30th, one was with Greylags on floodwater at Walcot (near Telford) on 29th and two were at Northwood on 30th.

Historically quite rare, substantial numbers of this attractive goose have only been reported in the last 30 years, usually as over-flying flocks. It could well be the case, therefore, that 2020 at least matched any previous year in this respect and almost certainly exceeded them in terms of birds 'wintering' in the County.

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

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Red List

Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
 Author: Graham Walker  
 Number of Records: 5 (BT=4, CR=0, eB=1)

Five records of just two individual birds, was consistent with the number of sightings recorded in recent years. The first of unspecified race, was on the dam wall at Chelmarsh on 6 Dec with Greylags before being disturbed by a nearby gun shot. The second, an adult of the European race *A. a. albifrons*, was at Adderley with Pink-footed Geese on 31 Dec.

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
 National Conservation Status: Amber List  
 Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
 Author: Martin Grant  
 Number of Records: 800 (BT=649, CR=6, eB=145). WeBS  
 Counts=167

Widely reported from northern and central areas of the County (SJ Grid References), but fewer sites in the south (SO Grid References). Cound Lane swan field that had a record count for the County of 124 in January 2019, had maximum counts of six in June with five September, November and December. Nevertheless, the usual flock was still recorded roosting over night at VP (see table below) with a maximum of 75 in January. The 21 reported at Eytton on Severn on 25 Feb were only the other side of the River Severn from Cound Lane so maybe the habitat was better there this year and that is where the flock were feeding.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh Reservoir	2	5			9	12	5	2	4		3	2
Cockshutt (East)			7	28	26					1		
EGM	12	9	12	2		26	22	51*	35	17	22	16
River Severn & Monkmoor Pool	2	2	2		14	12*	2*	5	5	2	2	2
Newport Canal	12	10	9	4	4*	4*	4*	16	16	12	12	9
Polemere	5	5	2	7	9	4				3		

River Severn Shrewsbury (Coton Hill to Weir)	7	6	12					9		6	7	19
River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence	20		22						2	2	25	22
River Severn Flood Plain (Atcham to Wroxeter)		5	2		3	9	1	4	11	11	1	27
Shavington/Tittenley	2		2	2	17	9	8		5	3	3	3
Venus Pool / Cound Fishery	75	53	54	68	55	22	12	12	4	5	6	21
Walcot Hall Lakes (Lydbury North) SO3585	51	41	23		4	37*	44	30	38	22	50	42

**Mute Swan - Monthly maxima at sites where the species was regularly recorded or recorded in double figures. \*Counts not including cygnets: See Confirmed Breeding details below.**

Counts in double figures in the north other than those sites in the table above, were 18 at Condover on 11 Jan, 37 at Fenemere on 13 Jan, 30 at Upper Rea nr Marton on 24 Jan with 12 on 17 Oct, 19 at Smythemoor, Longford on 10 Feb and 17 here on 8 Mar. 10 were at Pickstock on 18 Feb, 21 at Eyton on Severn on 25 Feb, 35 at Marton Pool, Baschurch on 21 Sep, 12 at Cold Hatton on 10 Oct, 11 at Ossmere, Whitchurch on 14 Nov, 12 at Telford Town Park on 11 Dec and 13 at Walcot on 29 Dec.

In the south, 10 were at Bridgwalton Quarries on 24 Sep (including nine juveniles) and 12 at Chelmarsh on 10 Jun. These and the regular monthly counts from Walcot Lakes, Lydbury North (above) were the only double-figure counts in this part of the County.

Confirmed breeding in the north was reported from 21 sites (22 nests), with a total of 104 cygnets. Interestingly, in 2019 confirmed breeding was from only 14 sites (15 nests) in this region, a total of 72 cygnets and both breeding pairs and cygnets exceeded counts in 2017 and 2016 too.

The two pairs this year at Newport Canal hatched 10 cygnets (with two eggs that failed to hatch) and eight cygnets (one egg not hatched). The ten cygnets struggled to get back to the nest when first entering the water and three died. The remaining seven were taken into care to Cuan Wildlife Rescue, five were returned next day and the pair successfully raised four of them. The two weakest remained at Cuan and were released back to the wild when they successfully fledged later in the year. The other pair at Newport Canal were more successful in all eight cygnets being raised to fledging.

One pair nested at The Mere, Ellesmere with just four cygnets.

Confirmed breeding in the south was from six sites (nine nests) with a total of 44 cygnets, including three nests at Walcot Hall Lakes (four cygnets), two nests Dudmaston (eight cygnets), also pairs on River Teme, Ludlow (eight cygnets), Bridgwalton Quarries (nine cygnets), Linley Hall Pool (seven cygnets) and Morville Heath (eight cygnets).

The moulting flock at The Mere reached 51 birds on 5 Aug.

Some interesting ringing records this year included a cygnet ringed at Newport Canal on 14 Sep 2015, reported as a breeding female with five cygnets at Aldersey Green Golf Course in Cheshire on 16 May. A cygnet ringed at Newport Canal on 4 Oct 2019 was reported in a flock of 140 at Aber Ogwen, Bangor, North Wales on 9 Sept. Another cygnet ringed on 4 Oct 2019 at Tee Lake, Dothill was reported at Acre Dell Pools, Congleton in Cheshire on 27 Mar. A cygnet ringed at Abergele in North Wales on 7 Dec 2018 flew into power-lines at Pentre by the River Severn on 5 Nov and was taken into care but unfortunately died overnight.

### Ringling Recoveries

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

#### W17691

Ringed Adult Female	16-10-2005	Shrewsbury: 52°42'N 2°45'W	
Caught by ringer	07-10-2016	near The Quarry, Shrewsbury: 52°42'N 2°46'W	1km 10y 11m 21d
Sick (disease)	21-01-2020	Shrewsbury: 52°42'N 2°46'W	1km 14y 3m 5d
Freshly dead (predated)	14-02-2020	River Severn, Shrewsbury: 52°46'N 2°46'W	1km 14y 3m 29d

#### ZZ8591

Ringed first-year	05-11-2008	Sambrook Mill: 52°48'N 2°25'W	
Sick (disease)	09-11-2020	Newport Canal: 52°45'N 2°23'W	6km SSE 12y 0m 4d

#### ZY1299

Ringed nestling	16-09-2010	Shrewsbury: 52°42'N 2°45'W	
Caught by ringer	10-09-2015	Four Crosses: 52°45'N 3°05'W (Powys)	24km WSW 4y 11m 25d
Alive (colour rings seen)	28-11-2020	Montgomery Canal, Pentreheylin, Four Crosses: 52°46'N 3°06'W (Powys)	25km WNW 10y 2m 12d

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

#### W35512

Ringed First-year Female	04-01-2013	Cheswardine Hall, Market Drayton: 52°51'N 2°24'W	
Alive (colour rings seen)	09-09-2020	New Cut: 52°37'N 1°19'E (Norfolk)	253km E 7y 8m 5d

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

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Martin Grant  
Number of Records: 16 (BT=15, CR=0, eB=1)

Recorded wintering in much reduced numbers since the end of the 20th Century.

Potentially two different birds recorded this year. The early winter period saw the first recorded early in the morning of 18 Jan at VP (*JA Almond, B Lyon*) and still present in the evening.

It was regularly recorded at VP late in the evening or early in the morning having roosted, spending the day at nearby Cound floods. The last sighting was leaving the roost at VP early in the morning of 1 Feb.

In the second winter period, another adult at VP was seen early in the morning of 6 Dec. After flying off for a period it returned in the afternoon to the near-by fishing pool (*J Reeves, JA Almond*).

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**WHOOOPER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Martin Grant  
Number of Records: 37 (BT=25, CR=11, eB=1). WeBS Counts=2

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. In 2019 Severn Valley flocks peaked at 23 in March and 25 in November. Previous maxima were 22 in 2018, 29 in 2017, 38 in 2016 and 39 in 2015.

The first report early this year was of a single adult at VP on New Year's Day. It had been wintering in the area since 1 Dec 2019 and was regularly seen until the turn of the year coming into VP to roost at dusk and leaving in the morning. After the first sighting New Year's Day it was reported again early in the morning on 5 Jan.

Presumably the same bird but not reported again until the final sighting at VP late in the evening 15 Mar.

First record at the regular wintering area around the Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence was of 11 (eight adults and three immatures) grazing on pasture near flooding at Hayes Farm on 12 Jan. The flock had increased, close by at Molverley Floods, to 23 on 19th and 24 on 23 Jan to a peak of 30 at Edgerley. The only other report, the last early in the year from the Confluence area was on a WeBS count at Ponthen of 12 adults on 8 Mar.

The only record early in the year from the south of the County was a late spring record of one at Bridgnorth on 12 Apr.

First records at the end of the year were from the Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence with 10 at Edgerley on 9 Nov increasing to 24 next day at Cae Howel nearby. Another six were seen at Molverley on 15th. The two flocks were counted together between Molverley and Edgerley on the 21 Nov, producing the maximum count for the year of 32 (including six juveniles).

There were scattered records away from the regular sites at the end of November and beginning of December, including two birds at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 20 Nov. At Cloverley Pool, Calverhall six came into roost at dusk on 22 Nov. There were also two adults in a field with nine Mute Swans at Betton Abbots between 8-11 Dec.

Back at the Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence the 32 were still there on 19 Dec, with 21 at Cae Howel and 11 (including two juveniles) at Molverley. On the final day of the year 26 were on the Molverley floods with probably others on inaccessible flooded fields west of Cae Howel.

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## EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Shropshire Status:	Rare naturalised visitor, very rare breeding species
National Conservation Status:	Not assessed (Naturalised)
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed (Naturalised)
Author:	Graham Walker
Number of Records:	54 (BT = 47, CR = 1, eB = 6). WeBS Counts=13

The colonisation of the County continues with birds recorded in every month of the year and breeding confirmed at two sites: Edgmond where 12 young were hatched and Wood Lane with a further two.

Reported from 14 sites, the majority of records were of two birds but, given the mobility of this species and the proximity of some of the sites, it is likely that two or three pairs were responsible for most of the reports. However, three birds were seen feeding on the dam wall at Chelmarsh on 31 Jan.

Seen every year since 2006, with breeding in at least three of those years. It should probably now be considered a rare, naturalised resident.

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer and winter visitor  
 National Conservation Status: Amber List  
 Shropshire conservation Status: Green List  
 Author: Martin Grant  
 Number of records: 254 (BT=208, CR=6, eB=40). WeBS Counts=20

Regularly recorded at more sites than previous years, most of the records coming from the north of the County.

Only four records received from southern areas, probably as much to do with the lack of suitable habitat as lack of observer coverage. The four records were of a pair, on a fishing pool below Caer Caradoc (SO4795) on 14 May, on a pond near Chirbury (SO2699) on 29 Jul, at Chelmarsh Reservoir (SO7387) on 6 Dec and at New House Farm, Church Stretton (SO4694) where two were seen on 17 Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Nov	Dec
Chetwynd Pool		2	2	3		1*				
Cockshutt (east)			2	24	9*				4	1
EGM (excluding Wood Lane)	2		4	6						
Ellerton Mill	1	3								
Pepperhill-Rhiew's Calverhall	2		2		2	2*	2*			2
Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn		2							2	
Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence	3		13						5	8
Shavington Park & Tittenley			1	2					2	
VP/Cound Fishery	7	10	4	5	3*	2*	2*		2	2
Wall Farm	1	1	2	2	2					
Whixall Moss & canal floods	7	2	2						4	4
Wood Lane	10				1*					

**Shelduck - Monthly maxima recorded at favoured sites (\*not including juveniles)**

The peak count of 24 at Cockshutt on 24 Apr, although notable, is nowhere near the record count of 40 at Wood Lane on 2 February 2012.

Confirmed breeding from five sites. At VP a pair had six small young on 14 May which reduced to three still downy young on 28 May and two well grown juveniles by 6 Jul. At Cockshutt a nest was found with young on 11 May, 10 ducklings on 19 May with eight juveniles surviving by 15 Jul. At Wood Lane Nature Reserve nine young were reported on 15 Jun. An adult with three young was at Chetwynd Pool on 7 Jun. Finally, a pair with seven fledged young was at Pepperhill Pool near Calverhall on 3 Jul although only three young were present on 9 Jul.

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**MANDARIN** *Aix galericulata*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce naturalised resident
National Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	157 (BT=138, CR=4, eB=15). WeBS Counts=13

Parity achieved? Maps showing the distribution of Mandarin over the period 2007/8 to 2013 as published in *The Birds of Shropshire*, revealed a marked disparity in records between the south and the north of the County. In the more southerly SO ‘half’, Mandarins were found in 27 tetrads in the breeding season and 20 in the winter. This easily trumped the nine and eight tetrads for the more northerly SJ ‘half’. These findings were the result of systematic survey over a period of years, so they are not directly comparable with records for a Bird Report, as these are a fairly random accumulation of largely casual records from sometimes ill-defined locations over a single 12-month period.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that in the period 1 Mar to 30 Jun 2020, Mandarin was reported from 14 locations in the more northerly SJ part of the County, only two fewer than the 16 in the more southerly SO part, and that in the remaining months of the year it was 11 and 13 respectively. So, by this measure, there has been a ‘levelling-up’ and virtual parity has now been achieved. But there are other measures to apply, notably the number of breeding records and the number of birds present outside the breeding season, and by these, the north remains impoverished.

The breeding season, loosely defined as the four months March to June, yielded 93 records across the board, as against 75 for the remaining eight months of the year, but there were relatively few records of confirmed breeding. Broods were seen at eight places in the SO area but there were no confirmed breeding records from SJ squares.

The SO records came from the River Clun near Aston on Clun, the Teme at Ludlow, the Severn at Bridgnorth, pools at Stead Vallets and from a location at Quatt.

Outside the months March to June, the maximum count in the north was of nine at Shavington Park on 24 Jul. Contrast this with counts made in the south of the County at a pool west of Meaton Lane on the edge of the Wyre Forest: here maxima in the months August to December were 11, 40+, 40+, 80+ and 80+. The last two are the highest counts ever for the County, exceeding the previous maximum of 59 on the Onny north of Bromfield on 27 May 2015. Outside the breeding season, the only other double-figure count for 2020 was of circa 15 at Shakenhurst, also in the south, on 4 Oct.

The high numbers occurring at the Meaton Lane pool may appear to come out of the blue, but there has been a build up there over recent years, and for some long time now, high counts have been made just six km. to the east at Trimpeley Reservoir in Worcestershire and on the adjacent River Severn, where in excess of 100 have been seen.

**SHOVELER** *Spatula clypeata*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon winter visitor; very rare breeding species  
 National Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP  
 Shropshire Conservation Status: Amber List  
 Author: Martin Grant  
 Number of Records: 336 (BT=282, CR=0, eB=54). WeBS Counts=36

Widespread at lakes, meres and mosses in the north, but with very few records south of Shrewsbury.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at the favoured sites:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chetwynd Pool	46	24	25	15				4	1	4	20	78
The Mere, Ellesmere	3	9							14	6	1	36
Mereside, Shrewsbury										21	16	5
Pepperhill-Rhiewes Calverhall	4		5					2	3			
Polemere			2	2						1		3
Priorslee Lake/Flash			c20									2
Shavington/Tittenley Pool	5	3	14				1			35	7	7

VP/Cound Fishery	70	55	39	31	2	2		2	14	11	19	13
Wall Farm	24	32	33	6	4					4	5	2
Whixall canal floods and Whixall Moss	13		10		2					14	52	34

The only count in double figures other than at the sites in the above table was on a WeBS count in February of 20 at the River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence. At the end of the year counts of 19 on 24 Dec with 17 on 28th and 31 on the 30<sup>th</sup> were made at Cressage Bridge on the River Severn.

Records from the south of the County (SO Grid references) included regular reports from a pool near Chirbury (SO2699) with a maximum of 14 on 28 Jan, up to eight in February, 10 in March, four on 21 Apr, two in May, one in July, with confirmed breeding on 21 Aug when a family party of eight was found. Five birds were here on 23 Dec. Other southern records were from Titterstone Clee Hill (seven on 24 Feb), one at Chelmarsh Scrape on 5 Sep and four here on 27 Nov. There were five at Cranmere Bog on 20 Dec.

Surprisingly, the only confirmed breeding this year was from the pool near Chirbury (SO2699) with the family party of eight on 21 Aug. No confirmed breeding this year from the north of the County, but pairs were recorded in every month at VP and early in the breeding season at Chetwynd Pool, Wall Farm and Whixall Moss. A juvenile was found at Whixall Moss on 31 Aug but may not have been reared there. The last confirmed breeding records, in 2014 and 2015, were from Whixall Moss.

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### **GADWALL** *Mareca strepera*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor, rare summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Martin Grant  
Number of records: 239 (BT=197, CR=1, eB=41). WeBS Counts=38

Recorded at pools and meres mainly in the north of the County as a winter visitor, but increasingly as a breeding species. The only report from river habitat was of five on the Severn at Cressage Bridge 22 Dec.

In the south, records were received from floods at Knowle Sands SO7388 on 27 Feb and at Chelmarsh with two on 12 Aug, one 5 Sep and in December two on the 12th and just singles on the 2nd & 17th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ellerton Mill	7	7	3		2	4	4	3*	20	5	24	12
Priorslee Lake	8	5		2	2	2	1		1	8	12	14
Sambrook Mill	2	7				6	8	16	22		8	10
Shavington Park						1	12				11	11
Shrewsbury Sewage Farm	9	3	4					2			3	
VP/Cound Fishery	25	7	17	14	4	5		2	2	2	4	18

Gadwall - Monthly maxima recorded at the favoured sites \*Not including juveniles seen that month.

The largest single flock this year was an exceptional count of 116 at Park Farm floods, near the Staffordshire border on 19 Aug (almost double the previous record count of 60 at Ellerton Mill in September 2018) with 106 still present on 25th. Other than these record counts and the favoured sites in the table above, no other site reported a count in double figures.

There was confirmed breeding at two sites this year. At Wood Lane Nature Reserve a female with five young were seen on 15 Jun. A female with one duckling was at Ellerton Mill on 22 Aug. There has been confirmed breeding in seven of the last ten years, including at Sambrook Mill in 2019, Ellerton Mill 2018, Wood Lane in 2017, Wall Farm 2014, ASF 2012, Mirelake 2011 and ASF, Ellerton Mill and VP all in 2010.

There were pairs throughout the breeding season at Cockshutt, Priorslee Lake, Sambrook Mill, Shavington Park, and VP where birds were displaying in April, but there was no confirmed breeding at any of these locations.

Numbers continue to increase steadily in the County and this species seems to benefit from the warming trend in our climate.

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### **WIGEON** *Mareca penelope*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: RBBP, Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Jonathan Groom  
Number of Records: 262 (BT=215, CR=0, eB=47). WeBS Counts=35

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 Meres	16	18	5	0	0	0	3	71	41
Severn/Vyrnwy confluence	6	50	506	0	0	0	No count	No count	No count
Polemere	32	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Shavington	113	32	0	0	1	2	1	3	200
Venus Pool	4	0	0	8	0	0	1	18	25
Whixall canal floods	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	62
WeBS total (no. of sites)	202 (8)	146 (5)	511 (2)	8 (1)	0	2 (1)	7 (4)	110 (4)	346 (6)

Wigeon - numbers recorded in the monthly WeBS survey counts 2020 (Some counts were not made due to either weather or ongoing Covid-19 restrictions)

### *January-April:*

Present at 22 sites between January and April.

Numbers of Wigeon were lower than in 2019 except for during March where high numbers on the flooded Severn-Vyrnwy were pleasing to see. It was good to see Polemere had much higher counts than the record lows of 2019. 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).

For example, numbers reported from non-WeBS surveys at The Mere, Ellesmere suggested that up to 70 birds could have been present during January and February though numbers were also reported as low as four! Likewise, VP had regular counts submitted of up to 55 birds in mid-January, though again with a low of just one only a few days before the high count. This suggests birds are moving around quite a bit, presumably to graze elsewhere before returning to roost on the open water.

Regular counts from a pool near Chirbury continued with nine counts made during January and February with a high count of 44 in January before dropping to 18 by March (numbers seemed to regularly be between 20-40 birds). These numbers are similar to those observed in 2019.

At Wall Farm, another regularly-watched site, birds were counted from January through to the end of March (with the last reported on 23rd). The peak in numbers

came on the 5 Mar with 150+ birds counted. Numbers ranged between three and 150 during this time before gradually declining through March. These numbers were significantly higher than those observed in 2018 and 2019.

High counts at this time were mostly made during WeBS counts (summarised in table above) but counts of c.30 birds at Dryton and Pepperhill Pool were notable.

The last count of the first winter season was from VP when two birds were present on 16 Apr.

### *May-August*

No summering birds were recorded this year. The first birds of the autumn passage were six at a temporary pool in Northwood on 31 Aug.

### *September – December*

Recorded at 33 sites during this winter period – nearly double that of 2019!

WeBS counts during this time were lower overall than in 2019 although it would appear that ongoing Covid-19 restrictions will have impacted here, particularly with counts at the Severn-Vyrnwy area being suspended. A count (not WeBS) submitted from the Holly Banks-Melverley area which is part of the usual WeBS plot of 200 in November does suggest significant numbers were present which would bring totals up to comparable levels with 2019.

High counts not taken from WeBS surveys at this time were few and only counts of 72 at Park Farm floods, Newport on 19 Dec, and 78 at VP on 1 Dec. Wall Farm was again regularly watched throughout November and December. Numbers fluctuated although seeming to even out at around 24-28 birds, with a high of 40 recorded in December, a smaller count overall than in 2019. The pool near Chirbury was only visited twice this year, with a very small high count of two birds.

Other non-WeBS records with counts in double-figures were 26 birds along the Severn between Atcham and Wroxeter on 17 Dec, 15 at Chelmarsh on 8 Nov, 11 at Chetwynd Pool on 8 Dec, 15 at Northwood Pool on 22 Oct, 15 at Pepperhill Pool on 11 Nov and 16 on the Buttery Reservoir on 9 Nov.

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**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber list  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Jonathan Groom  
Number of Records: 1,888 (BT=1383, CR=1, eB=504). WeBS Counts=315

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	31	16	12	10	18	50		41
Dudmaston	19	16	17					
Ellesmere Meres	334	175	133	387	411	338	288	289
Fenemere	40		13		24			
Marton Pool, Baschurch	74		86		414			
Polemere	34	20	9	14	23	9		20
Severn/Vyrnwy confluence	93	10	32		23			
Shavington	10		14	65	9	17	55	82
Venus Pool	28	12		20	15	21	25	20
Walcot Lake	36	26	16		171	150	125	76
Whixall canal floods	37	10	21			201	123	98
2020 WeBS total (no. of sites)	1,152 (35)	674 (31)	672 (35)	627 (10)	1,518 (27)	1,318 (27)	1,194 (23)	1,160 (25)
2019 WeBS total (no. of sites)	1,366 (35)	1,385 (32)	687 (30)	690 (13)	1,289 (20)	1,303 (32)	1,613 (28)	1,275 (29)
2018 WeBS totals	1,114 (39)	863 (35)	476 (32)	1,046 (18)	1,584 (31)	1,638 (31)	1,718 (34)	1,554 (36)

**Mallard – Monthly maxima from main sites**

Mallard were recorded at 44 WeBS sites and from over 100 sites across the County. Numbers were generally comparable with 2018 and 2019 although Covid-19 restrictions certainly impacted on number of counts carried out between September and October. Despite this however, more WeBS sites seem to have been taken on and

so counts were not dramatically less than the last two years.

The only count not included in the above WeBS summary, of more than 50 birds between January and March, was at Sambrook Mill (83 birds). Other counts of over 50 birds in the winter period between September and December were: Attingham (70), Cantlopgrove (98), Dryton (80), Meaton Lane (110), Mereside in Shrewsbury (111) and Telford Town Park (75).

During the spring and summer months 864 records from approximately 153 locations were submitted. This was exactly double the number of records for 2019!!

Eighty-six confirmed breeding records were received from 43 locations – certainly more of a lack of recording breeding status rather than an indication of how widespread breeding actually is. The earliest brood record was on 5 Apr at Whitcliffe. Records were received throughout the season up to the latest record of young at Chirbury on the 21 Aug. The highest brood count from a single female was made of 16 ducklings on the Shropshire Union Canal on 30 Apr.

High counts for 2020 came from a few locations and were much higher than in 2019. The highest overall count from anywhere was at Marton Pool, Baschurch where 414 birds were counted during the September count. Other exceptionally high counts came from Whixall Floods (201 birds in October) and The Mere, Ellesmere (320 birds in July). An additional 12 sites recorded counts of over 100 birds this year.

### Ringling Recoveries

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species::

#### GV32788

Ringed Full-grown Male	04-02-2018	Loppington: 52°52'N 2°47'W	
Freshly dead (shot)	30-01-2020	near Loppington: 52°51'N 2°47'W	3km 1y 11m 26d

### PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Jonathan Groom
Number of Records:	47 (BT=33, CR=6, eB=8). WeBS Counts=10

Pintail were recorded from 11 sites in Shropshire during 2020.

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 991 birds during the peak flooding in March. This is a record high count since the survey started here in the early 80s! It beats the previous count made in the winter of 2015/16 by nearly 200! It would be interesting to know where these birds go in years where flooding is much reduced, although climate change could see annual floods become regular and longer. Other WeBS counts reported higher counts than normal though numbers were still low – a high of 14 birds in January at the Whixall canal floods was the peak.

Non-WeBS counts of birds were made from the Whixall floods with a peak of 23 birds on the 31 Jan. Only two other sites, VP and Monkmoor Pools, Shrewsbury, recorded one or two birds during this time.

Sightings in the summer months are very rare, and no sightings were made after April. During April, a pair stayed on floods near Cockshutt until 13 Apr and a single bird was recorded at the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence on the 10 Apr.

Numbers picked up in the later part of the year with WeBS counts picking up a high of 22 birds in December on the Whixall canal floods and unusually, a single bird at Linley Pool. Covid-19 made WeBS counts irregular however, so this is probably an undercount.

The earliest record of returning birds was made of eight birds at Polemere on 4 Oct and a single bird at Wall Farm on 11 Oct. No further records were made until mid-November and nothing more from either of those two sites. Observations from the Severn/Vyrnwy area counted a high of nine birds during the November-December period. Further observations from Whixall did not record anything higher than the WeBS count total. Other records were limited to four birds at Kinnerley and eight birds at Cressage Bridge, both in late December.

**TEAL** *Anas crecca*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor, very scarce breeder  
 National Conservation Status: Amber List  
 Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
 Author: Martin Grant  
 Number of Records: 455 (BT=368, CR=1, eB=86). WeBS Counts=71

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh Reservoir/Scrape	2					2			30+		14	17
Chetwynd Pool	2		6	1								2
Dryton (SJ5906)		70								30	30	120
Hayes Farm & Hilley Farm Pentre	100		4									100+
Hardwick Pool [SO3690]	8	12	6							4		3
Lydham Heath [SO3490]		6	6						7	5	15	20
Monkmoor Pool	16	15	4						5	9	5	6
Park Farm floods									80	79	23	
Pepperhill-Rhiewes Calverhall	8		30	5				5	19	35		
Polemere	36	c30	34	6		2	2	3	6	8+	16	49
Shavington	20		18				2	4	1		75	6
VP/Cound Fishery	40	28	35	17		3		14	14	15	41	90
Wall Farm	50+	135	200+	45	3	4	1	3	32	77	49	81
Whixall canal floods [Moss*]	150	180	122		1			12	75	96	50	177

Teal – monthly maxima at favoured sites

The maximum counts at sites from the south, other than Hardwick Pool and Lydham Heath (in the table above), were 23 at Titterstone Clee 24 Feb, a pair at Nun Brook, Rudge 20 Mar, five south-west of Clungunford on 30 Mar, three at Cranmere Bog on 24 Aug, 18 at Pam’s Pool, Crosshouses on 8 Oct, and 36+ at Bromfield on 19 Dec.

In the first winter period, the only other double-figure counts from the north (other than the sites listed in the table above), were 12 at Brown Moss on 12 Jan; 60 at Montgomery Canal on 7 Feb; 4 at Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn on 22 Feb; c60 at Priorslee Lake on 8 Mar; 33 in Severn Floodplain between Atcham and Wroxeter on 8 Mar, and 23 at Waters Upton on 22 Mar.

Interesting late summer gatherings were of 80+ at Northwood (in a flooded field near Lawns Farm SJ4733) on 18/21 Aug, with 67 here on 31 Aug and c70 on 16 Sep. Autumn counts included 17 at Ellesmere on 4 Oct, 20+ at Cockshutt (east) on 6 Oct and 200 on a farm reservoir at Cantlopgrove on 8 Oct. 30 were recorded at Balmer Heath on 2 Dec.

Although recorded every month at Wall Farm including a drake with two females present from end of April to the end of June, no juveniles were seen and no sign of nesting activity found. Pairs in the breeding season were observed at VP and Chelmarsh with no further sign of nesting activity at either site. A juvenile was reported late in the season at Polemere 25 Sep alongside three adults but may not have bred at the site.

### Ringling Recoveries

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species::

#### EA68527

Ringed First-year Male	08-02-2020	Woolston Eyes No 3 Bed: 53°23'N 2°31'W (Warrington)
Freshly dead (shot)	07-12-2020	Onslow Hall, Shrewsbury: 52°42'N 2°50'W 79km SSW 0y 9m 29d

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### GREEN-WINGED TEAL *Anas carolinensis*

Shropshire Status:	Vagrant
National Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Martin Grant
Number of records:	14 (BT=14, CR=0, eB=0)

A male at Wall Farm from 5 Mar to 11 Mar (*MG Grant*) was initially thought likely to be the same bird that was here in 2019. However, in addition to the usual suite of Green-winged Teal features, it showed a faint horizontal white scapular line. Whether such individuals are within the normal plumage variation of this species or whether they are hybrids with Teal is a moot point. Following consideration by the county Rarities Committee, it was accepted as either a true Green-winged Teal or possibly a hybrid and therefore could well have been a different bird from the 2019 individual.

Prior to the 2019 bird, other County records were the first at VP 27 Feb to 10 Mar 1996; ASF, 8 to 12 Dec 2001; Whixall canal floods from 19 Jan to 3 Mar 2002 and at Polemere from 2 to 31 Jan 2013. Records at VP 24 Nov and 1 Dec 2016 and again VP 8 Jan 2017 almost certainly referred to the same bird.

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**RED-CRESTED POCHARD** *Netta rufina*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare, naturalised visitor
National Conservation Status:	Not listed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed (naturalised)
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	19 (BT=17, CR=0, eB=2)

A pair were at Middle Pool, Telford, briefly on 1 Jan (*K Webb*) and presumably the same pair were then at VP for a few hours on 29 Jan (*S Haslem, GE Holmes, JA Almond*). A drake graced Priorslee Lake from 26-30 Nov and proved a popular bird (*E Wilson, T Lowe et al.*). The first records since 2012.

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**POCHARD** *Aythya ferina*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce winter visitor; has bred
National Conservation Status:	Red List, RBBP
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of Records:	143 (BT=106, CR=2, eB=35). WeBS Counts=16

During the first winter period, birds were reported from six locations. In January, one or two were present at The Mere, Ellesmere between 2nd and 20th with another on 9 Mar. In between these dates one was nearby at Cole Mere on 30 Jan. Also in January, up to five were reported from Priorslee Lake and Priorslee Flash between 5th and 27<sup>th</sup>. On 7<sup>th</sup>, four were noted at the Flash and five on the Lake by the same observer. Higher numbers were found at Monkmoor STW; 13 on 12 Jan, 11 on 5 Feb and 10 on 8 Mar and VP; 8 on 11 and 15 Jan, 15 on 13 Feb and 10 on 22 Mar. A female at VP on 6 April was the final bird of this period.

Two at Monkmoor STW on 20 Sep and two at The Mere, Ellesmere the following day were the first of the autumn. There were just three reports in October; four at Monkmoor STW on 15th, two at this site on 20th and five at Priorslee Lake on 22<sup>nd</sup>. After two at Chelmarsh on 5 Nov records became more frequent. Eight at Trench Pool on 8 Nov, 10 at Priorslee Lake on 27 Nov, 13 at Shavington Park on 5 Dec and six at VP on the same day were the highest counts from the eight locations to hold Pochard during the final winter period.

Both males and females were regularly reported. Of the larger counts, 10 at VP on 3 Feb contained an even split with five males and females, while males predominated at Shavington Park on 5 Dec by 11 to two.

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**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Allan Dawes  
Number of Records: 523 (BT=404, CR=0, eB=119). WeBS  
Counts=113

Reports were received from 58 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	28	53	29	24	12	10	6	12	34
Ellesmere Meres	126	88	115		6	24	66	87	86
Oerley Reservoir	17	23	9			2		6	17
Priorslee Flash	30	48	56					53	
Priorslee Lake	48	16						48	54
Shavington	29	28	39	9	38	16	8	32	22
Venus Pool	30	20	20	29	10	8	2	7	41

Elsewhere numbers were generally low, only Alderford Lake 21 on 19 Jan and Pam's Pools, Crosshouses 29 on 12 Feb exceeded 20 during the first winter period. Similarly, later in the year 28 were at Pam's Pools, Crosshouses 8 Oct, 31 at Oss Mere on 24 Oct and again on 12 Dec.

Two pairs were present at Abdon Burf, Brown Clee on 6 and 29 May but breeding was not proved this year at this, the highest breeding location in the County. Breeding was confirmed at 10 locations; these ranged from a garden pool at Dodecote where a brood of seven, one-week old young was seen on 21 Jul to The Mere, Ellesmere, one of the larger waterbodies, which held a brood of three on 24 Aug. Broods were also seen at Quarry Farm Pool, Howle (two broods), Ellerton Mill Pool, Hodnet Hall Gardens, Whixall Moss, Brown Moss (two broods) and Pam's Pools, Crosshouses.

At Alderford Lake the flock noted above in January contained 14 males and seven females. In February, flocks at VP had 10 males, six females on 16th and 12 males, six females on 23rd. After 14 males and eight females on 4 Apr sex ratios at VP became closer as pairs became established, after which females became less obvious.

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**SCAUP** *Aythya marila*

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Red list, RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Allan Dawes  
Number of Records: 25 (BT=25, CR=0, eB=0). WeBS Counts=2

Four birds was a good return, following singles in 2017 and 2019 and a blank year in between.

A drake was at Cole Mere from 30 Jan to 6 Feb (*D Hardgrave et al.*) During this period a female was nearby at The Mere, Ellesmere on 3 Feb (*A Clare*).

A female was found at The Mere, Ellesmere first reported on 13 Nov (*JP Martin, A Gaunt, G Thomas*) and stayed to the end of the year. Another female was at Oerley Reservoir on 12 Dec (*AP Dawes*).

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**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: Martin Grant  
Number of records: 21 (BT=16, CR=0, eB=5). WeBS Count=1

Many more records than usual received this year, with several reports of birds heard calling while migrating over at night. Note that this species' nocturnal flight calls are similar to those of some other wildfowl, such as Pintail. We will currently only accept nocturnal records supported by recordings or sonograms. The species currently remains a county rarity.

At least two passed over Bank House Farm, Adderley on 1 Sep (*H Lloyd*), nocturnal flight calls being recorded at 01:21am and again at 01:32am

An influx occurred in November with six female/immature at the Mere Ellesmere 12-16 Nov (*J Shutt et al.*), two (an adult male and a female/immature) at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 19 Nov (*C Reed*) and three female/immatures at the same site on 29 Nov (*P Jones, A Ambrose, J A Almond*).

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**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Allan Dawes  
Number of Records: 77 (BT=60, CR=2, eB=15). WeBS Counts=19

The table shows the monthly maxima from the main sites.

	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
Cole Mere	13	15	4			7	22
The Mere, Ellesmere	20	39	27	3	1	7	24
White Mere	10	1	1			12	3
Ellesmere Meres WeBS total	39	55	32		1	28	49

After two successive winters with poor totals at EGM (30 in 2017-18 and 39 in 2018-18) a WeBS maximum of 55 in February of the 2019-20 winter was a welcome increase and a December total of 49 was a positive sign for the winter to come.

Birds were more widespread in both winter periods; singles were at Buttery Reservoir, Chelmarsh and Crose Mere during January and two were in Shrewsbury, presumably on the river but no details were given. A female at Shavington Park from 2–19 Mar may have been slowly moving north and this was the last report of the spring.

Three at Ellesmere on 30 Sep were much earlier than usual, the last September arrival was on the 18th in 1987 and there are only four others in the SOS database. There was a single report in October when one was at The Mere, Ellesmere during the WeBS. At Chelmarsh, a female was present from 7 Nov to 28 Nov with two reported there on the 8th and five on the 27th and a single bird was present on Christmas Day. A male was at Kynnersley on 8 Nov and a report of a male nearby at Buttery Reservoir the following day may relate to the same bird. A single at Priorslee Lake on 27 Nov was the only other record away from the EGM.

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**GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*

Shropshire Status: Scarse resident and uncommon winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Glenn Bishton  
Number of Records: 457 (BT=382, CR=6, eB=69). WeBS Counts=62

A total of 388 records (excluding eBird records) was received (up from 187 and 238 in 2018 and 2019 respectively).

The first winter period saw male and female Goosander congregated in flocks, mainly on the River Severn but also on smaller rivers and pools. Thirteen were recorded at Bromfield on 1 Jan, 23 and 36 at Shrewsbury on 2nd and 24th respectively. 36 were at Coalbrookdale on 7 Jan; 42 between Coton Hill and Shrewsbury Weir on 12 Jan, with 38 still there on 8 Mar. 12 were at Rea Brook on 24 Jan. In February, 14 were at Shrewsbury on 6th and 24 at Buildwas on 24th.

Goosander “temporarily vacated the River Severn at Ironbridge on 12 Feb as water levels rose due to heavy rains and persistent flooding into March”. Numbers tend to decline in March as residents begin moving away from the large static water bodies to their breeding sites and migrant birds begin pairing up and moving north but some large gatherings persisted into April with 25 at Atcham Bridge on 8 Mar, 16 Leighton on 7 Apr and 19 Bridgnorth on 11 Apr, the last large flock of this period.

Both male and female Goosander were recorded in the flocks throughout January to March with pairing noted at Coalbrookdale on 2 Feb followed by two pairs and a male at Leighton on 4 Feb. A pair were at Newport Canal on 4 Feb, with two pairs there 1 Mar. Other pairs were found at Edmond Canal on 13 Feb, Market Drayton on 15 Feb, Cound Stank on 9 Mar, Shrewsbury on 19 Mar, Shrewsbury Sewage Works on 31 Mar and Shakenhurst on 7 Apr. Additional pairs were noted as April progressed. The final male of the spring was recorded at Leighton on 5 May.

Breeding was confirmed mainly on the River Severn and in the northern half of the County. Females were found at Atcham on 2 May (with five young), at Cressage (eight young) and Buildwas on 5 May (nine young). Nine young were also at Coalbrookdale on 6 May with seven young at Bridgnorth and 10 young at Atcham on 8 May; five young at Monkmoor (19 May), eight young at Weir Hill (21 May), 32 young comprising “probably three broods” at Cressage Bridge (27 May); Seven Valley CP on 21 Jun; Rossall Rough on 23 Jun and six young “not-long hatched” at Bromfield on 14 Jul.

Post-breeding flocks comprised 28 at Weir Hill on 29 Jun, 26 at Monkmoor on 30 Jun and 26 females and juveniles at Leighton on 7 Jul. Thirteen were recorded at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 5 Sep with 14 there on 24 Sep, and 12 between Atcham and Wroxeter on 7 Sep.

The first record of a male in the second winter period returning from its summering grounds comprised a male “coming out of eclipse plumage” at Whitcliffe on 20 Oct. A male was with a female at Chetwynd Pool on 13 Nov and one accompanied three females at Whitcliffe on 18 Nov. The first double-figure count in this second winter period was 14 at Colemere on 20 Oct. This was followed by 33 at Cae Howel 10 Nov; 13 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 13 Nov, increasing to 25 on 14 Dec; 13 at Hill Valley on 17 Nov with 19 there on 24 Nov. Counts at Chelmarsh Reservoir included 11 on 19 Nov, rising to 18 on 26 Nov and the highest count in this period of 38 on 22 Dec. The 28 at Colemere on 20 Nov increased to 34 on 24 Nov. Ten were found at the English Bridge, Shrewsbury on 25 Nov and 8 Dec with 25 at Greyfriars Bridge, Shrewsbury on 27 Nov; 11 at Radbrook Pool on 6 Dec; 10 at Ironbridge on 8 Dec; 17 at New House Farm Pool on 17 Dec; 29 in flooded fields at Molverley on 25 Dec; at least 10, again in flooded fields, at Royal Hill on 27 Dec and 12 at Chetwynd Pool the same day.

December records suggested that pairing was already in progress, with four Goosander on the River Teme at Whitcliffe on 11 Dec “behaving as two pairs”.

The River Severn and a few other wild and large rivers probably constitute its main breeding ground in Shropshire though 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.

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

Shropshire Status:	Scarce resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	25 (BT=21, CR=0, eB=4)

As usual, it was only The Long Mynd and The Stiperstones that generated records and there were few records from either (15 and 10 respectively), reflecting no doubt

the impact of access restrictions due to Covid-19. And it was this that led to the cancellation of the long-standing annual surveys of breeding birds at both sites. All records were of one or two birds, other than five on The Stiperstones on 24 Apr and seven on The Long Mynd on 14 Sep. The former was probably a cumulative count of individuals rather than a covey, and the second certainly was. No breeding evidence was submitted.

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**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:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	9 (BT=9, CR=0, eB=0)

That it doesn't require all the fingers of two hands to count the records of Grey Partridge across the County for a whole year, even a year of Covid-19, is one of the most telling examples of the disaster that has befallen wildlife on our farmland over the last half century. In 1964, Grey Partridge were described as 'common ... widely distributed throughout the county even in the hill country ... up to the 1,550 ft. contour' (*A Handlist of the Birds of Shropshire*). And let us not forget that unlike Pheasant and Red-leg, this is a native species that was never captive-bred in any numbers – it was so common that the shoots didn't need to (though they were ruthless in exterminating anything that might conceivably predate their quarry). It was so common, that in a paper in *Ibis* in 1861 Alfred Newton speculated that it might be the commonest bird in England.

A small crumb of comfort is that the nine records came from eight locations. All were in SJ squares with SJ41, 51 and 61 all figuring (these lie from Shrewsbury across to Telford), as well as 52 and 62 which are just to the north, and 70, just to the south-east. The only outlying record was from SJ22; this was at Trefonen, in 'hill country' south-west of Oswestry. One of the reports was of presence, five were of two birds, and one each of three, four and 10. The 10, at Dodecote on 22 Dec, were assessed as 'likely but not certainly wild-bred'.

The current County status surely needs revision!

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**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
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	1,838 (BT=1,214, CR=0, eB=624)

‘Unexpected here even though they are all duff’, was the resigned commentary of one observer recording a Pheasant in the Rea Brook Valley, Shrewsbury, on 24 Mar. This was just one of the 1,838 records of this ubiquitous species pumped wholesale into our countryside each year. It has been estimated that in excess of 850,000 are released annually in Shropshire, while the breeding population may be fewer than 100,000 (*The Birds of Shropshire*). This would indicate that the Shropshire status summary at the head of this account should perhaps be reversed. How about ‘Very commonly released captive-bred bird with releases annually, if temporarily, overwhelming in numbers the population of naturalised residents’? ‘Temporarily’, because these released birds are particularly well adapted to getting run-over, killed by Foxes and other (including avian) predators or, indeed, shot, and the residue of released birds surviving for more than a year is relatively small. Those that survive are unlikely to breed successfully and it is telling perhaps that there were only two records of broods.

One predated by a juvenile Goshawk (at a location best left un-named) will have been just one of many mopped up by predators. And ‘mopping-up’ seemed to be what was going on at a south Shropshire release site where a dozen or so raptors (roughly equal numbers of Red Kite and Buzzard) spent the best part of a week feeding on the corpses of Pheasant poults close to a release pen. A possible explanation was that the young birds had left the pen prematurely and been subjected to a bout of ‘surplus killing’ by a Fox which had left a scatter of corpses as prime carrion. Whatever the cause, it illustrates how Pheasant releases are likely to sustain predator populations at unnaturally high levels, thereby putting native ground-nesting birds in greater jeopardy.

It may be that birders keep clear of shooting estates in the summer release times, as the overwhelming number of records (1,330 or so) were of fewer than 10 birds, and only four were of 50 or more (53, 142, 200 and 240) despite releases being from pens holding multiple hundreds of birds. This anomaly is typical, so cannot be explained

by the 2020/21 releasing and shooting season being affected by Covid-19, although it was anticipated in the shooting press that shooting levels (and presumably therefore releases) would be from 27% to 50% down. Only when reports are collated following the end of the season will we know whether these predictions came to fruition. But one observation can already be attributed to the consequences of Covid: a male took advantage of ‘lockdown’, calling for over a week in the deserted grounds of a Ludlow school.

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**QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

Shropshire Status:	Rare summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	74 (BT=46, CR=2, eB=26)

‘Wet-mi-lips’ was first heard on 7 May and there were seven further records in that month followed by 23 in June, 13 in July and 14 in August. This total of 58 records, as against the cumulative one of 74 suggested by the addition of the figures above, makes allowance for the duplication of records between recording schemes. Twenty-two locations were involved, of which 18 were in squares prefixed SJ, as against just four in those starting with SO. The distribution of records fitted into the pattern for 2008-13 as shown in *The Birds of Shropshire* with the exception of one at Tugford in SO58, a square from which no reports were received over that six-year period. It all added up to a comparatively good year for Quail, but not to a ‘Quail year’.

Birds were heard calling from spring Barley, Wheat and Rape and audio monitoring at Bank House Farm, Adderley, picked up song at various times throughout the day and night. Ten of the 58 records were of two birds and one of three; otherwise, all were of singles. As indicated above, reports peaked in June, when on 8th a total of six individuals was recorded, followed by eight on 10th and six on 24th; on each of these dates calling was heard at four different locations. There was no confirmation of breeding.

Over recent decades the most favoured locations have been Noneley/Sleep (in SJ42), Aldersey and Tilstock (SJ53) and Childs Ercall (SJ62). The first and last figured in 2020 and there were records at Prees in SJ53, but most reports came from the SJ squares 32, 50 and 63. Woolston, Maesbury Marsh and Knockin (all in SJ32), Cantlop and Stevenshill (SJ50) and an area south-west of Adderley (SJ63) were particularly favoured. But ‘wet-mi-lips’ was last heard near Knighton Reservoir in SJ72 on 22 Aug.

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## RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon naturalised resident, population supplemented by annual releases of captive-bred birds
National Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	203 (BT=150, CR=0, eB=53)

Abbotts Way, Bridgnorth, is not far from countryside, but the location recorded for a Red-leg seen there on 15 Nov was 'on road outside home'. It is the most curious record of the year for this species, but wayward behaviour should perhaps be anticipated when captive-bred birds are released and then harried by gun fire. Amongst other records were birds seen in gardens at Coptiviney, near Ellesmere, and Shakenhurst, near Cleobury Mortimer. The former location was amongst 62 in the more northerly 'SJ' area of the County, whereas the latter was one of 23 locations where birds were recorded in the southerly 'SO' area.

In western England, the species does best in lowland arable habitats. These are commoner in the north of Shropshire and presumably releases reflect this habitat preference whilst being a function, too, of where partridge shooting is most widely practised. It is estimated that in the order of 120,000 birds are released annually in the County, but Covid-19 may have led to fewer shoots being planned and hence fewer birds released this year. That the continuing presence of the species depends on releases is suggested by there being only two records of confirmed breeding – near Ellesmere and near Bridgnorth.

In the first half of the year there were only two records of 10 or more, but the second half provided twelve, including three of more than 20. These were 47 at Gorstybank near Bromlow Callow on 17 Oct, 22 at Brownheath Moss on 26 Oct and 35 at Eardington Sewage Treatment Works on 17 Dec; it lies just south of Bridgnorth, where this account began – perhaps a lot of birds were released in its environs.

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**NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Shropshire Status:	Rare summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Annex 1, UKBAP, LBAP, Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of records:	6 (BT=5, CR=1)

Only six records from four sites. A male was heard churring (intermittently) from forestry clear-fell at Walcot Woods, Kempton on 26 May (*T Wall*). Also in May, one at Black Hill on 30th (*C Pearson*). In June, two were found on Whixall Moss on 1st (*N French*) and a single male churred at The Stiperstones NNR on the evening of 23rd and at dawn on 24th (*B Daniels*).

Unfortunately, formal surveys on Whixall/Fenn's Moss complex were curtailed this year due to Covid restrictions in place covering Wales. However, at least five were counted on the night of 26 Jun, and four birds, believed to be a family party, were observed by two members of Natural England staff later in the year.

**2019**

A late record from 2019 concerned a bird photographed during the day at Fastings Coppice on the late date of 6 Oct.

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**SWIFT** *Apus apus*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	743 (BT=631, CR=10, eB=102)

The first sightings of the year were on 20 Apr: two at Newport, three at VP and eight over Shrewsbury. After this, records were almost daily into May. The average earliest date over the previous 30 years was 23 Apr. At Edgton, a nest site was being visited as early as 26 Apr but the following day a Ludlow resident's delight at seeing returning birds was tempered by knowledge of the netting erected (despite protests) across the entrances of nests on the house opposite her own. Later on, the story in Ludlow's town centre was worse still, leaving the reporter 'beyond words': scaffolding was erected on a building furnished with boxes which were removed in order to facilitate renovation works. When, belatedly, one of the boxes was opened, a dead chick was found. The

news at Lydbury North church was better. Here, pointing works in 2018 had excluded Swifts and three boxes were installed in 2019 in a belated attempt at compensation. Two of them were being visited in 2020, as were two crevices inadvertently left by the pointers. And by 10 May the downhearted Ludlow resident was ‘increasingly hopeful’ that the anti-Swift netting was proving largely ineffectual.

Peta Sams of the Shropshire Swift Group has continued to coordinate the submission of Swift nest site locations to the planning department at Shropshire Council. This enables the Council to update the ‘Swift layer’ held on its Geographic Information System which can then be interrogated when planning applications are submitted. The sites of a minimum of 124 active nests were logged this year, including 40 contributed by the Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group.

A total of 54 Swifts from Shropshire were taken in by Cuan Wildlife Rescue Centre at Much Wenlock. This is 20 more than in any year over the period from 2013 for which figures are available. Fluctuations over this time period are shown in the chart which accompanies the House Martin text. For that species the increase was even more dramatic, whereas the number of Swallows taken in was unexceptional. Weather and food supply are assumed to be factors, but a detailed analysis would be needed in order to begin to understand why they should play out differently for these three species.

There were only three records in treble figures: 100 at VP on 2 and 4 Jul and 112 heading north in two hours at Cantlopgrove on 11 May. But, as always, screaming parties and ‘frantic low-flying’ of smaller numbers excited many observers. One Shrewsbury resident remarked wistfully on 7 Aug that ‘it was very quiet now’ with no screaming parties and only ‘one or two Swift students about’. As to adult Swifts, at least two fell victim to a Sparrowhawk as they left nest sites in All Stretton. Of interest too were seven seen feeding at dusk over Trench Pool on 18 Aug with two Noctule bats.

On 8 Sep the wistful Shrewsbury resident was surprised by a single screamer over his Shrewsbury street. But this was not the only September record: a youngster was still calling on 1 Sep at a nest in Belle Vue, Shrewsbury, and a bird was seen entering a nest hole in Ludlow on 2, 4, 7 and 8 Sep, a date on which there were three separate observations over Shrewsbury, with a maximum of six birds. Then the skies went blank until, more than a month later, one was over Cold Hatton on 10 Oct. The average last-sighting date over the previous 30 years was 5 Sep, so clearly this was remarkably late. There has not been an October record since 1978 (one published in the annual report for 1979 was rejected following a review carried out for *The Birds of Shropshire*). In 1978 birds were reported on 2, 6 and 7 Oct, part of a significant late passage observed elsewhere in the country. There is however a later date: 9 Nov 1912.

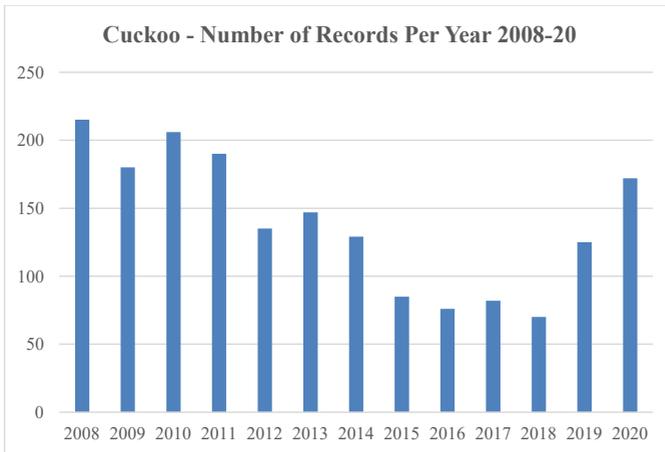
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## CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	John Arnfield
Number of Records:	199 (BT=167, CR=5, eB = 27)

After four years of poor record totals (70-85), there was a welcome increase in observations last year (to 125), a trend that has persisted to 2020 (199 observations in total, 172 excluding eBird, a 38% increase – see graph).

The “first Cuckoo of spring” was heard in All Stretton on 11 Apr, four days earlier than last year. Males were in voice from that date until 13 Jul and the last sighting was on 6 Aug at Wall Farm, Kynnersley, over a month later than in 2019. Characteristically, it was of a juvenile bird, as were all records after 24 Jul in which plumage was noted. The only record of the bubbling chuckle call of the hen bird was heard on 3 May at Tibberton. Overall, two-thirds of all records were for May. The geographical distribution of records was sparse with the only clustering being from Church Stretton north-west through the Shropshire Hills AONB, along the Severn between Ironbridge and Shrewsbury and in the Weald Moors north of Telford.



Sites with large numbers of records include Cantlopgrove (20), Wall Farm (17), Eaton Constantine (12), and Lilleshall parish (11) although in all cases these numbers appear to reflect the industry of a single observer rather than any specific habitat characteristic.

The largest counts (three or four birds) were all from The Stiperstones NNR and Whixall Moss, while counts of two made up about 5% of the records, and singletons constituted 81%. Singing males on territory were about half of all records: indeed, a large fraction of the reports appears to be based entirely on vocalisation. The nature of this species' egg-laying strategy makes direct evidence of breeding hard to obtain: the only indirect evidence for confirmed breeding was five reports of birds in juvenile plumage in the period 24 Jul to 6 Aug, all from Wall Farm, Kynnersley.

Given the infrequency with which this species is observed for extended periods, it is perhaps unsurprising that very little in the way of behavioural records were submitted. Males calling against one another were heard on 5 Jun at Tibberton. Two calling males harassed by Meadow Pipits were observed at Mason's Bank on 14 May and a calling bird, also pursued by a pipit, was noted at Mytton Dingle on 20 May. Finally, a juvenile bird was seen consistently on a fence-line from 24 Jul until 6 Aug, feeding on caterpillars prior to its departure for Africa.

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#### **FERAL PIGEON** *Columba livia*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common naturalised resident
National Conservation Status:	Not applicable (naturalised)
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not applicable (naturalised)
Author:	John Tucker
Number of Records:	485 (BT=417, CR=0, eB=68)

The 485 records received were more than three times the number last year. Analogous to last year, of the 417 records with known observers two thirds (67%) were reported by just five observers, one of them submitting 145 (30% of the grand total).

Multiple sites around Shrewsbury dominate the league table of localities given – 65% of them, with large counts there of 150 (a single flock) at Shrewsbury Station on 25 Jan and 47 roosting under a railway bridge at The Dana (close to the station) on 1 Feb. Other localities represented among the high counts were headed by Gobowen with the absolute peak count of 159 on Christmas Eve, while Ellesmere Lake often boasted 70 or more, the birds being supplementary fed by people – the peak there was 102 on 4 Dec. There were flocks of 100 in Bridgnorth on 11 Jan, 30 at Whixall floods on 12 Nov and 30 at Whitcliffe/Teme on 30 Nov. A flock of 24 were at Starvecrow, Overton 'feeding as a tight group amid Fieldfares' on 28 Jan.

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**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas*

Shropshire Status: Common resident  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: John Tucker  
Number of records: 1,364 (BT=903, CR=0, eB=461)

The number of records submitted leaped this year to 1,364, from 640 – a greater than two-fold increase, though a proportion of this is explained by the use of eBird records this year. The proportion of records attributed to the north (SJ), as opposed to the south (SO) remained at two thirds (66%; it was 67% last year).

Three counts in excess of 100 birds, all in winter; 140+ at Bagginswood on 12 Dec, 130 at Wall Farm on 3 Jan and 110 at Pen-yr-Estyn on 18 Nov. Less frequent were the 11 records of 30-99, nine from the north of the County. There were in the order of an additional 110 records of groups numbered in double figures.

One was perched in a quarry near Pentre, two metres from a Peregrine, on 21 Mar and a Buzzard was recorded feeding on a Stock Dove carcass at Wall Farm on 22 Jun.

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**WOODPIGEON** *Columba palumbus*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: John Tucker  
Number of Records: 3,595 (BT=2,836, CR=4, eB=756)

For such a common species, nationally regarded as ‘resident’, the most remarkable thing is its apparent migrations. The habit, which is so little understood, exhibits as seasonal and visible movements of large numbers, broadly-speaking first south in autumn and then north again in the same autumn.

Unlike so many migrant species Woodpigeons are observed on the move in daylight and the following are a few highlights recorded this year. There were about 20 reports of what were or might have been migration movements – observers are asked in future to submit records of all apparent migration movements, including the location, count, direction of travel and times of day.

The prime example is the passage of a phenomenal 26,395 birds recorded passing N/NE over Cantlopgrove in an hour and 40 mins from 07:30 on 11 Nov.; they appeared in a succession of 70 flocks with a maximum flock size of 2,000 birds. That northerly passage followed, as one example, the earlier passage over the same location of 3,121 birds heading SW on 28 Oct. Bearing in mind, additionally, that the northerly movement was the eighth highest count of the year in the UK submitted to *Trektellen*, a Dutch website dedicated to recording migration movements of birds, it is hardly the behaviour of a ‘resident’.

That a significant passage of birds took place in early November was emphasised by other records including 6,000 ‘flying south all morning’ at Adderley on 4 Nov; 1,100 south-west at Shrewsbury on 7 Nov with 1,500 overflying Cockshutt also in a south-westerly direction on the same date. On 10th 1,600 flew south-west at Cantlopgrove with 10,278 (mostly north-east) on 12th and 2,082 later in the month on 24th (south-west). Is the direction of travel related to wind direction and weather conditions?

Other significant flocks recorded at this time were 1,500 at Bagginswood on 8 Nov and 1,000 on fields near Chelmarsh on 12th increasing to 4,000 on 15th then reducing to 1,500 by 19th. Later flocks exceeding 1,000 birds were found at Welshampton on 24 Nov, 1,150 at Eaton Constantine on 1 Dec; 1,00 at Eudon George on 4 Dec and 1,500 at Bagginswood on 12 Dec.

Recorders are requested to note in their recording what large flocks of Woodpigeons are doing – feeding, roosting or moving - in order to better understand the wider picture.

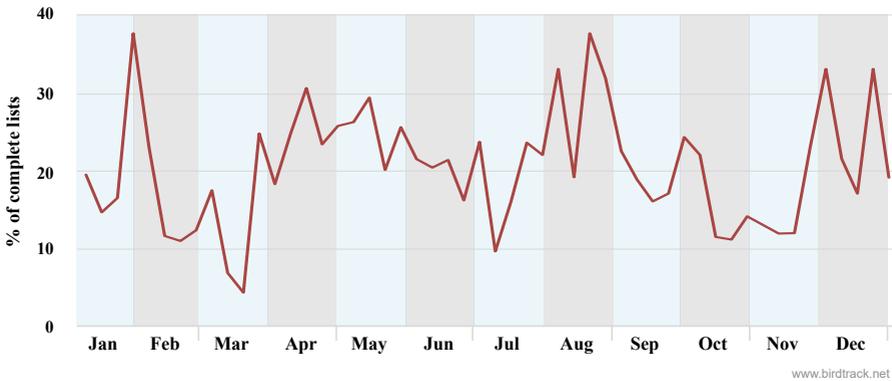
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## **COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John P Martin
Number of records:	1,152 (BT=777, CR=8, eB=367)

Still a widespread and common resident, reported from across the county with 1,152 records received. This is a big increase on last year’s 408 but is unlikely to reflect a big increase in Collared Dove numbers. Instead, the prevalence of garden and very local bird watching during the national lockdown, plus the inclusion of records from a new source (eBird) for the first time in this report, are almost certainly responsible. Lockdown might also be apparent in the higher reporting rate from late March through to early summer – see the chart below.

**Reporting rate Collared Dove - Shropshire 2020**



**Collared Dove – BirdTrack reporting rate in 10-day periods**

Hearteningly, more double-figure counts were received this year: 27 on wires over a farmyard at Edmond Marsh on 21 Oct; 25 at Moreton Say on 11 Nov; 22 at Wyke on 18 Dec (with 13 on 19 and 15 on 26); 19 at Albrighton on 7 Nov; 17 at Walcot on 9 Nov; 14 on wires by a farm at Ellerdine Heath on 19 Oct; 13 at Albrighton on 31 Dec and 10-12 at six other sites. Interestingly, all the higher counts were in autumn and the second winter period so might reflect a good breeding season.

Few reports contained breeding details but included an apparent pair with a single fledged youngster at Tenbury Dive, Shrewsbury on 5 May and two singing males at Wall Farm on 27 Apr. At Aston-on-Clun two pairs, noted for the first time in almost a decade in 2019, continued and song was regularly heard through the spring. At a Tibberton garden in March, one was noted persistently chasing off a Stock Dove on several dates.

**WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus***

Shropshire Status:	Scarce breeder and Winter Visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	140 (BT=101, CR=0, eB=39). WeBS Counts=5

The number of records doubled this year from 55 to 101 (excluding eBird records). Chelmarsh (33 encounters) and VP (50) accounted for more than two-thirds of the

total. The other records came from a variety of marshes, mosses, sewage works and small water-bodies almost exclusively in the north of the county. The exception was two observations made in November and December on brooks feeding the Clun near Aston-on-Clun, each a first for the site. WeBS counts at VP and Whixall canal floods produced nine more observations across five dates.

Evidence of breeding remains elusive. Chelmarsh was the only site at which Water Rail was identified by voice on four occasions in the heart of the breeding season; on 25 May the observer noted ‘sounds like it could be on a nest’ but further visits did not confirm this.

Nocturnal microphones deployed at Adderley and Cantlopgrove this year picked up evidence of migratory activity. Rails were recorded calling in flight on five dates in April and a further six between late July and early October.

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### **MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	John Arnfield
Number of Records:	1,187 (BT=857, CR=0, eB = 330). WeBS Counts=205

Moorhens are common, noisy, and easily seen and this, along with the efforts of WeBS surveyors, contributed to a plethora of observations (1,187, increased to 1,392 with the addition of WeBS records, up 61% over 2019). Spring months showed the largest number of records (about one-third). The species is well distributed geographically with the lowest concentrations in the hilly country of the south-central part of the county. Locations with more than 60 records were VP (171), Bank House Farm, Adderley (72), and Benthall Hall pools (62). The largest counts were for Furber’s floods (31 on 9 Feb, 30 on 8 Mar and 20 on 6 Mar), Cottage Pool, Nib Heath (24 on 20 Sep), Ellesmere on 29 Jan and Shavington Park on 24 Jul (both 20).

Breeding event information was also plentiful. The breeding calendar diagram below shows the periods during 2020 when each type of activity was recorded.

Interesting records include calling birds in nocturnal flight (between 22 Mar and 1 Jul from Adderley, Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury) and a multiple brood group with older juveniles assisting in the rearing of their younger siblings (Newport Canal on 3 Jul).

Despite this species’ newly-assigned local Amber List status, this year’s data suggests that this common rail is holding its own in the county.

**COOT** *Fulica atra*

Shropshire Status: Common resident and winter visitor  
 National Conservation Status: Green List  
 Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
 Author: John Tucker  
 Number of records: 853 (BT=616, CR=1, eB=236). WeBS counts =176

The total of 853 records from around 96 sites, doubling the records and increasing by around 25 the sites of the previous year. The imbalance of records from VP was down from a third (34%) last year to a fifth (19%) this year.

The highest count of the year was made at Priorslee Lake – 202 on 26 Nov, the next highest being the WeBS count of 188 at Whitemere on 24 Aug. There were nine reports of gatherings of 100 or more, all from either Priorslee Lake or The Mere in the north in January, February or December and from Chelmarsh, further south, on 27 Nov. The 2019 report mentioned there being 156 records in double figures: in 2020 there were 210 (272 including WeBS data). Breeding was confirmed at 25 sites, twice the number reported in 2019, perhaps the result of better recording overall. Most sites reported simply “breeding”, but four sites recorded two nests or broods, concurrently, each: Edgmond, Mereside Shrewsbury, VP and Wall Farm. Again, concurrently, Polemere had three nests and four were reported form Benthall Hall and Cockshutt east.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Colemere	20	9	7						4	14	21	<b>23</b>
Cottage Pool, Nib Heath	4	10	4						<b>24</b>	2	2	
Cound Fishery	30						10	<b>30</b>	13	6	14	14
<b>Crosemere</b>	8	8	4			1			3	4	<b>23</b>	11
The Mere, Ellesmere	124	41	29			116	173	154	102	<b>179</b>	82	84
Oerley Reservoir		8	1						7	8	17	<b>24</b>
Polemere	23	14	15		12	32	<b>36</b>	10	4	9		10
Shavington Big Pool	2	4	2		6	19		<b>37</b>	5		8	3
Shavington, Tittenley Pool	<b>14</b>	6	9		6				4	4	3	7

Shrewsbury Sewage Works	3	3	3			<b>10</b>	6	8	3	1		
Venus Pool	12	6		7	4	<b>12</b>	9	4	4	1	4	4
Whitemere	164	57	21			93	135	<b>188</b>	144	46	108	58
Sites with maxima	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	1	1	1	2
Sum of all counts	404	166	95	7	28	283	369	431	317	274	282	238

**Coot - WeBS count totals for sites with more than six months of counts and with peak totals in excess of ten in at least one of those months. Site maxima in bold.**

## Ringling Recoveries

The following bird is amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

### GK27974

Ringed First-year	16-10-2014	Ellesmere: 52°54'N 2°52'W	
Alive (colour rings seen)	02-02-2016	Ellesmere: 52°54'N 2°52'W	0km 1y 3m 17d
Alive (colour rings seen)	27-12-2018	Ellesmere: 52°54'N 2°52'W	0km 4y 2m 11d
Alive (colour rings seen)	09-12-2019	Ellesmere: 52°54'N 2°52'W	0km 5y 1m 23d
Alive (colour rings seen)	07-10-2020	Ellesmere: 52°54'N 2°52'W	0km 5y 11m 21d

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## LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John Tucker
Number of Records:	390 (BT=278, CR=2, eB=110). WeBS counts=74

A total of 390 records from around 80 sites, double the number of records received last year, at least partly due to the records retrieved from eBird this year. The contribution made by records from VP was only 23.9% compared with the corresponding figure of 46.3% then. Breeding was confirmed at the following eight sites, twice the number reported from last year; Ackleton, Bayston Hill Quarry, Benthall Hall, Brown Moss, Polemere, Quarry Farm Pool (Howle), Shakenhurst and Stevenshill. Breeding records were all of single pairs, although at VP on 10 May 'rival pairs were testing territory boundaries'.

The only record of more than one pair occupying a single water body was that of six adults and two young on Polemere on 27 Aug.

Less easy to explain are the nocturnal occurrences of birds whose calls were recorded as they overflowed Cantlopgrove, near Condober. The 18 'nocmiggling' recordings,

all made between 22:31 and 04:30, were in April (2), May (3), June (2), July (8) and August (3). It is currently not possible to know either the purpose or seasonal variation in these night-time overhead movements but further recording of both the sounds and their occurrence may produce some answers from this relatively new science of “nocmiggling”. At this address is a recording of a territorial flight: <https://soundapproach.co.uk/little-grebe/>; something to listen out for during nocturnal ramblings.

The WeBS data here are drawn from 74 monthly counts from 24 sites, six more than in 2019 and equalling those of 2018. Seven sites had five or more monthly counts and they are tabulated below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bow House Farm Pool			1						3	2	1	
The Mere	2								1	2	7	9
Linley Hall Pool	5	4							4	3	6	3
Oerley Reservoir	2	2	1						2	3	3	4
Polemere			4		2	6	2	7	3	1		
Shrewsbury Sewage Works	2	1	3			3	4	2	4	1	2	
VP	2			2			2	1	2		1	1
Sum of Monthly Counts	13	7	9	2	2	9	8	10	19	12	20	17

**Little Grebe - WeBS count totals for sites with five or more months of counts**

Apart from WeBS data other significant counts recorded in the year were of 11 birds at Polemere on 26 Jul, 10 at Brown Moss on 13 Aug and at The Mere on 3 Aug. Groups of five or more birds were found at Benthall Hall Pools (June), Shavington Park (July and October), Pams Pools (August), Quarry Farm Pool at Howle (September), Monkmoor Pool (March) and Ossmere (November).

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**PIED-BILLED GREBE** *Podilymbus podiceps*

Shropshire Status: Vagrant  
Author: John P Martin  
Number of Records: 82 (BT=65, CR=0, eB=17)

One, in non-breeding plumage, was found at Chelmarsh on the afternoon of 26 Nov (*T Lowe*). It remained at the reservoir until 17 Dec and was seen by many visiting birders during its stay. This represents the first county record of this North American grebe, which had amassed 45 British records by 2019. A number have been long stayers, some for years. Subsequently the Chelmarsh bird moved to a private site in Worcestershire where it was present from 9 Feb to 2 Apr 2021. A Finder's Account is included in this report.

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**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Amber List  
Author: John Tucker  
Number of records: 327 (BT=267, CR=1, eB=59). WeBS counts = 84.

The 268 records (excluding eBird) from 36 sites are a similar number to 2019. Comparing the annual WeBS data maximum counts between 2019 and 2020, only Whitemere saw an increase (from 15 to 24 birds) while the peak at Blakemere remained the same (three birds) and at six sites the annual peak counts were down.

Breeding was confirmed at Howle Pool, Marton Pool, Priorslee Lake, Shavington Park and VP, all apparently with single pairs.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Blakemere			3			1				1	1	
Cole Mere	5		1			1		1	1	3	9	8
Cound Fishery	2							2	5	4	1	1
Crose Mere	6	7	5					1		3	2	2
The Mere	2	1	6			3	4	1	3	2	3	7
Howle Pool			1		1			1	3			
Newtonmere	1	2	1			1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Priorslee Flash	2	1	1									
Priorslee Lake	2	3	1									

Shavington Big Pool						2		5	2	2		
Venus Pool	1	1		1	2	3						
White Mere			3			5	6	21	24	17	4	2
Sites with Maxima	1	3	1	0	0	1	1	1	3	0	1	1
Sum of all Counts	21	15	22	1	3	16	12	34	39	33	21	21

**Great Crested Grebe - Totals of WeBS counts from sites with counts from more than two months. Site maxima in bold.**

(The table excludes the following eight sites which had sightings in only one or two months: Chetwynd Pool, Dudmaston Pools, Fenemere, Marton Pool (Baschurch), Middle Pool, Ossmere. Shrewsbury Sewage Works and Trench Pool)

Non-WeBS peak counts included 10 birds at Chelmarsh on 10 Jun and a series at Priorslee Lake including 10 on 26 Nov and 12 here on 19 Aug and 18 Nov.

### **OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Tom Lowe  
Number of Records: 280 (BT=174, CR=5, eB=101). WeBS Counts=13

The first of the year was at VP from 22 Jan, with a second bird present from 1 Feb, then records were received almost daily during the spring. A third bird arrived on 6 Mar, and courtship was noted the following day. A nest scrape was constructed on 15th and incubation was observed on 26th, but by 12 Apr they were no longer sitting. A second breeding attempt from 27 Apr failed, and a third attempt began on 15 May but was also believed to have failed. The final sighting at VP was on 24 Jul.

Elsewhere, a pair was on Whixall canal floods on 8 Feb, one was on Tern Hill floods on 18 Feb, and a pair was at Buildwas on 24 Feb. A noticeable arrival occurred in early March, with records of ones and twos from Shavington Park and Pepperhill on 5th, nearby Adderley on 8th, Bridgnorth, Leighton, Buildwas and Tittenley Pool on 9th, Chelmarsh Reservoir on 11th (three birds), and Bayston Hill quarry on 13th. Six on the River Severn at Buildwas on 22 Mar increased to nine on 24th and 25th, the highest count of the year, and indeed the highest in the county since 11 at Wood Lane in 2014.

Further spring records were received from another 19 widely scattered localities, but mating was only observed at Wood Lane, and at Polemere on 24 Apr. Despite many of these records involving pairs, the only evidence of successful breeding came from Cross Houses, where a chick was seen on 12 May, and Lydham, where two chicks hatched but were predated. Six at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 21 May could have been failed breeders. On 15 Jun, three chicks fledged at Wood Lane, the result of three pairs' breeding attempts. A final breeding record came from Quarry Farm Pool, Howle on 26 Jul where a fledged juvenile accompanied three adults, although it is not known if they bred on site.

Nocturnal flyovers of presumed migrants or failed breeders were noted at Cantlop from 14 Jun to 19 Aug, over Market Drayton on 18 Jun, over Bridgnorth on 2 Jul, and at Adderley from 24 Jun to 24 Aug, the final record of the year.

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### LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Shropshire Status:	Common winter visitor, uncommon breeding species
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	624 (BT=532, CR=4, eB=88). WeBS Counts = 30

This year over 600 records were received from 150 sites, compared with 500 and 140 respectively in 2019, itself a 50% increase in records and a doubling of sites compared with 2018. However, reporting from sites in the south (SO grid references) has not increased, only 48 records from 18 sites, compared with 34 records from 19 sites in 2019, and 59 records from 16 sites in 2018.

Records came from all months, with over 60 in January - March, a build up to 81 in April and 113 in May, when pairs that breed here are conspicuous. Up to 50 were counted in June as post-breeding flocks build up, then 20-odd in July and August as breeding birds depart, and 30-odd in September and October. Counts of 52 in November and 48 in December were made as 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 in the early part of the year was at Polemere (400 on 11 Jan, with 250 at the same place on 8 Feb), with other counts of 200 or more at Ternhill flood (341 on 7 Feb, and 310 on 18 Feb), VP (313 on 14 Feb, and three further counts of

200 or more in January or February), Longford (300 on 5 Jan), Welshampton (300 on 4 Feb), Lostford (near Market Drayton - 250 on 10 Feb), Tibberton (219 on 5 Jan), Whixall canal flood (200 on 8 Feb) and Wood Lane SWT Reserve (200 on 8 Jan). Maximum flock sizes were lower in the same period last year, when there were 650 at Wall Farm (Kynnersley) on 11th and 18th Feb, with two counts of 400+ at the same place in the same month, 600 at Preston Brockhurst, also on 18 Feb, VP (max 580 on 16 Feb) and 447 at Maesbury on 23 January 2019.

Breeding was very poorly reported, and was confirmed, with birds sitting on nests, or with unfledged chicks, only at Aston Hall, Baggy Moor, Ball, Berrywood, Berth (Baschurch), Hopesgate, Ightfield, Lower Hordley, Lower Morton, Middleton, Wall Farm (Kynnersley), West Felton and Wood Lane Nature Reserve. Probable breeding (pairs, display or visiting likely nest sites) was reported from 27 additional locations. However, numbers reported from breeding sites were very small, with 51 individuals at Baggy Moor the highest. Other counts of 10 birds or more came only from Aston Hall (11), Ball (21), Berrywood (20), Cockshutt (23), Ditches (Wem) (30), Lower Hordley (10), Middleton (30), Polemere (10), Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn (36), VP (20), Wall Farm (Kynnersley) (29) and Wykey (10).

Lapwings were monitored by 10 Community Wildlife Groups (see Research Reports section), which found 72–83 pairs, the number reduced by Covid-19 restrictions. 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 22 on the 7th, building up to 45 on 25 Aug and 90 on 3 Sep. After that, monthly maxima were 160 in October (22nd), 75 in November (22nd and 25th) and 120 in December (11th).

Elsewhere, the largest counts for the year were winter visitors, 500 at Welshampton on 8 Dec and the same number at High Er call on 20th. Other maximum site counts of 200 or more, in December, were at Moreton Say (320 on 13th), Royal Hill (Pentre, Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence – 300 on 30th) and Souldon Hall (near Wem – 200 on 11th) while the maximum at Polemere was 200 on 14 Nov. These were mainly higher counts than in the later part of 2019 (maximum 250).



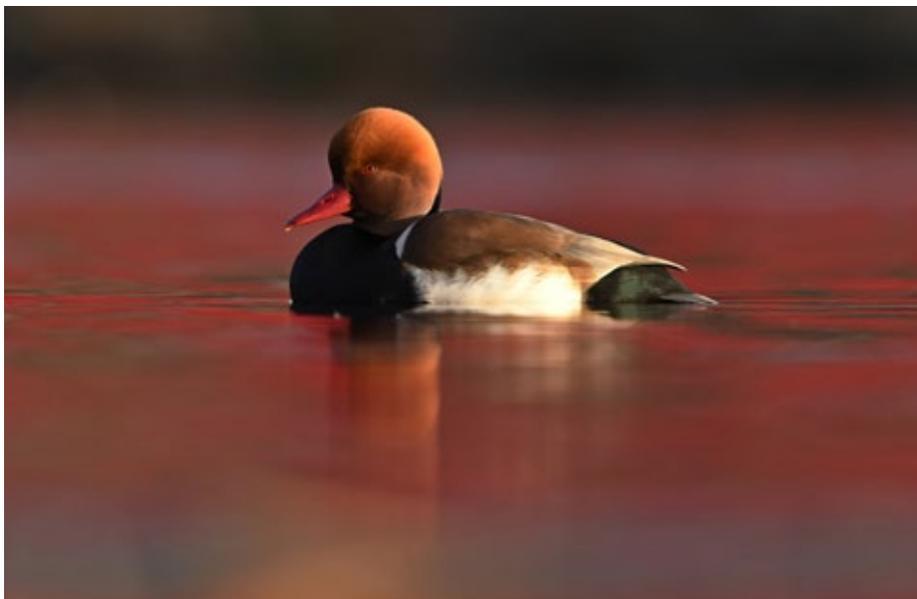
Pink-footed Goose, Middle Pool, Trench, 2 January 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Bewick's Swan, Venus Pool, 24 January 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Whooper Swans, Meverley floods, 17 Jan 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Red-crested Pochard, Priorslee Lake, 27 November 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)



Scaup and Tufted Duck, Ellesmere, 13 November 2020 (*John Martin*)



Great White Egret, Venus Pool, 1 October 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Red Grouse, Long Mynd, 31 July 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Great Northern Diver, Ellesmere, 4 November 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Sparrowhawk, Venus Pool, 2 February 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Red Kite, Broseley, 2 April 2020  
(*Terry Arch*)



Tawny Owl, The Ercall, 10 June 2020  
(*Steve Dawes*)



Mediterranean Gull, Chelmarsh Reservoir, 5 November 2020 (*John Martin*)



Caspian Gull, Venus Pool, 1 October 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Kingfisher, Rea Brook, Shrewsbury, 14 September 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Little Ringed Plover, Ironbridge, 25 June 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Water Rail, Whixall Moss, 16 May 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)



Barn Owl, Broseley, 3 November 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Hoopoe, Wem, 17 April 2020 (*Rob Dowley*)

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## **GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.
National Conservation Status:	Annex 1, Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of Records:	109 (BT=93, CR=3, eB=13). WeBS Counts=2

The largest flocks, >1,000 individuals, were recorded at Ternhill food on two dates in February, and on the 20 Dec at Cotwall Bank, High Ercall. Triple-figure flocks were at an additional 14 sites including, in the first winter period Jan-Mar, Longford (500), Long Mynd (200+), Haddon Hill (150), Warbrook Reservoir (100+), and Titterstone Clee Hill (100).

At the other end of the year, between October and December, flocks were seen at Tibberton (c250), Albrighton (200) Cantlopgrove (175), Shifnal, Long Mynd and Barretts Clun Forest (150+), and Kents Bank, Hollywaste and Carding Mill Valley (c120). Fifty were present at War Brook Reservoir on 9 Feb, c45 at Black Mountain on 23 Feb, and a single was at Sinkers Fields/Furbers floods on 8 Mar. On 28 Sep 50–60 were seen overflying Lower Shore Ditch.

Smaller numbers were present at an additional eight sites; all between September and November. Shadwell Hill (60), Lilleshall (38), Duckley Nap (12), Kynnersley Moor (10) and single figures for a day at Bushmoor, Cressage Bridge, Meaton Lane, Park Farm Floods, Polemere and VP.

### **Ringling Recoveries**

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species in 2020:

#### **DE69249**

Ringed First-year	21-10-2016	Two Crosses, Clun Forest: 52°28'N 3°06'W		
Alive (colour rings seen)	06-11-2016	Gwenlas, Llanbadarn Fynydd: 52°25'N 3°18'W	14km	
		WSW 0y 0m 16d		
Caught by ringer	03-03-2020	Kerry Hill: 52°27'N 3°17'W	12km W	3y 4m 21d

#### **DT24008**

Ringed First-year	13-10-2018	near Two Crosses, Clun Forest: 52°28'N 3°07'W		
Caught by ringer	27-01-2020	Kerry Hill: 52°27'N 3°17'W	12km W	1y 3m 14d

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**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 3 (BT=3)

A single was photographed in flooded fields near Northwood and stayed from the afternoon of the 24 May through to the following day (*R Dowley et al.*).

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**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 23 (BT=22, eB=1)

All records from only three sites. The first of the year from Chelmarsh Reservoir, a single bird for a single day (25 May) and one at VP, again for a single day, on 5 Sep. All other records were from Park Farm floods (SJ7717) near Newport. In August, six were present on the 16th and one on the 29th. Through September, birds were present on eleven days between the 3rd and 16th with a maximum of ten on the 13th and seven on the 6th. An individual was present on 13 and 16 October to complete the year.

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**LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius dubius*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Glenn Bishton  
Number of records: 70 (BT=52, CR=1, eB=17). WeBS Counts=2

The 70 records received, with just 53 excluding eBird, were down from 120 in 2019. This may be attributable to the restricted access to VP, which usually provides a high volume of records. There were no records from the southern half (SO grid references) of the county. Little Ringed Plover was recorded at nine sites compared with eight in

2019, with records from Park Farm floods, Polemere and Cressage Bridge for the first time. The sites included regular breeding sites but some passage stop-over wetlands, and fifty-one percent of the records were from VP, suggesting that other occupied sites may be under-recorded.

The first arrival comprised one at Whixall canal floods on 15 Mar, earlier than the first record of 31 Mar in 2019. This was followed by two at Buildwas and two at Leighton on the River Severn on 22 Mar and one at VP on 8 Apr. Numbers at these sites gradually rose with three at Leighton on 24 Mar and three at Buildwas on 25 Mar. Two at Whixall canal floods on 25 Mar, increased to six on 7 Apr whilst three at VP on 17 Apr rose to five there on 28 Apr. One at Cressage Bridge on 15 May could have been a passage bird but this site is worth watching further.

Early breeding activity included three displaying at VP on 18 Apr, with an occupied nest noted there on 28 Apr and recorded situated on the “main shingle island” on 29 Apr. Little Ringed Plover were still nesting here on 4 May but there was no further evidence of breeding success until 15 May when a “third nesting attempt” was recorded on another island. The outcome was inconclusive but a fledged juvenile there on 19 Jun was “likely from a nearby site” as there were no records of chicks at VP itself.

Successful breeding was confirmed at one other site, Wood Lane NR, where it was noted on 15 Jun that three pairs had attempted to breed, producing three or possibly four chicks.

One member of a pair on the shingle banks of the River Severn at Leighton on 5 May chased off a Common Sandpiper. Five Little Ringed Plover were there on 13 May, and four on 19 May, but there was no confirmation of breeding. A pair was on the shingle beds at Buildwas on 5 May and, although breeding was not confirmed, two adults were alarm-calling in a large fallow field adjacent to the River Severn on 22 Jun. The recorder noted that this was the first time that the field had been left fallow for at least 22 years and was a potential nest site.

Passage was noted at a new site, Polemere, on 27 Jun but Covid-19 restrictions probably contributed to a lack of passage records in July, particularly from VP. Nocturnal flight was recorded at Adderley over six days between 10 Jul and 9 Aug, variably between 2300 to 0345 hours. The latest records of the year all came from one site, Park Farm floods, with three there on 30 Aug and a final individual on 15 Sep.

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**DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus*

Shropshire Status: Rare passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Gerry Thomas  
Number of Records: 2 (BT=1, CR=1)

The Long Mynd airfield is a favourite location with this rare visitor, usually in spring. A pair flew onto the airfield and were seen feeding about 100 metres from the access gate, on 13 May (*B Daniels*). They moved on quickly.

The second record of the year was an unusual one on return passage. A bird was photographed at Pole Bank on the Long Mynd on 12 Oct (*A Cullis*). This is the latest autumn record in the modern era, with just a sole occurrence in November 1871 later in the year. The last autumn occurrence was also at Pole Cottage on the Long Mynd on 13 September 1998 with another record in August 1992 at Bucknell and six autumn records in the 1980s including three in September 1981.

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**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Gerry Thomas  
Number of Records: 7 (BT=5, CR=0, eB=2)

Most records this year were of birds sound-recorded or heard flying over. The species seems generally to overfly our county but is recorded most years on both spring and autumn passage. Birds were sound-recorded overnight at Cantlogrove on 23 Apr, 2 and 6 May with a bird seen here on the last date and another on 10th.

On return passage a bird called at 23:30 when flying over Shrewsbury on 24 Aug. Two or more were sound recorded at Cantlogrove after 22:00 on 28 Aug.

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## CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon summer visitor, scarce winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	249 (BT=223, CR=5, eB=21). WeBS Counts=7

In spite of the large increase in records for other species received in 2020, there was about the same number of Curlew records, from far fewer sites (117, compared with 140 in 2019), perhaps further evidence of its rapid decline.

It has virtually ceased to winter here, with only one January record, five in February, five in November and none in December. These were three at Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence (Ponthen WeBS site) on 12 Jan, one at VP on 5 Feb (the only spring passage record from this well-watched reserve), six at the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence on 9 Feb, six at Isombridge Pools on 13 Feb, one at Whixall canal floods on 24 Feb, and eight at the same site the following day. At the year-end, all in November, seven at Pentre (Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence) on 4th, one at Oerley reservoir on 9th, three at Cole Mere on 13th, 14 at Wood Lane on 15th, and the last for the year, 14 at Wood Lane on 16th.

Those at Whixall in late February may have been passing through, as there were nine at the same site on 2 Mar, 10 the following day, and nine on 8 Mar, but only one on 6th and 2 on 19th, but some of them they may have been newly arrived breeding birds.

Other WeBS counts in March produced only two sightings of one at Ponthen, but the other an exceptional 201 at Hayes Farm, both in the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence on 8 Mar. Similar large counts have frequently been made in February and March at the Confluence in previous years and are typical of Scandinavian birds passing through on return migration.

Although there were a few more sightings at passage sites in March and April, almost all records after 8 Mar and through the breeding season, were of one or two birds.

There were 41 records in March as more moved into or through the county, 74 in April as they became conspicuous on breeding sites, 48 in May and 59 in June.

The first records came from breeding sites near Oswestry, one heard on 2 Mar, and Bentlawnt, two on 3 Mar, but they were widespread by mid-March

Breeding was confirmed only at Bentlawnt (SJ30F) Morton (SJ22X), Westcott (SJ40A) and Woodhill (SJ22T), but evidence of probable breeding was found at Baggy Moor, Bicton Hill, Bridges, Catherton Common, Cleeton St. Mary, Craig Sychtyn, Earls Ditton, Gorstybank, Hopesgate, Lower Hordley, Maesbury Marsh, Magpie Hill (Titterstone Clee), Merrington Floods, Rhos Fiddle, Trefonen, Venusbank, Wern Ddu and Wheathill. No chicks or fledged young were reported, and the last record from any of these breeding sites, or any other potential breeding site, was 4 Jul, well before any young would have been old enough to fly.

Most records received were from the 10 areas monitored by the Community Wildlife Groups (see the Research Reports section) which located 93–112 territories. Attempts were made to establish how many of these pairs produced fledged young. There was an unconfirmed report that one pair raised a brood, but all the other pairs went quiet well before fledging could have occurred. It appears that virtually the whole breeding population failed again.

The SOS “Save our Curlews” Campaign appeal raised sufficient for a nest finding and protection project to be carried out in each of the Upper Clun, Clee Hill and Strettons areas, in co-operation with the respective Community Wildlife Group, but the project was postponed because of Covid-19 restrictions. Further information about the projects and the Campaign can be found on the website [www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews](http://www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews)

“Curlew Country” planned to continue with “Headstarting” (removing eggs from nests of wild birds, incubating them, rearing the chicks, and then releasing them after fledging), but that too was postponed.

The mid-Wales ringing group has been colour-ringing Curlews, and observers are asked to check all birds for rings (see SOS website).

There were 12 records in July, six in August, four in September and three in October, but all these were of only one or two birds, and the only reports of post-breeding or passage flocks in these months were of 36 roosting at Wood Lane on 29 Jul, 10 at Park Farm Floods on 30 Aug, eight at Wood Lane on 21 Sep and nine at Lyneal on 22 Oct. There were only two reports from VP, single birds on 22 Aug and 4 Oct.

Records for November are summarised above, and there were (again) no December records.

The small size of passage flocks, in spring and autumn, is a further indication of the rapid decline of this species.

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

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of Records:	2 (BT=1, CR=1)

A male in breeding plumage was found at Polemere on the evening of the 26 Apr (*J Grundy*).

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

Shropshire Status:	Scarce passage migrant, very rare winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, Annex 1, UKBAP, Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of Records:	7 (BT=6, eB=1)

A poor, possibly Covid-induced year, with only six birds counted in the county this year – one at Priorslee Lake on the morning of 1 Jan, four birds in summer plumage at Pepperhill Pool, Calverhall on 9 Jul, and an individual that remained on Park Farm floods for eight days from 18–25 Aug.

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**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:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	16 (BT=16, CR=0, eB=0)

Following a blank spring, nine birds on autumn passage represented the best year since 2016, despite the demise of Whixall canal floods, a formerly favoured site.

Three were discovered at Park Farm floods near Newport on 29 Aug, with two remaining the following evening. Ten days later, a juvenile was located on the same floods on 9 Sep, which lingered until 17 Sep, accompanied by a second individual on 15th and 16th. A party of three birds graced the same site on 4 Oct. Elsewhere, a juvenile male dropped in briefly at VP on 27 Sep but appeared to fly off east.

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**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Tom Lowe  
Number of Records: 27 (BT=22, CR=0, eB=5). WeBS Counts=1

One amongst Lapwings at Ternhill floods on 18 Feb was the first winter record since 2014, when two were also amongst the Lapwing flock at Ternhill in February. The following three months of 2020 recorded one apiece, with singles at Leighton on 22 Mar, VP on 11 Apr, and Whixall Moss on 26 May.

Autumn passage commenced on 30 Jul with a nocturnal migrant recorded over Adderley at 00:43. One was then seen at Bridgwalton Quarry, Underton on 4 Aug before more nocturnal migrants were recorded overnight on 7/8 Aug (multiple calls over both Cantlop at 23:10 and Adderley at 02:33). A final August record came from Northwood Pool on 25 Aug.

A good run of September birds at Park Farm floods, Newport began with eight in the evening of 3rd, 10 on 6th, dropping to seven on 7th, six on 8th and four on 9th. Five were reported on 10th, then one to four on 13th to 16th, with two on 19th. One was at Wood Lane on 21 Sep, and the final record of the year was of one at VP on 27 Sep.

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**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

Shropshire Status: Very rare passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Tom Lowe  
Number of Records: 7 (BT=7, CR=0, eB=0)

Following a brief sighting on 7 Sep (*MG Grant*) a juvenile lingered at the temporary wader hotspot of Park Farm floods, near Newport on 13-15 Sep (*MG Grant, TC Lowe, J Reeves*) but departed during the day on 15th. After the spring adult in May 2019, this was just the second record in a decade.

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**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

Shropshire Status: Common winter visitor, scarce resident  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Tom Wall  
Number of Records: 48 (BT=43, CR=1, eB=4)

Twelve records in January were followed by seven in February and four in March, the last on 22nd. The next record, of one roding over the Black Hill (the only such observation of the year), was on 2 Jul, followed by one bird on 24 Oct, after which there were eight records in November and 15 in December. It is a poor tally but Covid-19 may well have limited the numbers seen.

Most records are always of single birds roosting by day in woodland cover and flushed by chance, but thermal imaging devices offer the potential for night-time observations of birds feeding in short vegetation outside woodlands. Three were detected in this way at Lyneal Lodge on 18 Nov and 20 in twos and threes at Soulton Hall near Wem on 25 Nov, where 15 were spotted on 11 Dec.

The 2019 Annual Report mentioned that the remains of seven Woodcock had been found on the roof of St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, where they had been taken by Peregrines. At the time of writing, enquiries as to whether more were found in 2020 have not been answered.

**Ringling Recoveries**

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2020 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

**EA71646**

Ringed Adult	29-01-2020	Two Crosses, Clun Forest: 52°28'N 3°07'W D
Dead (hit by car)	03-04-2020	Kurichino, Selizharovskiy District: 56°45'N 33°16'E (Tver Oblast) <b>Russian Federation</b> 2,362km ENE 0y 2m 5d

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**JACK SNIFE** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.  
National Conservation Status: Green List, RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Peter Carty  
Number of Records: 16 (BT=14, CR=0, eB=2). WeBS Count=1

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.

Sixteen records received involving 20 individual birds. 11 records of single birds, one record of two birds and three of three birds. Two interesting and exceptional records of counts of eight spotlighted after dark at Soulton Hall, near Wem on 25 Nov and 11 Dec.

Records were widely dispersed across the county with nine in early part of year and six in latter.

**January:** One, Whitegates Farm Moretonwood 8th; three, Melverley Green 12th; one, Cole Mere 12th; three, Holly Banks NR 12th; three, Severn Vyrnwy confluence 12th; one, Benthall Hall Pool 27<sup>th</sup>

**February:** Two, Benthall Hall Pool 14th

**March:** One, Wall Farm 6<sup>th</sup>

Last of the first winter period was one at Meaton Lane on 11 Apr.

**October:** A bird with Common Snipe at Black Hill on 17th was in a long, wet grass with soft mud in a patch of clearfell; one Long Mynd on 19th; one at Buildwas also on 19th was in cereal stubble

**November:** One, Lyneal Lodge 18th and notably eight at Soulton Hall 25th (M George)

**December:** Another count of eight at Soulton Hall on 11th

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### **SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

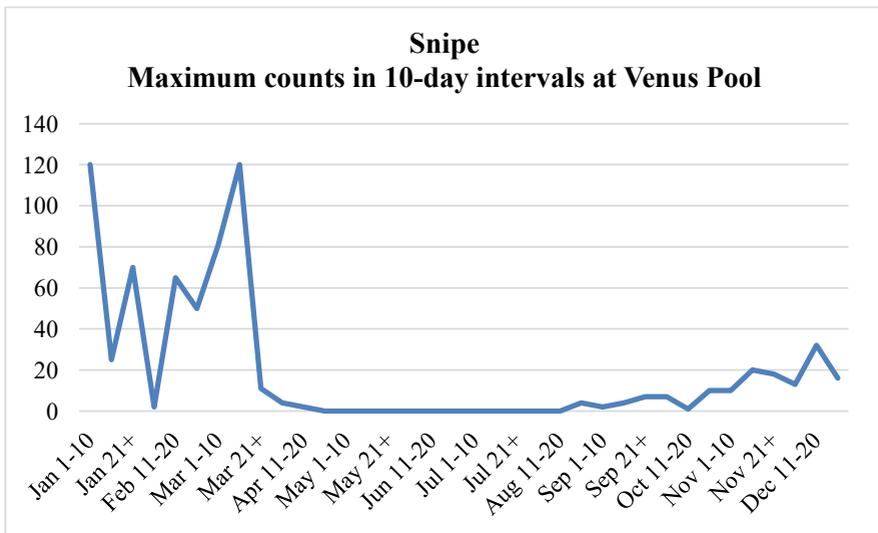
Shropshire Status:	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	325 (BT=253, CR=5, eB=77). WeBS counts = 29

About 320 records were received, a slight increase on 2019, which was itself a big increase from previous years, but the number of different sites, about 100, was twice as many as last year. Once again VP dominated with over a third of the records coming from this well-watched reserve. Only 30 came from Whixall (canal floods

and Moss), compared with about 100 in 2019; and 28 came from Benthall Hall, and 25 from Wall Farm. Most records came from the north, with only 36 from 24 locations in the south, a few more than last year. Almost all were in the winter and autumn period.

There were only four breeding season records, Long Mynd (location unspecified) on 9 May, one drumming and chipping at Duckley Nap (Wild Moor, Long Mynd) on 28 May, and one at Whixall Moss NNR on 1 Jun, and another at a different location there, drumming, on 2 Jun.

There were also 29 records from WeBS counts. The only records submitted with evidence of breeding were the two of drumming birds.



The chart shows the pattern of winter visitors and passage migrants, the maximum count at VP for each 10-day interval. There was a substantial winter population, but the maximum of 70 on 20 Feb was rather less than the 120 on 9 Jan and 16 Mar last year (the comparison should not have been affected by Covid-19 restrictions, which came into effect after 20 Mar). Dispersal and spring passage occurs during late March and early April, then, as usual, there were no records until return passage, and a steady increase throughout the autumn and winter. These figures were affected by the pandemic because the hides were closed. Autumn passage usually starts in mid-July, but wasn't noted until the end of August, but the highest count, 23 on 25 Nov, was slightly higher than the maximum last autumn.

There were 121 double-figure counts, the highest 120 at Soulton Hall (near Wem) on 25 Nov and again on 11 Dec. Other maximum site counts over 50 came from Wall Farm (Kynnersley - 80 on 17 Jan), VP (see above), Benthall Hall (63 on 27 Jan) and Noneley (50 on 8 Oct).

In addition, there were 11 double-figure WeBS counts, but the highest were only 12, at VP, Chelmarsh Reservoir, Polemere and Whixall Moss, all in December.

Snipe is a Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, and SBR 2019 included the results of a survey carried out every five years since 2004 to monitor the breeding population and distribution. The survey found three drumming males on Wild Moor, but the welcome increase found on Long Mynd continued, with five found on Wild Moor in 2020, an increase of two on the 2019 survey result. One of these is the one near Duckley Nap referred to above, and the new pair at Whixall Moss was also reported and referred to above.

A full report of the 2019 survey can be found on the SOS website [www.shropshirebirds.com](http://www.shropshirebirds.com).

Snipe is on the *Red List of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*, and more breeding season records are wanted, please, particularly of drumming or chipping birds.

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### **COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Shropshire Status:	Passage migrant, rare breeding species
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	66 (BT=55, CR=3, eB=8). WeBS Counts=4

Sixty-six records were received, but from only 22 sites. Twenty-eight came from VP, but there were none from Whixall this year. A quarter of the VP records were of spring passage, and three-quarters were autumn passage. Annual and seasonal fluctuations usually reflect the water levels at the different sites, but there are usually more autumn passage records, spread over a longer period, reflecting the increased population at that time, boosted by juveniles.

All the records were of single birds, except five of two together, all on spring passage, at VP on 16, 25 and 27 Apr at Leighton, at Polemere on 5 May, and Chelmarsh on 16 May. All were seen on one day only. The only sighting of more

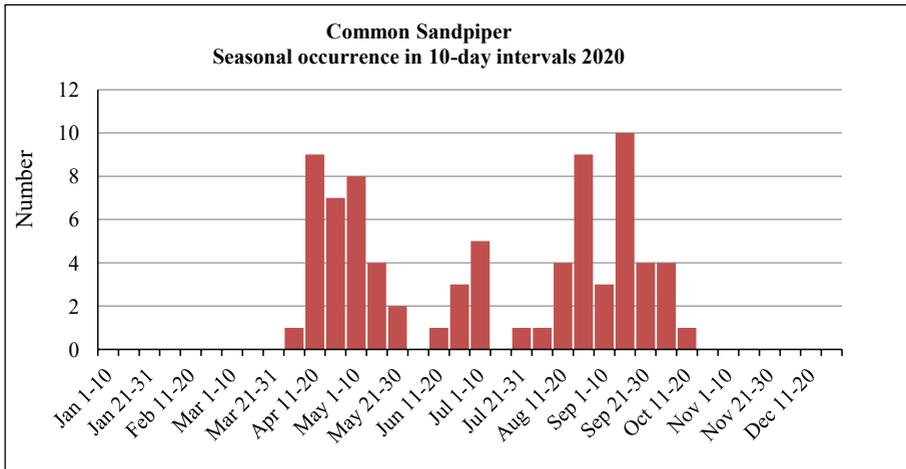
were three together at Chelmarsh on 6 Jul. There were no reports of possible breeding, but this early July record, together with other records from Chelmarsh on 31 May and 24 Jun, suggest the possibility.

One at Buildwas meanders on 28 May was also near suitable breeding habitat. Others at Polemere on 27 June and at Upper Berwick on 23 July were probably failed breeders on very early return passage,

Passage got underway way with records from Cantlopgrove, the River Severn at Cressage and VP on 17 Aug, and there were 28 further records from widespread locations up until 2 Oct. There was then a gap until the last of the year, at Shrewsbury Weir on 13 Oct.

Wintering birds are recorded occasionally, but none were recorded this year.

The pattern of seasonal occurrence of the 77 individuals recorded is shown in the chart.



In comparison, the earliest arrivals in 2019 and 2020 were a month later than the earliest arrivals in 2018 (five at two sites in mid-March), while unlike 2018, autumn passage was more pronounced than spring passage and started later.

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**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:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records	77 (BT=66, eB=7 CR=4). WeBS Count=1

Just two records in the first winter period. Singles were found at Walcot on 4 Jan and at Oliver's Pond just south of Chirk Bank on 17 Jan, on the Shropshire side of the border.

Continuing scarce into spring with two more records. A bird in flight at Shrewsbury on 2 Apr landed nearby, and two at VP on 8 Apr were present for several hours.

Autumn migration started in late June as is usual, with one flying south and calling at 03.00 over Cantlopgrove on 24 Jun and one seen next day at Bridgwalton Quarry, Underton.

Twelve records in July were widely spread, starting with singles at Cantlopgrove on 5th and Pepperhill Pool, Calverhall on 9th. Other singletons were found at Chelmarsh (several dates), Wall Farm Kynnersley, Tibberton Moor and Northwood with two birds at Chelmarsh on 26 Jul.

Seen on 16 dates in August, with peak numbers of six at Bridgwalton Quarry on 10th and at VP on 13th. A peak of four were on Chelmarsh scrape on 2nd with one or two birds recorded here on six other dates. Singles or two birds were also present at Tibberton Moor, Park Farm Floods near Newport and by the River Tern at Attingham Park. Nocturnal passage was recorded at Cantlopgrove on 7th, 18th and 22nd.

Passage continued in September. Recorded on five dates at VP including a monthly peak of four birds on 1st. One or two birds also noted at Shrewsbury, Chelmarsh scrape, Wall Farm, and Bicton Hill while three flew over before dawn at Cantlopgrove on 14th.

Reports declined in October when two were at Pams Pools, Crosshouses. Singles were at Cold Hatton on 10th and Cantlopgrove on 26th. Rather more in November may have reflected an influx of wintering birds. Two were at Adderley on 3rd and three at Chelmarsh on 6th. One at Brown Heath on 16th was flushed from the runoff water of a muck pile, with other singles in late November from VP, Bromfield and Cantlopgrove. The status of the November records as 'wintering' individuals was strengthened as singletons continued to be reported at some of these sites

into December with reports on three dates at Chelmarsh; two dates at each of Cantlopgrove and Bromfield and one at Adderley.

The usual pattern of records for this species and one of the few wader species in our county whose numbers in general are holding up.

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**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor, formerly bred  
National Conservation Status: LBAP, Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 12 (BT=9, CR=0, eB=3). WeBS Count=1

A lone individual was seen at Leighton Flats, Buildwas, on 28 Jan. The next, in March, was a single bird reported from Sinkers Fields /Furbers floods intermittently over the period 6-8th. Two, 6 Apr, and then three (possibly more), 7 Apr, were heard in flight over Cantlopgrove. Singles were at Chirbury, 26 May, and Quarry Farm Pool, Howle, 26 Jul. The only other records were from VP with singles on 4 Jun, and 28 Sep, with two on the 18 Jun.

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**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 9 (BT=9)

Apart from one at Cockshutt, 22 Apr, and Chelmarsh, 2 Aug, all other records were from Park Farm floods in September. Three were present on the 1st, with one seen daily from the 14-17th.

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**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla*

Shropshire Status: Rare passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Tom Lowe  
Number of Records: 4 (BT=4, CR=0, eB=0)

On 16 Feb an adult was located in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere (*JP Martin*) and it or another was reported there again on 19th. A more surprising record was of a fresh juvenile located in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 10 Aug (*T Lowe*), a day when a series of large thunderstorms tracked north up the Welsh coast during the afternoon.

Following three blank years 2008-2011, this species has been recorded annually since 2012, with a noticeable peak in late winter and early spring, and to a lesser extent in November and December.

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

Shropshire Status: Common winter visitor and passage migrant, uncommon breeder  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Tom Lowe  
Number of Records: 1,040 (BT=829, CR=2, eB=209). WeBS Counts=72

Compared with 2019, the number of records received of this, the commonest small gull, more than doubled. Present throughout the year, there is a peak in the winter months, and a slump in records in early summer.

The now regular early January peak at The Mere, Ellesmere reached 5,500 on 2nd, and 5,000 there on 12th, the highest county total since 2005 when an exceptional 8,000 were on Priorslee Lake on 29 Nov. Other significant January counts included 1,000 at Moreton Say on 8th and 3,000 at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 29th. 4,000 were still roosting at The Mere on 8 Feb, with 1,300 feeding on a slurred field not far away at Edstaston earlier the same day, and the roost reached 5,000 again on 16 Feb. 1,500 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13 Feb, but there were no roost counts from either of the two main sites in March, presumably due to Covid-19 lockdown

restrictions. 510 at Hayes Farm near Molverley on 8th was the highest March count, followed by 194 at Chetwynd Pool, also on 8th, and 180 at Buildwas on 9th. 200 were on a pond near Chirbury on 27 Mar.

Breeding information for this species is always lacking in Shropshire, and the lockdown spring made things even worse. The only breeding evidence came from the Wood Lane colony, where 100 sitting pairs were estimated on 15 Jun. Elsewhere, counts of up to 30 birds were received from various sites during April to June, but many were flyovers, including nocturnal flocks sound-recorded over Cantlopgrove at 02:15 on 24 Apr and 23:07 on 31 May.

Autumn passage commenced as usual in July, with 53 counted in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 6th. Flocks of 20, 25 and 30 were seen feeding on flying ants over various Shrewsbury locations in the evening of 12 Jul, and another nocturnal movement was detected at 23:25 on 19 Jul, this time over Bank House Farm, Adderley. The Chelmarsh roost built to 300 on 20th and 1,000 on 26th, but in the north of the county just 150 were in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 29th, with 80 at nearby White Mere the same evening. Numbers continued to rise at Chelmarsh Reservoir, where 800 roosted on 2 Aug (including at least 30 fledged juveniles), 2,300 roosted on 10th and 2,500 on 19th, but there was then a drop during September to 1,500 on 5th and 900 on 25th. Other notable gatherings included 320 at Park Farm floods on 18 Aug, 300 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 26 Aug, and 150 at VP in the evening of 5 Sep.

On 2 Oct 1,600 roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere and 350 were on flooded fields at Moreton Say on 4 Oct. 200 were on Priorslee Lake on 24 Oct, and at the end of the month 2,500 were in the roost on The Mere, Ellesmere. In November, 1,000 were on Priorslee Lake on 11th, and the next day 2,500 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir and 1,000 roosted at The Mere. The latter saw an increase to 5,200 on 2 Dec, 4,800 on 21st and 4,600 on 29th, whilst the Chelmarsh roost recorded a December max of 1,700 on 6th. Away from the hotspots, 500 fed on pasture at Moreton Say on 30 Dec and 450 were on Whixall floods on New Year's Eve.

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**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** *Ichthyæetus 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:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	22 (BT=19, CR=0, eB=3)

The first of the year was a winter-plumaged adult at Priorslee Lake on 3 Jan, followed by one at Colemere on 5 Feb. Compared with recent years, the annual late winter passage at The Mere, Ellesmere was reduced in numbers and duration, with an adult in the roost on 8 Feb, three adults on 10th and one on 16th. The typical peak period of mid-February to mid-March did not yield any reports.

As in 2019, there was then a gap in records until a late July juvenile, this time in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 26th. More juveniles appeared in August, with the Chelmarsh roost hosting one on 2nd, two on 9th and 10th, and one on 18th. Elsewhere, there was a juvenile at The Mere, Ellesmere on 12th and two juveniles at VP on 17th. Finally, a juvenile accompanied 20 Black-headed Gulls feeding on playing fields in Bridgnorth on 30th. Another youngster lingered at Chelmarsh Reservoir all day on 5 Sep, and in October there were two, a 1cy and a 2cy, in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 14th. Another three birds were recorded in November: a 1cy at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 5th, at The Mere, Ellesmere on 12th, and an adult at VP on 19th. The last record of the year concerned a 2cy in the roost at The Mere on 30 Dec.

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## COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon winter visitor, has bred
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	68 (BT=54, CR=0, eB=14). WeBS Count=1

Typically, during January and February, almost all records came from the Ellesmere area, with peak counts of 350 on 2 Jan and 400 on 8 Feb, in the roost at The Mere. There were still at least 350 roosting there on 16 Feb, but no records were received after 1 Mar. A single bird at Cottage Pool, Nib Heath on 24 Mar was the final record of the winter, and there were no more until August.

Autumn passage began with a subadult in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 2 Aug and there were three there on 9th, rising to seven (including four juveniles) the next day. A 2cy roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere on 21 Aug, and single figure counts continued to be recorded from there and Chelmarsh during September. Two birds in a field north of Condover on 18 Sep was an unusual mid-county record, and one in a ploughed field with Lesser Black-backed Gulls at nearby Cantlop on 18 Oct was the first record for this well-watched site.

With the exception of two records from Priorslee Lake in late December, the

remaining autumn and winter records all came from the Ellesmere area or Chelmarsh Reservoir. At The Mere, 50 roosted on 16 Oct, 200 on 9 Dec and 550 on 29 Dec, the highest count of the year, and indeed of the decade. Meanwhile the peak count at Chelmarsh Reservoir was just four on 12 Nov, and Priorslee Lake recorded five in the pre-roost on 29 Dec, one of which stayed to roost.

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

Shropshire Status:	Scarce winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	33 (BT=28, CR=2, eB=3)

The first of the year was an adult near Market Drayton at Smythemoor on 2 Jan, with the remaining winter records coming from the more traditional Telford haunts, except for one in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 17 Jan. Following double-figure counts in Telford in December 2019, up to six were recorded at Priorslee Lake and nearby Red Hill on eight dates during January and early February.

Spring records are unusual, but in 2020 there were several reports, possibly as a result of increased observer hours spent sky-watching from gardens due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Two were reported on a flooded meadow near Clungunford on 30 Mar, followed by another two at Mereside, Shrewsbury on 8 Apr. On 3 May, one flew north over Cantlopgrove, tagged onto a flock of seemingly migrant Lesser Black-backed Gulls, the first site record, and three days later on 6th another flew north. Also in May, a 2cy was at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 24th.

After a three-month break in records, a juvenile was seen in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 28 Aug, with it or another recorded there on 30 Sep and 23 Oct. Another juvenile roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 24 Sep, followed by a 2cy on 8 Oct. The first of the winter at Priorslee Lake was a group of three (an adult and two juveniles) on 30 Nov, and up to nine were present in the pre-roost on four dates in December, with four staying to roost on 29th.

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## **HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	UKBAP, Red List ( <i>argenteus</i> ) and Amber List ( <i>argentatus</i> )
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	288 (BT=247, CR=2, eB=39)

The number of records received more than doubled compared with the previous year, and came from throughout the year, although with a notable slump in spring. As with Lesser Black-backed Gull, following a shift in distribution towards Telford and the south-east of the county at the turn of the century, recent years have seen a return of the largest numbers to the Ellesmere area. However, whilst that species has tended to peak in autumn recently, Herring Gull has remained a true winterer, peaking around New Year.

At the start of the year, 500 roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10 Jan and 17 Jan, and 250 on 8 Feb. Elsewhere in the county, 150 were at Priorslee Lake on 23 Jan and 100 at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 29 Jan, and 200 roosted there on 13 Feb. Following a count of 50 at The Mere on 16 Feb, the next double-figure count anywhere was not until 24 Aug when ten were in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir.

During March to July, 79 reports of one to three individuals came from 22 locations, many of them flying over gardens as the county's birders remained at home during the Covid-19 lockdown. Three birds feeding on flying ants over the Rea Brook area of Shrewsbury with Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on the evening of 12 Jul was an atypical record for this species.

Autumn passage commenced in early August with four birds present in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 10th including an adult accompanied by a begging juvenile. Numbers then slowly crept up, with counts of 34 at Cockshutt on 31 Aug, eight at VP and 35 at Chelmarsh on 5 Sep, and 15 in fields at Boretton near Condover on 6 Sep. By the end of September there were at least 80 in each of the roosts at Chelmarsh Reservoir and The Mere, Ellesmere, a relatively early date for such numbers. 80 were also reported from Northwood on 22 Oct.

A maximum of 132 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir in November (on 12th), and 150 in December (on 6th) whilst numbers remained low at The Mere, Ellesmere until late December when 450 were counted in the roost on 21st. The final days saw the highest count of the year, 530 at The Mere on 29 Dec, the same day as 80 were

present at Priorslee Lake late afternoon before departing to roost in Staffordshire.

A handful of reports of Scandinavian Herring Gulls *L. a. argentatus* came from The Mere, Ellesmere in January and December, but the only count was of 20 on 21 Dec (along with 430 *argenteus*).

*Due to an editorial error the species account for Herring Gull was omitted from the 2019 report (ed.). It is published below.*

## **2019:**

Records of this species continued to increase with 118 received from all months of the year.

The highest count of the year came from The Mere, Ellesmere where 600 roosted on 27 Jan. Numbers then fell away rapidly with just 150 recorded in the roost there on 23 Feb and 150 in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 1 Feb. Also in February, five were observed amongst nest-prospecting Lesser Black-backed Gulls at rooftop sites in Harlescott, Shrewsbury, but no further breeding information was received, and it has yet to join the county's breeding avifauna.

During April to July, just ten records of single figures were received from six sites, including the first returning juvenile at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 30 Jul. Twelve roosted there on 29 Aug but it was not until October that numbers started to increase, with 34 at Whixall canal floods on 3rd and 25 in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10th, rising to 50 on 19th, and 110 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 23rd. An increase in large gulls in the Priorslee Lake and Red Hill area in late November led to a count of 100 Herring Gulls on 2 Dec and 50 roosted overnight there on 7 Dec. The highest count of the second winter period was 300 in the Chelmarsh Reservoir roost.

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## **CASPIAN GULL** *Larus cachinnans*

Shropshire Status:	Rare vagrant
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	52 (BT=48, CR=2, eB=2)

The first county record of Caspian Gull was in December 2006 at Priorslee Lake, and apart from a blank year in 2008, the species steadily increased to a peak of 22 individuals in 2013. Changes in feeding opportunities then saw a decline before the

number of birds levelled off at between three and five per year in 2015–2018. The 2019 total of nine was a welcome increase, and remarkably that figure doubled in 2020, with 18 individuals recorded at six different sites, the second highest annual total after 2013.

The previous winter's pulse of records in the Telford area continued into the New Year, beginning with a new 2nd-winter at Priorslee Lake on 2 Jan (*J Reeves*) and a 4th-winter there the next day (*J Almond*). Meanwhile another 2nd-winter roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10 Jan (*J Reeves*) and then on 28 Jan, a 2nd-winter first seen in November and December 2019 reappeared at Priorslee Lake. The winter finished with a near-adult in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13 Feb (*T Lowe*), getting all three gull hotspots off to a good start for the year.

As expected, there was a gap in records during the spring and early summer before a 3cy was located in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on the relatively early date of 26 Jul (*J Reeves*), and was seen again on 4 Aug. A stormy evening at Chelmarsh with a fresh SSE breeze on 19 Aug was the setting for the discovery of the first juvenile since 2014 (*D Western et al*) when one was seen at Candles landfill site on 12 Aug. A month later another 1st-year was found following the plough at Concover on 18 Sep (*T Lowe*), followed by a moulting adult in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 25 Sep (*T Lowe*). An adult in a field at Cantlopgrove on 29 Sep (*T Lowe*) was a long-awaited house tick for the finder, visible from the bathroom window as it fed with 180 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and an adult Yellow-legged Gull. Two days later it was relocated two miles away at VP (*J Almond, JP Martin*).

A 2nd-winter at Priorslee Lake on 20–24 Oct (*A Gaunt*) was the first of another winter series of records at the site involving at least six birds. A long-staying 2nd-winter present on and off from 2 Nov into 2021 (*E Wilson, J Reeves*) bore a resemblance to the 1st-winter present during November and December 2019 that was first found on the similar date of 29 Oct and may have been a returning bird. On 4 Nov a 3rd-winter joined the 2nd-winter (*J Reeves*), and was seen again on 6 Nov. An adult in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 12 Nov (*C Reed*) was the last of the late autumn records, and it was Christmas Eve when the next bird was found, a smart 1st-winter in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere (*R Dowley*). A final arrival at the end of the year involved three 1st-winters at Priorslee Lake: two in the pre-roost on 28 Dec and another which stayed to roost along with the long-staying 2nd-winter the following night (*T Lowe*).

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

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Tom Lowe  
Number of Records: 108 (BT=93, CR=4, eB=11)

The first 17 records of the year came from the three main gull hotspots of Chelmarsh Reservoir, Priorslee Lake, and The Mere, Ellesmere between 1 Jan and 13 Feb. Most were of one to three birds, but six were at Priorslee Lake on 7 Jan and four at The Mere on 8 Feb. Two records from Trench Pool in Telford then followed, one on 24 Feb and one on 20 Mar.

After the usual spring gap in records, one at Northwood flood on 23 Jul represented a typical start to the summer season. The first two juveniles were in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir the next day and on 26th two adults and three juveniles roosted. Up to six were recorded there on nine dates in August, involving a minimum of 11 birds (three adults, a 3cy, a 2cy and six juveniles) but likely many more. At The Mere, Ellesmere, up to four were recorded on nine dates in August, including at least one juvenile. Numbers increased during September, peaking at eight at Chelmarsh on 25th and ten at The Mere on 11th, followed by a report of 18 on 22nd, but just nine the following evening. Elsewhere, one was at Park Farm floods on 21 Aug and 1 Sep, with four there on 3 Sep. Five in fields at Boreton, near Condover on 6 Sep included two juveniles, two were at nearby Condover on 18 Sep, and one was at Cantlopgrove on 29 Sep.

During October counts peaked at nine at The Mere, Ellesmere on 16th, five at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 8th and two at Priorslee Lake on 15th whilst an adult was seen at Cantlopgrove on 26-28 Oct. Just as at the start of the year, all of November and December's records came from the three hotspots, with maxima of five at Priorslee Lake and Chelmarsh Reservoir, and four at The Mere.

	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
The Mere, Ellesmere	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	18	9	2	4
Chelmarsh Reservoir	3	3	-	-	-	-	5	6	8	5	3	5
Priorslee Lake	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	4
Condover area	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-

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## 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
Author:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	1,204 (BT=825, CR=0, eB=379). WeBS Counts=40

The five-fold increase in records can only partly be explained by the inclusion of eBird records this year. During March to June, 442 records (more than double the total for 2019), mostly of groups of up to 30 birds, came from over 60 sites across the county, many of them gardens. This presumably reflected the Covid-19 lockdown-induced increase in casual recording, garden-listing and lockdown walks. Whilst there was a corresponding absence of roost counts during this period, notable spring totals included 50 at Pepperhill on 4 Mar, 80 on a newly-sown field at Cantlop on 29 Apr, 117 over Shrewsbury on 1 May, 67 apparently migrating north over Cantlopgrove on 3 May, and 187 in a bare field near Cockshutt in the evening of 14 May.

Breeding data was almost non-existent, but three well-grown juveniles were reported from the traditional Ludlow site on 19 Jul, with four juveniles there on 26th, the same day as at least 15 fledged juveniles were counted amongst a gathering of 80 birds at the Shrewsbury stronghold in Harlescott. Breeding could not be proved at the recently-colonised site in Oswestry, unfortunately. Three fledged juveniles were present away from the colonies at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 24 Jul. Typically, July also saw the start of autumn passage, with 26 in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 1st rising to 140 on 26th. 48 were seen feeding on flying ants over Shrewsbury during the evening of 12th, and 93 flew over Bank House Farm, Adderley the following day. The Chelmarsh roost had risen to 232 by 4 Aug, and 120 roosted on The Mere, Ellesmere the following evening. A roost of 690 at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 10 Aug contained at least 50 juveniles, and by 21 Aug the roost contained 1,270 birds. 214 were recorded at Park Farm Floods on 22 Aug, and 2,000 roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere on the last day of the month.

As ever, the highest site totals came from the two main roosts at The Mere, Ellesmere in the north, and Chelmarsh Reservoir in the south-east of the county, with a significant peak during September and October. At the end of the twentieth century, the largest counts came from Chelmarsh in winter, peaking at 5,500 in February 1990, whereas in the last decade numbers have been higher at The Mere in autumn (6,100 in November 2019). This recent change may be attributed to the closure of

the major feeding opportunities at the landfills in the south-east, and possibly an increase in observer hours at autumn roosts, ahead of the typical winter season. During autumn and winter 2020, Priorslee Lake also hosted significant counts, but in numbers far below the regular four-figure totals seen a decade ago. Monthly maxima (where available) are shown in the table and chart below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
The Mere, Ellesmere	1,000	2,100	-	-	-	1	-	2,000	5,700	6,000	1,500	1,500
Chelmarsh Reservoir	1,500	500	-	-	22	10	140	1,270	3,000	-	2,000	1,000
Priorslee Lake	650	-	2	-	1	1	-	3	322	560	550	350

Away from the main sites, other high counts during the autumn and winter included 600 at Bank House Farm, Adderley during the first week of January, 400 at Moreton Say on 8 Jan, 650 at Priorslee Lake on 23 Jan, and 250 at Pontesbury on 26 Jan. In September, at least 750 commuted between VP and surrounding fields throughout the day on 5th, and 950 fed in two ploughed fields at Boreton, near Condover on 6th. On 8th, 570 flew over Cantloprogre in the evening: 350 south towards Chelmarsh Reservoir and 220 north apparently to roost on Bomere, a temporary seasonal roost perhaps. The following evening, at least 200 roosted overnight on the roof of an industrial unit in Hortonwood, Telford, another itinerant roost. 500 were following the plough at Condover on 18 Sep, with a similar-sized flock seen at Upton Cressett two days later. At least 400 were at VP on 1 Oct, and 1,000 were on flooded wheat at Moreton Say on 4th (with 800 still present three weeks later). Large numbers present around nearby Bank House Farm, Adderley culminated in a swirling flock of 3,500 on the windy afternoon of 29 Oct. 600 were at Pontesbury on 1 Nov, 550 at Oerley Reservoir on 9 Nov, and 900 flew over Trefonen on 2 Dec.

Birds showing characteristics of the darker-backed Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. f. intermedius* were seen at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 10 Aug, and at The Mere, Ellesmere on 18 Sep (at least two, one of which was a small, strikingly dark bird showing plumage features suggestive of Baltic Gull *L. f. fuscus*), 21 Dec and 29 Dec. These forms are undoubtedly under-recorded in the county. A creamy-white leucistic individual was at VP on 24 Sep and a hybrid Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Cantloprogre on 2 Oct.

2019 addition:

At least two juveniles fledged from a new rooftop location in Oswestry, bringing the total number of breeding sites to three.

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**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:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	9 (BT=9, CR=0, eB=0)

As in 2011 and 2017, there were no records of birds on spring passage, but six individuals were recorded during the summer. On 18 Jun four birds were present at Priorslee Lake, and singles were seen at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 1 Jul and 2 Aug.

Late August storms then triggered a flurry of records of birds on autumn passage. With the arrival of Storm Ellen on 21 Aug, at least one was seen at Priorslee Lake, and the following day a juvenile was present at Chelmarsh Reservoir. On the evening of 24 Aug, an adult arrived at Chelmarsh and soon settled to roost on a buoy ahead of Storm Francis, and the next day the storm delivered six to White Mere amongst a flock of 32 Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea*. On 26 Aug, just one adult remained at White Mere before making a brief visit to The Mere, Ellesmere and then flying off high west.

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**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

Shropshire Status:	Rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Annex 1, Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	5 (BT=5, CR=0, eB=0)

In complete contrast to 2019, none was recorded on spring passage in 2020 but there was a healthy autumn showing. On the evening of 4 Aug, two juveniles graced The Mere, Ellesmere but were gone the next day. On 21 Aug, in the wake of Storm Ellen, a juvenile spent a couple of hours fishing along the dam at Chelmarsh Reservoir before roosting on a buoy amongst the gull roost. Arctic and Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* were recorded across the Midlands that same evening.

The most startling record came a few days later, on 25 Aug, when Storm Francis swept across the country, and gusts of up to 55mph were recorded at RAF Shawbury. An unprecedented flock of 32 were found in the evening lined up on the jetties

at one of the species' favoured sites, White Mere, along with six Common Terns (*R Dowley*). Unfortunately, they departed overnight.

Since 1992 the species has been recorded in every year except 2018, usually in single figures, and more frequently in spring than autumn. The previous highest counts were of 21, also at White Mere, on 12 May 1993, 14 at Priorslee Lake on 28 April 2004, and 12 at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13 May 2002, making this year's flock the largest by some margin. There have been no previous double-figure counts on return passage.

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**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:	Tom Lowe
Number of Records:	2 (BT=1, CR=1, eB=0)

After a superb showing in 2019, the species clung on to its annual status with a flock of four at The Mere, Ellesmere on 18 Apr. There were no autumn records, and unlike the *Sterna* terns, return migrants remain the scarcer in the county.

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**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records	91 (BT=82, eB=9, CR=0)

Chelmarsh seems to be a favourite site for this species when it does appear here. A first-year bird, found on 4 Nov stayed until the end of the year (*J Reeves et al*). It was regularly seen fishing throughout its stay, particularly along the eastern shoreline, though it was seen bleeding from the bill on 27 Nov, perhaps a wound caused by a fishing hook. However, it recovered and was recorded into early 2021. Towards the end of its stay, it was heard a few times giving the mournful call typical of the species.

Following no records of this species from 2000–2011, it has been recorded in seven of the last nine years. All recent records have been birds of the year.

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**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Shropshire Status:	Nominate Atlantic form <i>carbo</i> ('Atlantic Cormorant') uncommon winter visitor; scarce non-breeding resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	692 (BT=458, CR=2, eB=232). WeBS counts=119

The great majority of records came from water bodies of various sorts, lakes, reservoirs, meres and pools, with a much smaller number associated with rivers including the Clun, Onny, Perry, Rea Brook and Severn. However quite a number of birds were picked up in flight only, identifiable by their distinctive silhouette and flight-action.

The highest count was 55+ at The Mere, Ellesmere on 20 Sep, exceeded only by 63 at the same site during a WeBS survey the following day. Other high counts were made at Shavington Park and VP, both peaking at 30, with Chelmarsh close behind on 18. VP was the most-visited site, possibly by observers as well as Cormorants, with the species found on 152 occasions and in every month, followed by Bank House Farm, Adderley, where it was encountered 73 times and in all months bar December.

Three *sinensis* in full breeding plumage were identified in a group with eight *carbo* at Shavington Park in February; single *sinensis* were recorded at VP in January, April and June, and another single at Greyfriars Bridge, Shrewsbury in December.

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**SHAG** *Gulosus aristotelis*

Shropshire Status:	Vagrant
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed (Vagrant)
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	1 (BT=1)

A juvenile was at Priorslee Lake, Telford on 25 Oct (*J Reeves*). It stayed just long enough for the observer to obtain some record shots before it departed. Remarkably, this was only the eighth modern record of this species in Shropshire and the first since 1993.

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**BITTERN** *Botaurus stellaris*

Shropshire Status: Very rare winter visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: John P Martin  
Number of records: 1 (BT=1, CR=0, eB=0)

One was sound-recorded as it migrated over Cantlopgrove at 0125 on 7 April (*T Lowe*). Perhaps the most outstanding of this year's records from the new and fast-developing field of nocturnal sound recording.

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**CATTLE EGRET** *Bubulcus ibis*

Shropshire Status: Very rare visitor  
National Conservation Status: RBBP  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: Gerry Thomas  
Number of Records: 5 (BT=5)

Three adults and three juvenile egrets flew into The Mere, Ellesmere on 17 Sep (*R Dowley*), with three seen the next morning, and singles on 19th and 21st.

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**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
National Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green list  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Josie Owen  
Number of Records: 867 (BT=663, CR=3, eB=201). WeBS  
Counts=103

Most of the 867 records were from northern parts of the county (SJ grid references), although there were records throughout. 70% were of single birds.

Good numbers seen at Leighton and Buildwas during the breeding season almost certainly relate to the well-established local colony. On 8 Jan nine birds were seen resting together on a sandbank in the River Severn. On 28th, 10 birds were seen. Then, on 3 Feb, 15 flew in as a flock and landed on the riverbank and eight birds

were seen on 9 Mar. At the end of the year, five birds were present by the River Severn at Leighton, possibly a prelude to the coming breeding season.

Holly Banks lies halfway between Bicton Heath and Llanymynech, so eight birds seen there on 5 and 8 Dec could have been pre-breeding birds from either of these colonies or perhaps a yet to be found heronry.

The colonies below are the known breeding sites in the county. Due to Covid restrictions just two colonies were counted this year.

Ashford	n/c
Bicton Heath	n/c
Bromfield	n/c
Chelmarsh	n/c
Chetwynd Park	4
Chirbury	n/c
Ellesmere	n/c
Halston Hall Whittington	n/c
Leighton	n/c
Llanymynech	4+
Lydham	n/c
Peplow	n/c
Skyborry	n/c

17 records from Chetwynd Pool illustrate breeding progress and activity through a whole year demonstrates how the breeding season extends from December to July:-

- 12 Jan** One bird attending nest
- 25 Mar** Three nests all with a pair present
- 31 Mar and 4 Apr** Four occupied nests
- 8 Apr** Four nests including one nest with young. Five adults on nests
- 12 Apr** Four nests, five adults, one juvenile in nest
- 1 May** Four active nests at least, five juveniles
- 16 May** Two nests with two young in each, adult on nest and two more nests with chicks
- 7 Jun** Two adult, four juveniles in four nests.

**5 Jul** Two young still in the nest

On seven more visits during the rest of the year at least one bird was present. Five birds on 12 Dec suggests the prelude to a new breeding season.

Only one other colony was observed, at Llanymynech:-

**10 Apr** “Heronry at this site which I usually monitor for the Heronries Census but survey on hold for Covid-19. I did not make an accurate count today to avoid disturbing birds but there were at least four actively occupied nests”

Records of several birds together between early December and late May could suggest a nearby breeding colony. Heronries are remarkably difficult to find so observations such as, “Gathering in willows by pool. Possible nesting attempt?” for four birds on 11 Jan at Sambrook Mill, then three nearby on 28 Mar are very helpful. So too are, “One pair in full breeding plumage displaying. Three sub-adults nearby. Possible new heronry starting up?” on 19 Mar at Shavington Park and four seen in suitable habitat on 20 Mar.

Five birds at Cantlop on 5 May flew to or from a roost at a nearby pond, and two adults and two fledged 2020 immatures at Wall Farm on 1 Jun could be from parties dispersing from a known colony.

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

Shropshire Status:	Rare visitor
National Conservation Status:	RBBP, Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Josie Owen
Number of Records:	104 (BT=89, CR=10, eB=5). WeBS Counts=9

The 104 recorded sightings likely referred to rather fewer individual birds; exactly how many is difficult to assess. A single record of three was in the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence on 9 Nov. Six records of two birds seen between 12 and 19 Jan in the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence suggests probably the same birds at each sighting. Most sightings, though, were of singletons usually in river valleys or meadows, or by our larger meres and lakes.

Northern locations in the County were the Severn at Buildwas/Leighton, Chetwynd Park and Pool and Park Farm near Newport, Priorslee Lake, Trench Pool, the Meres and Mosses, VP and the Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence. In the south, as well as Chelmarsh, singles were seen at nearby Dudmaston, Meaton Lane and Morville. Further south-west regular spots were Kempton, Lydbury North, Lydham Heath and Walcot.

Regular records early in the year were from 1 Jan to 20 Mar at the locations above. No birds were recorded then from late March until 23 Jun and it seems that birds headed off presumably to breeding sites out of the county at this time. Single birds returned to the county in late June with records at Priorslee Lake on 23rd and Meaton Lane on 27th.

Six records in July probably referred to just two individuals; more sightings in August were centred on Chelmarsh and the Severn Valley at Leighton/Buildwas. By September many of the locations listed above held one or two individuals at least temporarily but these obviously ranged widely.

Some notes allude to possibly favoured locations and company:

At Crosemere on 12 Jan: “Flew up from wet woodland at west end and did a circuit, calling, before landing in trees. Was with a Grey Heron.”

At Dudmaston on 1 Jan: “Bird present on Dudmaston Big Pool. It flew off in the direction of the River Severn” and on 26<sup>th</sup>: “The bird was in the Cormorant roost tree on Big Pool. In roughly the same place I saw it on the 1 Jan.”

On 2 Aug at Leighton: “Feeding edge of River Severn. Alongside Grey Heron.”

At VP on 1 Oct: “In primary moult. Getting chased around by the Grey Heron.”

On 7 Nov: “Flew into trees around Rowton Castle ponds at dusk, presumably to roost.”

Despite the June records there was no evidence of breeding in the county and none were reported at heronries.

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### **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:	Josie Owen
Number of Records:	144 (BT=123, CR=7, eB=14). WeBS Counts=8

Of the 144 records submitted, 93 were of single birds, 30 of two birds, 10 of three, four of four, four of five, two of eight and one of 10. There were 109 records in the north – SJ area 35 in the south – SO area.

In January and February, three birds were present at Holly Banks/Melverley on the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence 6 Jan.

The breeding season may be quite long, possibly into July, so records of two or more

birds may be useful as possible indication of nesting. Two at Maesbury Marsh on 1 Mar and two displaying at nearby Crosslanes on 8th are the most notable. Other records in spring/summer included two or more birds were recorded at Wall Farm Marsh, Kynnersley (two on 25 May) and at VP (four on 20 Jun, five on 1 and 6 Jul). Two birds were on the Severn at Leighton/Buildwas on 24 Jul and two more at Chelmarsh Scrape on 30th.

The Rivers Clun and especially the Teme seem a focus for the species in summer. Ten records on or near these rivers included two on 12 Jul at a regular feeding place, "Feeding in River Teme upstream from Ludford Bridge, Ludlow." Four birds were seen at Stokesay on 15 Sep.

All the recorded sightings at Chelmarsh were in the post-breeding dispersal period, notably on 2 Aug, when eight were seen leaving a roosting spot and 10 birds seen on 16 Aug.

The likelihood of good winter feeding around Maesbury, Meverley, Holly Banks, The Mere at Ellesmere, Shropshire Union and Montgomery Canals was again indicated by 15 winter sightings through late and early winter, including eight recorded at Holly Banks on 5 Dec

VP was popular with both the birds and their observers, with regular sightings through both winter periods and during post breeding dispersal. Notes on 5 and 28 Sep and 12 Dec refer to birds coming "out of roost, soon after dawn". Little Egrets favour the same breeding and feeding locations as Grey Herons. The sight of the first breeding pair of Little Egrets in Shropshire is keenly anticipated.

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### **OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

Shropshire Status:	Rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	30 (BT=25, CR=1, eB=4)

All except one of the records came from the Severn Valley, but there were very few from VP because the reserve was closed during the migration periods. They probably relate to about 11 individuals altogether (two or three more than last year).

The first for the year, one flying north over Plaish on 28 Mar, was the only sighting not in the Severn Valley, and spring migration continued with one over Shrewsbury on 1 Apr.

There were two records of two birds, both from Cantlopgrove, on 4 and 5 Apr, and another of two birds passing over Bridgnorth three-quarters of an hour apart, also on 4 Apr, which were probably the same as the two seen further north on the same date. All the other records were of singles.

Other reports from various locations around Shrewsbury (including Monkmoor, Atcham and Berrington Pool), also on 4 and 5 Apr, were probably the same birds.

There was one out-of-season sighting at Melverley on 21 Jun, probably a prospecting immature returning to the UK for the first time

Five records of autumn passage comprised probably one individual seen at both VP and Leighton on 4 Aug, one at Coundlane on 21 Aug, another at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 24 Aug, and the last for the year, at VP on 5 Sep.

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### **HONEY-BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant, has bred
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	2 (BT=1, CR=1)

An adult male Honey-buzzard was seen passing west over Market Drayton on 25 May (*G Thomas*), presumably on north-bound spring migration. This was seen in a period of warm south/south-easterly winds. A second adult male was found at Dothill on 23 Jun (*C Biddulph*) a much more intriguing date from the perspective of possible breeding.

These are the first records since 2010, when two were seen at Whixall Moss on 12 May, presumably also on spring migration. A pair bred successfully in most years between 1995 -2007 in Forestry Commission woods in the south, but since then there were only three other records between 2007 and 2010, from VP in August 2008, Black Hill in June 2009, and Shawbirch in September 2009.

Nationally, the Honey-Buzzard population has expanded into the upland forests of northern and western Britain since late in the twentieth century but is estimated at only 100-150 breeding pairs. However, it is under-recorded, so the Rare Breeding Bird Panel planned a survey to look for them. This was disrupted by the Covid-19 restrictions, but it will be undertaken in 2021, and hopefully it will increase local knowledge of this rare raptor.

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## SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	679 (BT=511, CR=8, eB=160)

At least a quarter of records submitted this year were made in domestic gardens, a good proportion of which were in urban or suburban settings. Some of the observers who see Sparrowhawk regularly might be surprised to learn that its population is currently in a phase of moderate decline: BBS figures for England covering the period 2008-2018 suggest a fall of around 28% (range 21% to 34%). The driver appears to be a reduction in average brood size, the causes of which are not yet understood (*BTO Bird Trends*).

As always, a good deal of interest was shown in hunting exploits. At Wall Farm Marsh in January a female flushed 80 Snipe; at the same site in February a hawk caught one of eight Snipe it flushed. In the latter part of the breeding season a Sparrowhawk was seen catching a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker at a feeder, taking several minutes to kill it. The observer noted that the woodpecker was ‘greatly distressed, still blinking as it was being plucked’; the Sparrowhawk flew off with it once dead, presumably to its own young.’

This year’s catalogue of prey also included Greenfinch, Blackbird, Redwing, Starling and three Song Thrush as well as the aforementioned Snipe; a juvenile Blackbird, luckier or more alert than the woodpecker, got away. But there’s a hint of desperation about the Sparrowhawk seen trying to extract a fat-ball from a feeder in the depths of winter, a reminder how close to the edge they are most of the time: a fledgling has only a one-in-three chance of surviving to the next year and an adult barely more than two-in-three.

The only nest that was recorded also emphasises their vulnerability: the female was sitting in late May, but the nest subsequently failed, the third consecutive year that a nest at this site has done so. There was evidence of active nests or dependent young in or near Llanymynech, Market Drayton, Meadowley, Preston Bridge, Sambrook and Shrewsbury.

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**GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce resident breeding species
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	58 (BT=56, CR=0, eB=2)

Nearly 58 casual records were received from about 30 sites, almost one-third of which were from one observer monitoring sites for the Raptor Group (see below). Only two of these sites (Cantlogrove and Stiperstones (north)) were in the north.

Records were received for every month, but the usual peak in February and the first three weeks in March, when Goshawks may be seen displaying over woods, was absent because of Covid-19 restrictions on observers.

The majority were of single birds, and many came from known breeding areas in the south. All evidence of breeding came from sites monitored by the Raptor Group, except one in the north and another in the south-east.

Shropshire Raptor Group visited almost 50 previously occupied sites, 23 of which were apparently unoccupied; nests were found at three new sites. Including the new sites, 23 territories were occupied, and nests were found in 18 of them. Two nests failed, and 16 were successful. At least 33 young are known to have fledged from these nests. None were colour-ringed, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Only one of the successful nests was in the north (not at the site that produced the casual record referred to above, which was not visited in 2020).

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**MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant, has bred
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	18 (BT=12, CR=4, eB=2)

Eighteen records for the year was a slight improvement on 14 in 2019, itself a big improvement of four in 2018, and five in the previous two years. The increase reflects the increase in the national population, particularly the productivity of the breeding population at Leighton Moss, and the twenty-first century colonisation of several other sites in Lancashire and Merseyside. All records were of single birds, and

probably relate to at least nine individuals.

Four were from the early winter period and five were in March, all at Whixall, two relate to the spring migration period, and four were of autumn passage. There were no late winter records. Eleven of the 14 records came from Whixall Moss or canal floods (*RJ Harris*).

The second winter report on record came from Whixall canal floods on 6 and 7 Dec in 2019, and the one seen at the same site on 2, 3, 10, and 15 Jan was probably the same individual.

The March records from the same site, on 2nd, 8th, 22nd and 27th, may have been the same or a different individual, and may have been a late wintering bird or an early spring migrant. However, the first spring migrant record from elsewhere, only two days later, suggests that the last record at least was of a spring migrant.

Two spring migration records came from VP on 29 Mar (*JP Martin*) and Cantlopgrove on 10 May (*TC Lowe*). Both were “female types” (i.e. a female or an unsexed 1-2 year old immature).

The first late summer/autumn sighting was at Pepperhill Pool (near Calverhall) on 22 Aug (*G Thomas*), and the last three were at Whixall on 20, 25 (*J Reeves*) and 26 Sep, the latter a female.

Marsh Harrier is not quite annual but the only blank years since the turn of the century were 2006 and 2009. The eight or nine different individuals seen in 2019 was the largest by far: before that, the maximum number of birds per year was five, in 2010 and 2012. The 2020 estimate is comparable with 2019 and may have exceeded it.

Observers are requested to report sex / plumage, to help determine the number of different birds involved.

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## **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:	Red List
Author:	Peter Carty
Number of Records:	21 (BT=16, CR=4, eB=1)

Declining, perhaps coincident with breeding population in north Wales declining from over 50 to 30 pairs in recent years.

There were 21 records from seven sites. Whixall is currently the best site to see Hen Harrier but more recording effort on Long Mynd, Clun Forest and Clee Hill would likely generate more records. Verbal reports from Clee Hill would be good to have confirmed.

2020 records all referred to single birds:-

**January:** Noneley, an adult female on 4th; Whixall, 5th; Coalmoor, a male, 22nd

**February:** Northwood 4th

**March:** Wall Farm, a male 6th<sup>h</sup>; Whixall 15<sup>th</sup>

**September:** Long Mynd, a ring-tail on Wildmoor, 3rd and 5th (*D Stafford*), a ring-tail at Berriewood on 9th (*N Barratt*) and at Henley Nap on 27th (*L Smith*);

**October:** Whixall 25th and 29th

**November:** Whixall 4th and 12th

**December:** Whixall, 5th and 22th; Noneley 30th.

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 three and perhaps six birds are considered to be involved.

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## MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, RBBP
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	1 (BT=1)

Remarkably, an adult male was photographed for the third spring in four years on the Long Mynd (*D Stafford*, *P Lewis*). The date, 14 May, was the earliest of the three sightings, the others being on 16 May 2019 and 25 May 2017. All birds were seen on a single day only but the likelihood of the three sightings all referring to one individual looks high. Where does it spend the remainder of the summer?

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**RED KITE** *Milvus milvus*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	834 (BT=703, CR=16, eB=125)

The number of casual records has increased massively for each of the last three years, approximately doubling year on year in terms of the number of records and the number of different locations. This spectacular increase continued in 2020, with over 800 records from 340 locations. These included around 150 different locations in the north, a third of which were in the north-east quadrant. About 130 locations were in the south-west, where the population is still concentrated, but others were at the very edges of the County, including Morda, Trefonen and Ellesmere in the north-west, Lilleshall and Ollerton in the north-east, Bridgnorth and several locations around Titterstone Cleve in the south-east, and Ludlow in the south. This species is now encountered throughout Shropshire, and there were several records from urban Shrewsbury and Telford, presumably facilitated by recorders being at home during the Covid-19 lockdown. This is a remarkable spread since the first successful breeding for 130 years near Knighton as recently as 2006, no doubt helped by the large amounts of Pheasant carrion available from birds released for shooting.

Records came from all months but the usual pattern, a peak in February and March, decreasing from July onwards, was disrupted because of Covid-19 restrictions on travel by observers.

Most records were of one or two birds, but the number of double-figure counts increased from two to nine, with 14+ at Bicton (near Clun) on 27 Sep and 14 at Clunton on 8 Mar (with 10 at the same place on 17 Feb), with five counts of 12, at Barretts (Clun Forest) on 11 Jul, Clunbury on 30 Nov, near Ludlow on 11 Dec, Walcot Hall Lakes on 13 Dec, and at Bayston Hill on the same date. Ten were at Bury Ditches on 10 Jan. Large counts occur over farmland grass-cutting or ploughing, or other abundant sources of prey, and near winter roost sites.

The Welsh Kite Trust and the Shropshire Raptor Study Group intended to try and find the nests of all breeding pairs of Red Kite in 2020, but travel restrictions limited the effort that could be put into finding new sites. Thirty nests were found or reported by local residents, seven less than last year but still more than the previous highest total (28 in 2017). Seven were at new sites. Six further pairs were located or reported.

Only five of the nests failed, largely due to warm dry weather in May and June, and 22 are known to have been successful (one less than last year, the highest annual successful number to date). The outcome of three nests is unknown. Assuming that all chicks large enough to tag survived, at least 45 young fledged from them (higher than all previous years, the best being 2011, when 36 fledged).

The tagging programme has finished, the total of tagged young from Shropshire nests since 2006 is 212.



Red Kite Cerise/Black 30 (*Simon Marlow*)

The equal oldest Shropshire Kite yet found, cerise/black 30, an 11-year-old male tagged in the nest in 2009, nested near Clunbury (thanks to Simon Marlow for posting the photo on the Shropshire Ornithology Facebook site). A white-tagged Kite from 2011, and two yellow-tagged in 2013, were again found at nest sites, and a new white-tagged Kite last seen in 2014, and a new green-tagged female from 2015, were found at other nests. A black-tagged female in 2017 was reported, but the nest was not found, and another green-tagged bird was seen after the breeding season. Photos of four other tagged Kites were received, one tagged in 2010 near the Stiperstones, and the other three tagged in 2016 or later. The nest sites of these Kites are unknown.

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 2020*, can be found on the SOS website.

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**WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Shropshire Status: Vagrant  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Not assessed  
Author: John P Martin  
Number of Records: 2 (BT=1, CR=1, eB=0)

Two records of released birds (category E), both from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme.

An immature male, G393, was tracked flying through the county on the afternoon of 23 Mar. He took just over two hours to cross the county heading NE between Ludlow and Tong between about 13:48 and 16:00. On 31 May a second individual from the scheme flew through Shropshire, again undetected from the ground. This young female, G324, flew north over Catherton Common, passed to the east of Brown Clee crossed the Wrekin, then headed over the westernmost fringes of Telford, following the A442 and then the Tern Valley before leaving the county over Shavington Park, at over 1,000m. For a full account see the article “White-tailed Eagles in Shropshire in 2020”.

The sole county record of a wild bird was in 2005 when an immature, which was previously (and subsequently) seen in Norfolk, flew over VP on 26 Jan.

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**BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

Shropshire Status: Common resident breeding species  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Leo Smith  
Number of Records: 2,441 (BT=1,731, CR=9, eB=701)

The records came from almost 600 widespread locations, up almost 20% on 2019. The number peaked during April and May (almost 350 each month), followed by a more or less steady decline from June onwards, until a big surge to over 200 in December, presumably a result of Boris cancelling Christmas(!). Around 64% came from sites in the north, in spite of the species being more numerous in the south-west.

There were six counts of 20 or over, at Cantlopgrove (28 on 3 Apr, 26 on 29 Apr, and 21 on 27 Apr, feeding together in a newly-tilled field on the latter date), 22 at Moreton Say (near Market Drayton) on 4 Oct on a flooded winter wheat field, 20 at Benthall Hall on 11 Apr and the same number at Lilleshall on 9 Oct. There were 54 other double-figure counts, considerably more than last year. Twelve at Rednal/Penyr-estyn on 18 Nov included nine which appeared to be feeding on worms in a field, ignoring the dead sheep which was attended by four Magpies and a Raven.

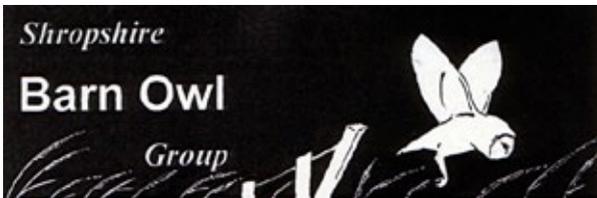
Although Buzzard is a widespread breeding species, evidence was poorly reported with confirmed breeding at only 18 sites: Buttonoak, Catherton, Cleestanton, Clunton Coppice, Deuxhill, Howlett Hall (No Man's Green), Lyneal, Meadowley, Meaton Lane, Whitcliffe, Priors Holt, Shavington Park, Sidbury, Six Ashes (Cleobury), Aston on Clun, The Lawley, Venusbank (near Hope) and Wall Farm (Kynnersley – two nests only 1km apart). Probable breeding was reported at another 30 sites where pairs were seen in suitable nesting habitat or display or territorial behaviour was noted.

None were reported with prey, but there were several reports of Buzzards on the ground, "worming" in fields.

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### **BARN OWL** *Tyto alba*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	187 (BT=135, CR=4, eB=48)



Providing nestboxes for Barn owls and promoting their conservation in Shropshire

### **The Shropshire Barn Owl Group nestbox scheme**

Shropshire Barn Owl Group (SBOG) expected 2020 to show a decline in breeding activity following three successful peak years, but it was not by any means the worst year. The weather possibly contributed to a difficult breeding season, the start of the

year proving to be one of the wettest, but warmest, winters on record with persistent rainfall and sodden ground in January and February. Low rainfall in April and May, with May recording the driest May in England but the sunniest month on record in the UK, restricted the growth of grass and much went brown. This probably affected Field Vole numbers.

One hundred and ninety-five nestboxes and natural sites were monitored. Breeding (at least one egg laid) occurred in 69 (35.3%) of the sites. The breeding data in Table 1 is confined to those pairs successfully producing chicks and includes data from four successful breeding sites monitored by the Upper Onny Community Wildlife Group (UOCWG). One hundred and thirty-nine chicks were successfully produced in 55 (28.2%) of the sites, an average of 2.5 chicks. Of those chicks produced, 27 were found dead in the nest on the first visit or missing on a second inspection, presumed predated or consumed by their parents or siblings. An additional 14 sites held a single adult or non-breeding pair. Broods ranged from one to four chicks. No second broods were recorded, which is typical in trough years. Ten new pairs were recorded.

**Table 1. Number of chicks produced according to type of nest site in 2020**  
**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		
106 (40)	2.6	21 (10)	2.1	4 (2)	2.0	8 (3)	2.6	0	0	0	0	139 (55)	2.5

2,199 chicks have been produced in nest sites monitored by SBOG since 2002, 1,895 in nestboxes and 304 in natural sites. Although data on the location and number of natural nest sites is limited, it is highly probable that nestboxes are now the predominant nest site for breeding Barn Owls in Shropshire and produce more young than natural sites.

The mean number of chicks produced per successful brood in Shropshire for the nineteen years 2002-2020 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 productivity rate for Shropshire’s Barn Owls appears to be encouraging.

### Road Casualties

Nineteen casualties were recorded on roads in Shropshire in 2020. Owls were located either directly on the road or on the central reservation or grass verge. 92% of casualties between 2002 and 2020 have occurred on ‘A’ roads with relatively few casualties on ‘B’ roads. The A5 is the most serious threat to Barn Owls accounting for 73 (33%) of casualties.

63% of road victims occur in the winter period October–March, peaking in 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, although some make longer movements, usually by December. An emerging trend is a peak in casualties in March.

### Casual records

In addition to the data provided above by SBOG, 187 records were submitted to BirdTrack or eBird in all months. Barn Owls were recorded flight-hunting as singles in the first winter period, including over ungrazed fields at Aston on Clun on 14 Jan, field margins at Eaton Constantine on 20 Jan, grass verges at Morville on 10 Feb and field margins and a disused railway track at Newport on 16 Mar. One roosted in a cavity in an Oak on 3 Mar at Shakenhurst.

Pairs were noted at Aston on Clun 24 Feb and regularly into March until 9 Apr and near Culmington on 10 Mar. One hunted over tussocky grassland in daylight at 1645 hours on 15 Mar and two were recorded there on 27 Apr. Two were at Noneley 26 Aug. There were no records of confirmed breeding.

One was found drowned in a cattle trough at Bushmoor on 11 Oct and reported to SBOG.

### Ringling Recoveries

The following bird was amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

#### GR54203

Ringed Nesting Female	04-06-2012	Stanley Green, Whixall: 52°54’N 2°40’W C
Caught by ringer	03-03-2020	Confidential site near Holt: 53°05’N 2°58’W (Wrexham) 20km. NW 8y 5m 22d

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## LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon naturalised resident
National Conservation Status:	Not listed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed (naturalised)
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	27 (BT=23) eB=3) CR=1)

Two proven breeding records this year. At Cantlopgrove, a series of observations were made between 3 Apr and 10 Aug, culminating in the sight of at least four birds, including fledged juveniles, on hay bales on 1 Aug. This was the first record here for five years. A fledged juvenile was reported from Meadowley on 12 Jul. Breeding was suspected, too, near Copthorne, Shrewsbury where a bird was heard on 20 May.

Records were also received from another nine widely-spaced sites across the county. A single bird in January (18th) was found at Isombridge with another single at Upper Fenemere on 6 Mar. One at Wall Farm, Kynnersley on 24 Apr was the only record this year at a site where the species has bred in the past. Singles were found near Clive in June, Terrick, near Whitchurch on the Cheshire border in August and at both Wistanstow and Church Stretton in September. One at Noneley on 23 Oct was “calling intermittently from oaks in hedge-line to the east of the floods or fen field, starting around 17:50”. A night survey at Boningale, near Albrighton in November recorded a single bird on 20th whilst a further record at Cantlopgrove was on 9th.

The breeding observations are encouraging and the widespread nature of the other records might suggest a number of pairs survive across the county; equally it might indicate birds have difficulty finding other Little Owls in the wider countryside.

BTO BBS data show a huge decline in the population index of 62% between 1995 and 2018. Though agricultural intensification has been mooted as a reason for the decline there is little evidence for its ultimate causes in the UK. Indeed, breeding success for the remaining pairs is generally good with slight increases in clutch and brood sizes according to the BTO’s Nest Record Scheme, although fledging production has declined slightly. The species is also in decline in mainland Europe where evidence suggests poor juvenile survival is the main cause of the decline. Modelling predicts the species will struggle in a warming climate; so, the long-term prospects are not promising.

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**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:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	15 (BT=12, CR=1, eB=2)

Short-eared Owls are known to be real travellers at all times of the year but the recent reported movements of a female which was satellite tagged near Stirling in 2017 were still surprising. After breeding in Stirlingshire in 2017 it bred in Perthshire the following April. Leaving its chicks in the care of the male it headed off north-east and bred again in Norway in June 2018 and was subsequently tracked back to Britain where it spent the autumn and winter in Counties Galway and Cork before moving on to Devon and Cambridgeshire. Its last signal was received from just off the SW coast of Norway in April 2019.

There is no doubt they seek out habitat with good rodent numbers at least for breeding and the variability of prey abundance drives their nomadic behaviour over huge distances.

This year we had two few reports in summer months which is unusual in recent times. There was no evidence of breeding. These were a bird at Whixall Moss on 7 Jun (*E Jones*), and a single bird seen several times over half an hour at Copthorne, Shrewsbury on 25 Aug (*J Grundy*).

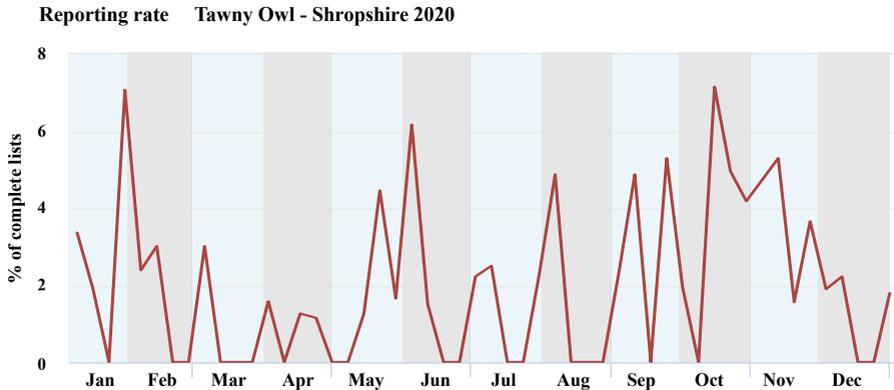
More usual were two reports in January possibly the same bird from the Long Mynd on 3rd and Stiperstones on 14th.

The first of the autumn was on 8 Oct again on the Long Mynd, with other October reports from Cantlop (*T Lowe*) on 13th flying to NW at 0845. One was found at Boningdale ,near Albrighton during a nocturnal ringing session on 29 Oct (*J Hood*). A single record in November was from Whixall Moss (4th) and another report from the Long Mynd was on 24 Dec. There seems little evidence that birds spent long in the county and most were probably transients.

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## TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Gerry Thomas  
Number of Records: 323 (BT=194, CR=8, eB=121)



### Tawny Owl – BirdTrack Reporting Rate in 10-day periods 2020

Another real increase this year in records with 202 reported to BirdTrack or directly to the County Recorder. The additional eBird records have increased overall coverage too. Records were received from all wooded or partially wooded parts of the county including from over 75% of all hectads.

Of interest this year, though, was the relatively low reporting rate (see chart above) in March and April compared with previous years and to the usual situation over the last 20 years (See the Tawny Owl species account in the 2019 County Bird Report). Presumably the Covid-19 lockdown was the reason. The autumn peak in October, though, was in line with the 20-year profile of records.

As usual, Tawnies were usually reported vocalising and there was much activity in January and February especially with the territorial calls of male birds. ‘Hooting’ was actively noted at Ironbridge, The Wrekin, Brown Clee hill, Adderley, Market Drayton, Llanymynech, Whixall, Wyke and Cantlopgrove in the first quarter. Many recorders often heard more than one male; no doubt establishing territorial boundaries at this time.

Unlike for the Barn Owl we have no extensive Tawny Owl nest box scheme, which

is a pity as they take well to boxes in many situations. The first proof of breeding, though, was from a garden nestbox in Clungunford on 2 May. Breeding was also proven at Cantlopgrove, English Frankton and Woolston. The observer of the Woolston fledglings noted that the two juveniles involved were very noisy and mobile but clumsy too as they explored their surroundings. They called constantly as is often the case, ensuring contact with their parents.

Fledglings remain dependent on their parents for several months after fledging. By October though, they are branching out and with adult persuasion leave their natal territories. October's peak in Tawny Owl detectability reflects this important stage in young Tawny Owl lives as they are forced to move and establish territories or feeding areas of their own. Peak counts at this time included six birds calling at Bawhill Woods, Adderley on 11 Oct. At least seven birds were hooting and counter calling at Brownheath Moss on 26 Oct, whilst six different birds were identified calling at Shavington Park on 4 Nov.

Territorial calls by both males and female birds continued into the winter as the adults remain territorial at this time.

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**HOOPOE** *Upupa epops*

Shropshire Status:	Rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Not listed
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	4 (BT=1, CR=3, eB=0)

An excellent spring for this species with three individuals accepted. One was at Wem from 17 to 28 Apr (*K Sylvester et al.*). A second was watched at Shrewsbury Show Ground on 29 Apr (*Z Harris*) and presumably the same bird flew SW over nearby Coton Hill on 1 May heading roughly towards Shrewsbury Station area. Finally, one was in a garden at Enchmarsh on 4 May (*W Dunne*). All were photographed. Last recorded in 2015, when two were seen in April.

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**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, Annexe 1, Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	322 (BT=281, CR=2, eB=39). WeBS Counts=10

A total of 322 records was received from across Shropshire and in all months.

Kingfisher was typically recorded in a variety of wetland habitats in the first winter period, including rivers, brooks, lakes, ponds and sewage works. Recorded mainly as singles, two were noted at Ludlow on 1 Jan and Wood Lane NR on 26 Jan. One was recorded at Bridgnorth on 8 Mar fishing from a tree over a flooded field. Birds increasingly moved away from standing water to potential breeding sites on rivers and other flowing waters as March arrived with evidence of pairs at Shrewsbury on 8th, Nineveh on 21st, Rea Brook Valley on 27th and two displaying at Market Drayton on 16 Apr.

Breeding appeared to be mainly associated with rivers, particularly the River Severn, and was confirmed at Stokesay on 15 May, Cressage on 21 May, with a second brood on 13 Jul, Nineveh on 30 May, Osbaston on 8 Jun and Ellerton Mill Pools on 15 Jul. Juvenile dispersal from the natal territory is generally most pronounced between July and October and there was a notable movement from rivers and other flowing water to pools and other static water in July. Two young ringed at Chelmarsh scrape on 11 Jul is probable evidence of this dispersal. Four at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 24 Sep 'appeared to roost' there.

Records in the second winter period comprised mainly singles, but three were recorded at Severn Valley CP on 18 Oct, Chelmarsh Reservoir on 26 Nov and Atcham Bridge on 17 Dec. An unusually large count of eight was recorded at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 24 Dec. Two "noisily" chasing each other up and down the Perry at Ryton X1 Towns on 9 Oct were probably engaged in territorial activity and one of at least two birds at Whitcliffe on 17 Oct fished 'almost on top of otters'.

More records of territorial Kingfisher and confirmed breeding would be valuable in mediating against river pollution, environmental degradation, waterway engineering and recreational disturbance.

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**WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, RBBP, Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	1 (BT=1)

For the second year running a spring migrant was found in the county. Photographed in a garden at Berrington on 21 Apr (*E Stuckey*).

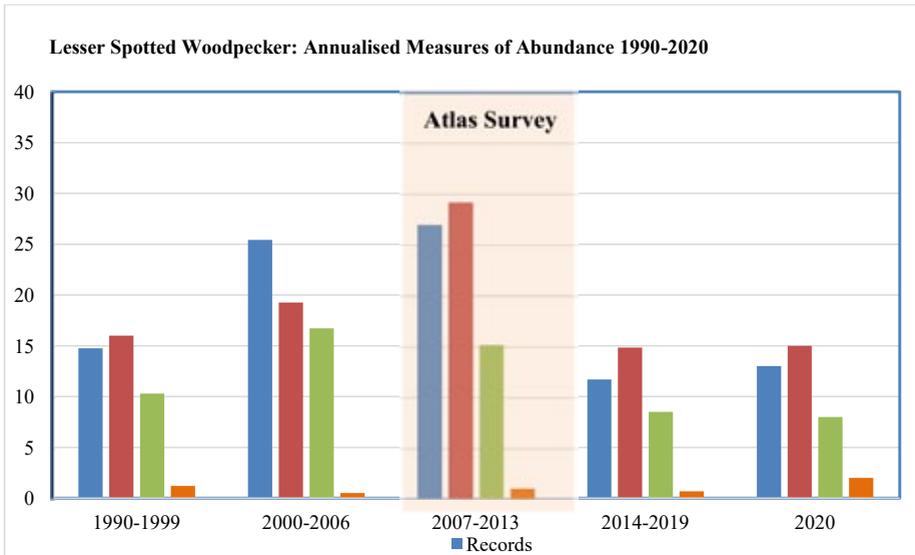
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## LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dryobates minor*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: John Arnfield  
Number of Records: 13 (BT=13, CR=0, eB = 0)

Records for 2020 echo the decline in this species apparent in prior SBRs since the 2007-2013 atlas period. Only 13 reports were submitted (covering 15 individuals), all from south of a line passing south of Shrewsbury. The distribution was sparse but with three clusters from the Wyre Forest, the Clun valley and in the Severn valley between Cound and Leighton. As in 2019, only one record of drumming was reported (in February from Stevenshill) while evidence of confirmed breeding was restricted to a recently-fledged bird at Dowles Brook (Wyre Forest) on 4 Jun and distraction-display behaviour involving two individuals near Cressage on 31 Jun.

The data on measures of abundance for this species are puzzling. The graph shows annual averages of four measures of abundance (number of records, number of individual birds, number of sites occupied, and number of confirmed breeding cases) for five unequal length periods – the 1990s, the pre-atlas 2000s, the atlas survey period (outlined in pale green), the post-atlas 2010s and the current year. While it is perhaps not surprising that the enhanced level of observation during the atlas survey



period led to the largest number of records and birds, it is less apparent why the prior period also showed moderately good numbers and why the remaining three periods (including this year) are very similar to one another. Could we have reached the nadir of the post-twentieth century decline in this species? Despite this potentially encouraging indication, it is undeniable that Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has become less prevalent in the past half a century, and this remains a source of concern.

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**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major*

Shropshire Status: Common resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: John Arnfield  
Number of Records: 1,477 (BT=1,028, CR=2, eB = 447)

Observations of our commonest woodpecker species continue to climb, with 1,477 records overall, 76% more than last year and 94% more than of the total for 2018. These records come from all months of the year, with spring showing the largest number (35% of the annual total). The largest number of records for an individual month was for April, with 201 records. Geographically, these records were largely uniformly distributed, with a slight tendency for clustering along the Severn Valley, in the north-west uplands and in the southern part of the South Shropshire Hills. The plethora of records, in part, appears to reflect the success of this species in the county but undoubtedly is also an artifact of intensive monitoring at certain sites (e.g. Bank House Farm/Bawhill Woods, Adderley; VP; Aston-on-Clun/Beambridge), each of which yielded more than 100 records. Notably, “VP” contributed 10% of all the observations!

Breeding activity is well represented in these records. Drumming and other courtship/display behaviour was recorded from 7 Jan until 22 Jun. Nest excavation was observed on 23 Mar at Brown Moss and occupied nests (with or without observable young) were in evidence between 11 May and 30 May (Whitchurch and environs, Plowden, Dowles Valley, Lee Brockhurst, Haughtmond Hill, Bushmoor Coppice and near Minsterley). Parents were observed tending young on 31 May (Chapel Lawn) and recently-fledged or juvenile birds were recorded from 29 May until 28 Aug.

The largest count was of 10 birds at Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth (7 Jun): this was a record of free flying birds - six juveniles (probably from two nests) and four adults. Otherwise, the largest count was six, from Adderley and Clee St Margaret, between 20 May and 17 Jun. Counts of five individuals from various locations between 24 Jan

and 6 Aug and of four between 4 Jan and 31 Dec suggest that family groups may not uncommonly remain together throughout the non-breeding period.

Behavioural observations were scarce in the records, with the commonest observation being this species' presence in gardens and/or its use of feeding stations. One or two birds visited suet blocks at a garden in Carding Mill Valley, Church Stretton, in every month of the year except September, while a garden in Newport yielded observations of "Great Spots" on sunflower and peanut feeders on various dates from June until December. Winter reports of a bird consuming suet balls in a garden in Shrewsbury and of visitors to the feeding station at VP support the conclusion that this species is well able to exploit food resources provided by humans.

Of interest was a report of the predation of other species' nests by Great Spotted Woodpeckers. On 3 Jun, an adult was observed returning to a House Martin nest it had broken into previously at Kempton. Two young were taken and two perished on the ground beneath. At the same location, an adult was also observed visiting a next box from which Blue Tits had probably fledged and another House Martin nest in which Wrens were nesting. Further visits to occupied House Martin nests were seen in June and July.

### Ringling Recoveries

The following bird was amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

#### LE51329

Ringed First-year Female	04-07-2012	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W
Caught by ringer on 10 occasions between	14-07-2012 and 04-05-2020	
		Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km.
Caught by ringer	26-05-2020	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km 7y 10m 22d

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### GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	John Arnfield
Number of Records:	298 (BT=254, CR=5, eB = 39)

Records were received for all months of the year, with the largest totals in the spring months (March-May, all of which reported 40 records or more), a seasonal total that approaches half of the annual record count. The lowest number of records was for February (10). The annual record total was 298, some 72% larger than in 2019. The

geographical distribution of records showed higher frequencies of occurrence in the valleys of the Clun and Severn (especially south of Bridgnorth), the north-west uplands, the Weald Moors area and the Long Mynd – Stiperstones – Stretton Hills region. As in 2019, however, the largest number of records for a specific site was for VP, with 92, a number that is likely to reflect the number of observers as much as the number of Green Woodpeckers.

Of records with a specified count of birds observed, 86% were of singletons and 12% were of two birds. The only records with counts of more than two were three observed at VP (28 Aug) and a family party of four in the quarry area adjacent to VP (1 Oct).

Breeding evidence was scarce. Birds ‘yaffling’ were reported from 20 Jan until 5 Sep. Confirmed breeding data is limited to recently-fledged birds (two seen on Aston Hill on 2 Jul and one at Catherton on 26 Jul). Juvenile birds were noted on 4 Jul at Whitcott Keysett, on 29 Jul, probing the cracks between paving slabs in Ludlow, and as members of a family party (mentioned above) at VP on 1 Oct.

The improved representation of Green Woodpecker in the records for 2020 is encouraging, but longer-term data are required to establish whether this is a “blip” or a welcome trend.

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### **KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident and passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of records:	691 (BT=526, CR=9, eB=156)

Observations peaked this year between the end of March and the beginning of July with a second, smaller rise through September to November; January, February, August and December produced fewest encounters. At least half were in series involving either the same site, the same observer, or both, suggesting that a good number of individual birds were recorded multiple times. The bias towards the north of the county was even more marked: just under three-quarters of encounters took place there, up from about two-thirds in 2019.

The first hint of future breeding came in February with a pair seen at a nest box at Severn Valley Country Park, followed by pairs, including some displaying, observed from early March. In all, 31 records in March and April involved two or more birds,

and although breeding was subsequently confirmed in only a few cases it is likely to have occurred at more of these sites.

Nests with young were located at Catherton Common, Cleestanton, Cleeton St Mary, Moretonwood, No Man's Green, Newcastle on Clun and Shavington Park. Breeding was confirmed by observations of adults carrying food, or recently-fledged young, at Ightfield, Meadowley, The Lawley and Titterstone Clee. Groups in late summer suggested possible breeding at Caer Caradoc near All Stretton and The Stiperstones NNR. Although the distribution of confirmed breeding records runs counter to that of general observations, with more cases in the south, this is readily explained by the presence of several established sites, for example around Clee Hill, and regular visits to the area by an experienced fieldworker from the Shropshire Raptor Study Group.

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

Shropshire Status:	Rare resident, scarce winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	40 (BT=39, CR=1, eB=0)

A total of 40 records were received. All were of single birds, except the first for the year, two at Whixall Moss on 3 Jan. All were probably winter visitors from the north. No records at all were received for the breeding season, the months of May, June, July, and August.

In the first quarter (the early winter period), another was seen at Whixall Moss two days later, and there were further records from Bicton Hill on 22 Feb, Cantlogrove (a female on 16 Feb and an unsexed bird on 8 Mar), Ceri Ridgeway on 20 Jan, Noneley (a male on 28 Jan and 2 Feb, and a female on the same date) and VP on 16 Mar.

One was seen during the passage period at The Stiperstones on 21 Apr, but not subsequently.

There was one record from Long Mynd just before the start of the breeding season, in Batch Valley on 22 Mar, and six records from other parts of this large site between 17 Sep and 15 Oct. However, as usual, The Long Mynd was searched thoroughly by the Raptor Group, and for the third year running, no nests were found, and no Merlins were seen during this searching. No young fledged during the last-known breeding attempt in 2017, so perhaps this absence is not surprising.

Otherwise, there were 18 late winter records from 12 widespread sites, starting with Rhos Fiddle on 22 Sep, and finishing with the last for the year, the third in this period, from Cantlopgrove on 31 Dec.

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**HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	161 (BT=135, CR=6, eB=20)

Records from 97 locations were received, equally divided between the north and the south. No large gatherings were reported and the only counts of more than two birds were at Whixall Moss (2+ on 29 May and 18 Jul), and at Cantlopgrove, Chesterton, Eudon George, Howlett Hall (No Man's Green), Meadowley and Upton Cressett, all of which were in August and included recently-fledged young.

The first arrivals were singles at Ruyton XI Towns, Long Mynd and Newport, all on 27 Apr, the same first arrival date as last year. There were two more in April, at Cantlopgrove (two) and Whitcliffe. There were sightings in May at Adderley, Asterton, Baschurch, Bridgnorth, Clungunford, Cockshutt (south), Cressage, Long Mynd, Maesbury Marsh, Market Drayton, Pentre, Preston Bridge (River Severn), Shifnal, Shrewsbury, Stiperstones, West Felton, Whixall Moss and Wyke, some on more than one occasion, and several of which will have been passage birds.

Hobbies were seen in the breeding season (June – late August) at 47 sites, 12 more than last year, and slightly more in the north than the south: Astley Abbots, Aston Locks, Aston on Clun, Attingham Park, Beckbury, Bicton, Bridgnorth, Calverhall, Cantlopgrove, Chesterton, Cleeton St. Mary, Clungunford, Cross Houses, Darnford Brook, Ellesmere, Eudon George, Fenemere, Frodesley, Haughmond Hill, Holly banks gate, Howlett Hall (No Man's Green), Isombridge, Long Mynd, Meadowley, Meaton Lane, Overton, Priorslee Lake, Rossall Rough, Ruyton XI Towns, Shakenhurst, Shavington Park, Shifnal, Shrewsbury, Stiperstones, Tibberton, Trefonen, Upper Berwick, Upton Cressett, Venus Pool, Walcot, Wall Farm (Kynnersley), Whitcliffe, Whitcott Keysett, Whixall Moss, Withypool/Dudnill and Woolston.

A pair was seen at Cressage (21 May). Apart from sites with fledged young, referred to above, there were no other records of confirmed breeding, and the only other record suggesting breeding was two chasing off crows from oak trees in a field near Fenemere on 2 Jul.

Reports included one chasing dragonflies at Wall Farm, and at Whixall Moss, and chasing hirundines at several locations. Again, there were few records from the Whixall sites, and it was present on only 10 dates, where most records were of singles. At VP, singles were seen on just five dates, the first not until 11 Aug and the last on 5 Sep.

There were 22 September records, again split almost equally between the north and south, some lingering at breeding sites and some on passage. The only October record, the last for the year, was from Oerley reservoir on 8th.

Shropshire Raptor Group checked 41 sites where breeding Hobbies have been found in the previous ten years, and two new nests was found. Fifteen breeding pairs were found, including seven nests, three of which with fledged young are referred to above. Six nests were in the south, and the other was near Ellesmere. Two nests failed, but the other five fledged nine young. In addition, four recently-fledged young were found, but not the three nests they were from, making 13 fledged young in total.

The breeding pairs also include one near Claverley, where an adult caught a House Martin and carried it off towards a nest on 2 Aug.

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### **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:	Jonathan Groom
Number of Records:	197 (BT=178, CR=2, eB=17)

The year 2020 was the best year on record for Shropshire's Peregrines! Despite difficulties from Covid-19 which led to a few regular sites being inaccessible and visits to others being too late to get the usual amount of information, twenty-one sites were monitored. Additionally, a new site was confirmed in 2021 with anecdotal reports of the site being active for at least five years and fledging two young in 2020.

This brings the confirmed total of sites with successful breeding attempts to 18 in 2020 (85% of sites successful), and a total of 46 fledged young. This total is certainly higher due to a couple of regular sites not being accessible at all – this was frustrating as it may even have gone over 50 which would have smashed the previous record of 43 chicks in 2011. There was no way to mitigate the impact that Covid-19 had on the activities of the Shropshire Peregrine Group (SPG), however, so this was unavoidable.

Whilst it could be assumed that lack of human disturbance due to lockdown has helped, I think this is a bit of a stretch. In general, human disturbance is low and success rates are good, during most years, so I don't think this is a major factor. It is most likely just a combination of good conditions and the continued success of this species, resulting in a peak of productivity.

In fact, looking back over the last 10 years of data held by SPG, it can be clearly seen that although the number of breeding attempts has remained relatively consistent (despite new sites being located and old sites being recolonised), the average brood size and number of fledged young has increased. In fact, the average number of fledged young per breeding attempt has risen by 33% between 2016-2020 compared to 2010-2015.

There were 178 records submitted via BirdTrack, and an additional 19 to the County Recorder/eBird, from across the county. 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 of the breeding season included a pair involved in a 'skirmish' with a pair of Ravens and a Red Kite over a traditional breeding area, and also a single record of a bird hunting a Starling flock.

### Ringling Recoveries

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species in 2020:

#### GV90460

Ringed Nesting Female	16-05-2019	Confidential site in Greater Manchester: c53°32'N 2°40'W
Alive (colour rings seen)	27-11-2019	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°38'N 2°39'W 96km. S 0y 6m 11d
Alive (colour rings seen)	08-02-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°38'N 2°39'W 96km. S 0y 8m 23d

#### GV82009

Ringed Nesting	04-06-2020	Confidential site in Staffordshire: c52°43'N 2°04'W (Staffordshire)
Long Dead	06-10-2020	The Wrekin, Wellington: 52°38'N 2°31'W 36km. WSW 0y 4m 12d

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**RING-NECKED PARAKEET** *Psittacula krameri*

Shropshire Status:	Rare naturalised visitor or escapee
National Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	3 (BT=3)

Despite the growing numbers in Birmingham, this naturalised parakeet remains elusive in Shropshire. Just one record this year of a single bird at Belle Vue, Shrewsbury (Oakley Street), a regular haunt in recent years (*D Wrench*). Although it is a regular location, there seems never to be more than one or two sightings each year which is surprising and intriguing.

A single was seen and heard in a garden at Ackleton on 14 Sep and a few days before (*R Kemp*). One at Shawbirch on 13 Nov was photographed (*P Jordan*).

It is conceivable all records refer to the same individual.

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**JAY** *Garrulus glandarius*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John Arnfield
Number of Records:	748 (BT=493, CR=2, eB = 254)

With no shortage of records (up just over 40% on last year), Jay is found in all months of the year and is well distributed throughout the county, with a tendency to larger concentrations in the north and east. Most counted records were of single birds or pairs, the largest counts being eight at Gorstybank, seven at Granville, Telford, and six at the same site and at Benthall Hall. Despite the gaudy nature of its plumage and noisy vocalisations, Jay tends to be secretive during the breeding season and little evidence of breeding was reported. Nest building was observed on 7 Apr in Shrewsbury and two recently-fledged individuals were at Bentlawnt (20 Jul).

Garden records were not uncommon. Such locations within Shrewsbury were reported in every month of the year. Other garden records were for Aston-on-Clun, Bridgnorth, Church Stretton, Newport, Telford, and Whitchurch.

A Jay being pursued by Blue and Marsh Tits was observed at Whitcliffe, Ludlow, on 23 May and, in a turning of the tables, a Hobby being harassed by a pair of Jays was noted at Wall Farm, Kynnersley (30 Oct).

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**MAGPIE** *Pica pica*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	2,667 (BT=1,989, CR=4, eB=674)

A group of 22 in a single tree at VP in late January was described by a regular visitor as the 'largest group he had seen at the reserve'. Overall, the highest count was 26 reported at Priorslee Flash in November, followed by 23 at Cockshutt in early April.

Nest-building was observed from mid-March and incubation from 30 Mar. The first fledged juvenile of the year was recorded in Shrewsbury on 19 May, implying a laying date not later than 3 Apr. This is consistent with the trend towards earlier breeding noted last year. Recently-fledged juveniles were present in June and early July at several sites in different parts of the county.

A leucistic individual was seen in the Rea Brook Valley on three occasions in April and May, once accompanied by another Magpie. One observer remarked that a leucistic bird had been present at the site for the last three years; the other described it as a 'long-staying individual'. It may well have been the same bird, but as leucism is heritable it is possible that more than one generation was involved.

Among the handful of notes on foraging three involved sheep carrion, including a carcass that attracted no fewer than fourteen Magpies and eight Ravens. It is unclear whether the two species were present simultaneously but, if so, their interactions may have been pretty lively.

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**JACKDAW** *Coloeus monedula*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	2,499 (BT=1,867, CR=0, eB=632)

There was abundant evidence of the current success of this species. On the first day of the year a flock going to roost at VP was counted in in groups totalling around 1,200 birds; by 19 Jan two observers at the same site each estimated the flock at around or over 3,000. At the latter end of the year the maximum flock was over 1,000

at Chelmarsh in December.

Breeding was reported in tree holes, farm buildings, a chimney where the nestlings attracted the unwelcome attention of crows, and, to the frustration of its installer, a new Barn Owl box. Given the rapid and continuing increase in the Jackdaw population it seems likely that it will be putting pressure on the availability of suitable sites for other hole-nesting species: for example, nestboxes and tree-holes used by Kestrel are known to have been appropriated by Jackdaw.

### Ringling Recoveries

The following bird was amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

#### EK48604

Ringed Nesting Female	25-05-2009	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W
Caught by Ringer	25-05-2020	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W 0km. 11y 0m 0d

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### ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John Tucker
Number of Records:	983 (BT=504, CR=0, eB=479)

In 2019 this author coordinated a county resurvey of rookeries, ‘The Shropshire Rookeries Survey’, following up his own county survey of 2008 and that of the BTO/SOS in 1975/76. The aim to complete the revisiting of the remainder of sites in 2020 was largely negated by disruptions caused by Covid-19, though some work was done. A concerted effort was made in 2021 to clarify the situation at as many sites as possible, using the help of close to 100 volunteers around the county. The results of that work, reviewing the entire half a century, will be written up during late 2021.

This year, the peak count was of c.900 on 29 Dec near Cockshutt, being ‘Part of the Sweat Mere roost’ (‘Counted by videoing the pre-roost assemblage on the ground using a mobile phone through the telescope eyepiece and then counting the birds with a tally counter. 900 was the average of three viewings’). Another high count of 450 was made at Eyton on Severn on 29 Nov. but the flock included Jackdaws – the two species commonly associate in the autumn in noisy flocks, likely acting in part as ‘dating agencies’ for young birds of the year.

Rooks were gathering in the churchyard at Sambrook (a regular rookery) on 11 Jan

but the first nest building behaviour was observed at Wem on 25 Feb. A twig-bearing Rook, (“aka” Gilbert White of Selborne) was seen in the south of the county on 29 Feb and further activity was recorded at Pentre Chapel Lawn on this date. By the end of March nesting was well underway although active rookeries noted only at Whitcliffe Wood, Newport, Venusbank (Hope), Adderley, Much Wenlock, The Wyke and at Monks Bridge (Chirk) before the end of the month. The first fledged Rook was noted at Longford on 1 Jun.

One was seen ‘harassing a Sparrowhawk’ near Albrighton on 13 Nov.

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**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Michelle Frater  
Number of Records: 3,276 (BT=2,537, CR=3, eB=736)

Several of the higher counts this year highlighted the many feeding opportunities enjoyed by Carrion Crow: they included 30 on a bare field, 11 scavenging the ‘scattered remains of at least two dead lambs’ in March, 30 or more feeding in association with 20 Jackdaw and five Feral Pigeon on a harrowed field, and 45 or so on a newly-sown field alongside 70 Black-headed Gull and 14 Jackdaw. Towards the end of the year, parties were found foraging on an ‘emerging cereal crop’, recently-manured pasture and the edge of floods.

Breeding evidence was collected by a handful of observers: nest-building was under way by the beginning of March, the first record of incubation was 31 March and a nest with visible young was reported on 24 May. Recently-fledged young made their appearance from 3 Jun.

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**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Leo Smith  
Number of Records: 1,130 (BT=833, CR=8, eB=289)

Records of the charismatic corvid continue to increase, to over 1,100, almost twice as

many as 2019, that being 50% greater than 2018, itself a significant increase on 2017. They came from over 350 widespread locations, almost evenly divided between north and south, and twice as many as last year, itself twice as many as 2018, but the proportion of records from the south (around 40%), which holds the vast majority of the population, was unchanged.

February had fewest records, but no month had less than 60, April had the highest (about 150), but March, April and May and October, November and December all had over 100.

Around 80% of the records were of one or two birds. In spite of the big increase in records, there were only 16 double-figure counts, less than the 20 last year. The highest numbers were 30, at The Lawley on 29 Jan, and at Titterstone Clee on 4 Sep. Next highest was 24 at Wall Farm (Kinnersley) on 5 Mar, 21 at Burrow Hill (Aston-on-Clun) on 14 Oct, 20 at Upton Cressett on the same date, 12 at Bridges on 21 Jun and the same number at Cefn Coch on 16 Jul, and 11 at Meadowley on 2 Aug and at Brown Clee on 26 Aug. There were lesser counts at some of these sites on other dates, none exceeding 15.

This suggests a large reduction in the size of the non-breeding flock at The Lawley, which accounted for half of the double-figure counts in 2019, with 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.

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. Eleven 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 2019 is thus the biggest ever recorded.

Although no doubt widespread, breeding was poorly recorded. However, nests were reported near Bridges, Catherton, High Lane, Kinlet Bank, Prescott, Shakenhurst, Silvington, Trefonen and Upper Bromdon, mostly in the south-east by *Jon Lingard*, and fledged young at Papermill Bank (south of Lee Brockhurst), Shavington Park, Sidbury, Wall Farm (Kynnersley) and Westcott. Probable breeding was observed at 12 sites, and pairs at 10 more.

Raven nest sites on and around the Long Mynd were surveyed for the National Trust

in 2020, as part of a review of its SSSI status. Several sites were previously known, based on Bird Atlas data provided by the Shropshire Raven Study Group, and the results of the Long Mynd Breeding Bird survey in 2017-20. There were 13 such sites, but not all were checked because the BBS was suspended:-

Regular sites 2008-13 (occupied most years since, including 2020): eight nests found

Two regular sites 2008-13 (occupied most years since, not checked in 2020):

New site, occupied 2017 & 2018, not 2019, not checked in 2020:

New site, occupied 2018, not 2019, not checked in 2020:

New site, found in 2020: one new nest found

The pairs at the regular, well-established sites all forage on the Long Mynd, but all the nests are around the periphery, with the usual distance between them one or two kilometres. Two of these are on the National Trust property, a third is on it some years (alternate sites are used), and one is on recently-acquired land. The others are in large conifers close by.

However, the three new sites are all in small Hawthorn trees on steep slopes in the upper valleys, very different from the substantial trees usually used for Raven nests. One young fledged from the new nest found in 2020, only about 10m above the ground.

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### **WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

Shropshire Status:	<b>Rare</b> winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	7 (BT=7)

Three birds were found in a garden in Little Drayton on 5 Mar (*D Barnes*) feeding in a Rowan tree and were watched for an hour before they flew off. The Rowan was the same tree as used by the species in 2017 here. The birds were re-located about a kilometre away in another garden in Market Drayton and stayed there until the following day. One bird was colour ringed and investigation found that it had been ringed by the Grampian Ringing Group on 27 Nov 2019 in Aberdeen and aged/sexed as a first-year female.

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**COAL TIT** *Periparus ater*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	1,085 (BT=778, CR=3, eB=304)

An unusual post-breeding record from Titterstone Clee this year. A party of 12 were seen climbing to the top of a tree before taking off, gaining height to at least 100 metres calling continuously before flying off south. This ‘irruptive’ behaviour has been noted in Coal Tits elsewhere (e.g. Lancashire coast in 1985 and 2012), but appears to be the first definitive record of such behaviour in Shropshire.

Although there was an increase in records this year, the highest counts of the species remained modest with 10 or more birds reported from Shifnal SF in February, Colebatch in March, Black Hill and Shavington Park in October, and Attingham Park in November, as well as the Titterstone observation above. Twenty or more were noted at Buttonoak in November and Shavington again in December.

Breeding season records were few this year with the typical observation of males feeding females on the nest from Chetwynd Park on 1 May and Pentre near Chapel Lawn on 3 May. Fledged young were first found at Wellington on 1 Jun where a party of young were being fed by adults. Other fledglings were noted at Whitcliffe Wood on 4 Jun, Benthall Hall on 13th Rossall Rough on 23rd, Aston-on-Clun on 28th and Shavington Park on 17 Jul.

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**MARSH TIT** *Poecile palustris*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	UKBAP, Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	Jonathan Groom
Number of Records:	300 (BT=239, CR=0, eB=61)

Fifty-four observers submitted 300 records from approximately 85 locations. The eBird records accounted for the bulk of the increase in records from 2019. Records were widespread throughout the county – though again the bias was towards the south (73% of records) and many of the sites are those regularly visited by recorders every year. This distribution of records is unsurprising, given that this is where the majority of wooded habitat lies within the county.

There were only four confirmed breeding records for the county this year, at Benthall Hall, Duffryn near Newcastle-on-Clun, Shavington Park and Whitcliffe. Recently-fledged young were seen in all cases. At Whitcliffe, two territories were noted in the same visit, one with a pair agitatedly mobbing a Jay, and the other with three fledged young seen.

Whilst this species seems to be much more abundant than its near-identical cousin, the Willow Tit, they do occur at some of the same locations, and it is noted that very few records have any sort of comment to record identification criteria used. They are easily and most reliably distinguished by call or song and a note to this effect would be very useful when coming to analyse records of the two species.

The highest single counts per record were of seven and eight at Shavington Park. This is a site where birds are regularly caught for ringing.

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### **WILLOW TIT** *Poecile montanus*

Shropshire Status:	Scarce resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Jonathan Groom
Number of Records:	27 (BT=27, CR=0, eB=0)

Specific survey work for this elusive species continued in 2020 with the National Willow Tit survey, led by the RSPB. Take up in Shropshire was better than in 2019, though only 17 tetrads were covered in the end – still double that of 2019. Sadly, Covid-19 lockdown measures put a stop to these surveys in March. Of these 17 tetrads, only 7 produced a positive result, all of them in the south-west of the county in large forestry blocks (this seems to be the best habitat for them in the county) at Cefn Einion, Bucknell, Blakeridge Wood and Hopton Hill. Numbers were never more than three at most in a single tetrad.

An interesting record was obtained from a householder in Shrawardine, on the River Severn, west of Shrewsbury. At least one Marsh or Willow Tit has been visiting the garden feeder and they managed to obtain a few photos that sadly were not enough to clarify the identity of the species. Looking at the habitat in the surrounding area, there is certainly no significant wooded habitat for some distance in any direction. There are areas of riverside scrub and carr and so this would probably indicate Willow Tit – sadly much of this habitat is inaccessible without permission from private landowners. This habitat is also very scattered along the linear corridor of the river and occurs on both sides.

There is quite a bit of evidence to suggest that Willow Tit distribution is linked to waterways (distribution records both here in Shropshire and very much so in neighbouring Staffordshire can be seen to loosely follow the routes of canals and rivers) but this example highlights the difficulty in actually surveying this habitat effectively. There is also a dearth of information about how large territories may be in this linear environment as opposed to more traditional wooded blocks – presumably a single territory may cover a considerable length of a waterway depending on the density of riverside scrub?

A total of 27 records was submitted via BirdTrack from 19 locations, a slight decrease from last year. Most of these are from regular sites, but there do appear to be at least two new locations which can feed into the information collected by the Willow Tit surveys regarding their distribution.

The best time to record Willow Tit 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.

The only breeding record came from *A Gaunt* on 6 May, where he observed adults bringing caterpillars to a nest in a damp woodland area at Aston Botterell, calling all the while. A notable record of four birds from Black Hill, Clun made on 9th August (*D Stafford*) could very likely have included fledged young at that point.

It is encouraging to see people making notes about calls and behaviour. But it must be noted that about two-thirds of records are submitted without any notes on identifying features, which given their similarity to Marsh Tit (and their overlapping range) makes it hard to verify them. Some records also come from areas where Marsh Tit have been confirmed to be present and hence doubt over identity will be present unless identification details are provided, ideally in the form of vocalisation notes.

If you are interested in taking part in Willow Tit survey work in the future, please contact Jonathan Groom at [bto.shropshire@gmail.com](mailto:bto.shropshire@gmail.com).

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**BLUE TIT** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Shropshire status: Very common resident  
National conservation status: Green List  
Shropshire conservation status: Green List  
Author: Gerry Thomas  
Number of Records: 3,196 (BT=2,473, eB=720, CR=3)

As with many observations this year, the Covid lockdown meant many nestbox schemes were either not visited or first visits in late May were too late to get a proper measure of the egg-laying stage, including those at the Craig Sychtyn scheme. Only a small percentage of the available boxes at the Newcastle-on-Clun scheme were visited more than once, so the data presented below shows only the minimum possible eggs laid.

Scheme	Blue Tit nests	Minimum no. Eggs	Minimum no. chicks known to have hatched	No. Chicks fledging	% Hatched chicks which fledged (maximum)
Craig Sychtyn	3	Unknown	Unknown	9	
Newcastle-on-Clun (R. Clun and Folly Brook)	18	106	105	71	68%
Clunton Coppice	12	75	64	42	66%

Male song was reported early at Sheinton on Jan 19, and at Annscroft on several dates in February. As usual, though, nesting behaviour got underway in earnest in March and nest building was reported from Newport on Mar 11, Market Drayton on 19th and Ironbridge on 20th. Nests with eggs were found at Bushmoor Coppice on Apr 17 and Cross Lane Head three days later, with sitting birds at Crickheath Hill on Apr 29 and Church Stretton on May 2, although nest building was still underway at Whitcliffe Wood on Apr 27.

The first young in the nest were reported from Walcot on May 16 but these were trumped by the first fledglings already out of the nestbox in a garden in Shrewsbury a day earlier. Successful nesting was reported from over 100 locations up and down the county, with fledglings reported almost daily from May 27.

Large flocks or associations were regular after the breeding season and in both winter

periods, with 40 or more at VP on several dates in January and November and at The Ercall on Nov 13. As usual, field counts of birds are likely to underestimate the number of individuals in the vicinity and ringing operations caught 58 individuals at Cross Lane Head on Mar 20 and 45 at Shavington Park on Mar 5, both catches helped by feeding stations at a critical time of year for Blue Tits when natural foods are often scarce.

**Ringing Recoveries**

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**D415523**

Ringed First-year Male	20-01-2014	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W
Caught by Ringer		Six captures between 01-03-2014 and 22-12-2018
		Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km.
Caught by Ringer	21-01-2020	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km. 6y 0m 1d

**Z291185**

Ringed First-year Female	14-11-2014	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W
Caught by Ringer	09-04-2020	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km. 5y 4m 26d

**GREAT TIT *Parus major***

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	2,749 (BT=1,959, CR=0, eB=790)

Making the reasonable assumption there is little immigration or emigration into the county, and the distribution and recording of records in the county is representative, then the reporting rate chart above should give a good representation of the detectability of Great Tits through the year. In this respect the chart meets expectations, with most records in March and April when birds are most vocal and active in starting breeding behaviour. Lower numbers after the breeding season when birds are in moult and both much quieter and less active in their behaviour is also not unexpected.

As usual, male birds start their ‘teacher teacher’ call early in the year in late January and February. Presumably due to lockdown, little nest building was reported, although a bird at Trefonen on 16 Apr was actively building in a crevice in a stone wall.

First true incubation was recorded from mid-April with sitting birds on 16 Apr at Clungunford and 23 Apr at both Shrewsbury and Cross Lane Head. First hatched chicks were noted at Walcot on 16 May, Cockshutt and Clungunford on 17 May and at Eardington next day.



**Great Tit – BirdTrack Reporting Rate in 10-day Periods for 2020**

By 26 May the first fledglings were on the wing at Lee Brockhurst. Other fledglings were found at English Frankton on 28 May and Hopesgate on 29th but the major fledging of birds seemed to take place in the first few days of June with reports on 1st from Shifnal SF and Adderley; 2nd from Cockshutt, Cantlopgrove, Wyke and Swancote (Bridgnorth); 3rd from Bentlawnt, Shrewsbury, Benthall Hall and 5th from Whitcliffe where adults were watched feeding fledged young. Fledglings were reported from a further ten locations between 7-21 Jun.

Due to Covid-19, nestbox scheme results were not obtained for schemes this year.

Counts of 20 or more birds were reported frequently this year. In January, 20+ were at VP on 7th. In February, 20 were counted at Dowles Brook in the Wyre on 2nd whilst this number were trapped for ringing at Shavington Park on 7 Mar. Later in the year ,20+ counts were noted at Adderley on 18 un and again here on 25 Nov; and at Walcot, VP, Aston-on-Clun and Trefonen in December.

## Ringling Recoveries

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

### TR38612

Ringed First-year Male	12-09-2014	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W	
Caught by Ringer	26-11-2016	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W	0km. 2y 2m 14d
Caught by Ringer	18-10-2020	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W	0km. 6y 1m 6d

### TR38611

Ringed First-year Male	24-08-2014	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W	
Caught by Ringer	Two captures on 12-09-2014 and 13-02-2016 Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W 0km.		
Caught by Ringer	04-01-2020	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W	0km. 5y 4m 11d

### Z558076

Ringed Juvenile Male	30-07-2015	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W	
Caught by Ringer	Two captures on 15-11-2017 and 17-09-2020 Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W 0km.		
Caught by Ringer	28-09-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W	0km. 5y 1m 29d

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## SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	1,125 (BT=778, CR=2, eB=345)

A total of 1,125 records was received (779 excluding eBird), up substantially from 320 and 516 in 2018 and 2019 respectively, with Skylark recorded in every month of the year.

There were no exceptionally large flocks in the first winter period but 20 were at Hollywaste on 1 Jan, 30 at Meadowley on 3 Jan, 40 at Evenhall and 21 in stubble at Edmond on 20 Jan and 30 at Shifnal on 21 Jan. 50 were with Fieldfares in autumn-sown crops and stubble at Priors Halton on 29 Jan. Other flocks were 20 at Welshampton on 4 Feb, 50 at Cantlopgrove on 16 Feb and 20 with some song at Benthall on 20 Mar.

Territorial song was first noted as early as 3 Feb at Buildwas with snatches of song and brief song-flights from Skylark in stubble. This was followed on 4 Feb by three "returning territorial birds" at Eaton Constantine, three males in song on the Long Mynd on 5 Feb and single singing males at Cross Lane Head and Tibberton on

13 Feb, Shipton on 22 Feb, Wall Farm, Kynnersley on 24 Feb and at Cressage 25 Feb. Three were in autumn-sown cereal and a fodder crop at Eyton on Severn and five in autumn-sown cereal and a fodder crop at Eaton Constantine, both on 25 Feb.

Territorial males were increasingly noted throughout March with three males in song at Titterstone Cleve on 3 Mar, four at Brompton on 8 Mar, four in cereal stubble at Buildwas on 9 Mar, five on the Long Mynd on 22 Mar and seven at Baggy Moor on 24 Mar. Ten at Caer Caradoc on 25 Mar must have included singing males and seven were at Titterstone Cleve on 26 Mar, where territories were noted as “fewer about than previous years”. Numbers continued to build up and territorial activity increased throughout April, particularly on high ground, with 11 at Stapeley Hill and 13 at Rhos Fiddle on 4 Apr, 25 at Stiperstones NNR on 21 Apr rising to 50 on 20 May and 21 at the north end of the Stiperstones ridge and 12 at Bicton Hill on 27 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed first at Stapeley Hill on 23 Apr, then Long Mynd 13 May, Rhos Fiddle 20 May and 24 Jun, Childs Ercall Airfield 29 May, and Beckbury on 8 Jun, where 14 males occupied territories in wheat, oats, barley and potatoes. Further confirmation of breeding was received from Titterstone Cleve on 9 Jun, Knuck Bank on 13 Jun, Wall Farm and Westcott on 20 Jun, Polemere on 28 Jun, Llanfair Waterdine on 16 Jul, Adeney on 19 Jul and Bicton Hill on 23 Jul. Territorial activity was last recorded on 13 Jul at Childs Ercall Airfield.

Movements south from Scotland and from northern and western Europe augment resident Skylark numbers in autumn. Nocturnal flight was recorded at Adderley at 23:43 hours on 2 Aug and 45 records in September was substantially more for this month than usual. One hundred and sixty-seven “migrated south in an hour” at Cantlopgrove on 28 Sep whilst eight flew over Trefonen on 14 Oct. Twenty-one “flew west with Fieldfares” at Tibberton on 22 Oct and 14 flew over Eaton Constantine on 9 Nov.

The number of wintering flocks and flock-sizes appeared to be high between October and December, with 63 counts of over 20. Ten were at Upton Cressett, 12 at Lower Overton and nine at VP on 20 Sep, with 20 at the latter site on 28 Sep. Over 100 were found at Meaton Lane with 13 at Cantlopgrove and 10 Adderley on 27 Sep, with 16 at the latter site on 2 Oct. Thirty were recorded at Calverhall, 23 Polemere, 250 Hollywaste and 60 Meaton Lane on 4 Oct, whilst 80 at Cantlopgrove on 6 Oct declined to 70 by 23 Nov. 25 were at Charlton Hill on 7 Oct and 23 at Tibberton West on 8 Oct.

An exceptional count of 257 were found in cereal stubble and autumn-sown crop at Arlescott on 13 Oct. Thirty-seven in cereal stubble at Buildwas on 19 Oct increased to 70 there on 24 Nov with 33 also in stubble at Tibberton on 16 Nov and 25 at Soulton Hall on 25 Nov. Several males were “in full song” at Preston on the Weald

Moors on 7 Nov and another male sang at Overton 12 Nov. Final large flock counts included 230 in a recently-seeded field at Eaton Constantine on 22 Dec, 26 in stubble at Tibberton on 27 Dec rising to 80 on 31 Dec and 40 at Adderley 31 Dec.

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**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Amber List  
Author: Tom Wall  
Number of Records: 174 (BT=132, CR=2, eB=40)

The first report was on 21 Mar when five were at VP, where there were eight on 22nd and 12 on 23rd, after which records came on most days; the average first-sighting date over the last 30 years is 16 Mar. The pattern of reports thereafter is likely to reflect, in part, greater enthusiasm to record at the beginning and end of the season (especially the former) but may nevertheless tell us something about the level of occurrences (even in a year of Covid-19) and particularly how they tail off rather earlier than those of Swallow and House Martin. There were six records in March, and approximately 49 in April, 55 in May, 26 in June and 15 in July, followed by nine in August, four in September and one in October. The last was of a single at VP on 4th, considerably later than the current 30-year average of 17 Sep.

The only nesting colony count was of an estimated 150 pairs at Wood Lane Nature Reserve, but actual or assumed nesting was recorded along the Severn east and west of Atcham and at Hampton Loade and Buildwas; nesting reports from Pentre and Astley Abbots may also have been related to the Severn. Others came from Morville Heath and a small disused quarry at Rudge.

All but two of the counts of 100 or more were made in April, and some, at least, may well have involved birds on passage. At VP, 150, 120, 450 and 150 were estimated on 13, 18, 21, 28 and 29 Apr respectively, and 100 were seen at Bridgnorth on 21st. Otherwise, as stated above, 150 pairs were estimated at Wood Lane on 15 Jun and more than 150 birds were feeding low over the Mere at Ellesmere on 29 Jun.

**Ringing Recoveries**

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain and Ireland in 2020:

**AEB8867**

Ringed First-year	19-07-2018	Portland Bill: 50°30'N 2°27'W (Dorset)
Caught by Ringer	06-08-2020	Bridgnorth: 52°31'N 2°25'W 225km. N 2y 0m 18d



Waxwing, Market Drayton, 6 March 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Cetti's warbler, Whixall Floods, 29 December 2020 (*Rob Dowley*)



Whitethroat, Noneley, 24 May 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)



Willow Warbler, Telford Town Park, 17 April 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Rose-coloured Starling, Whitchurch, 25 October 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Redwing, Venus Pool, 23 November 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Pied Flycatcher, Asterton, 14 May 2020 (*Steve Dawes*)



Spotted Flycatcher, Lower Frankton, 13 May 2020 (*Dawn Micklewright*)



Black Redstart, Bromfield, 25 February 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Dipper, Bridges, 15 May 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)



Redstart, Bridges, 5 June 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)



Yellow Wagtail, Noneley, 2 June 2020 (*Dawn Micklewright*)



Lesser Redpoll, Venus Pool, 16 February 2020 (*Paul King*)



Stonechat, Noneley, 8 February 2020 (*Paul King*)



Crossbill, Eardington, 31 December 2020 (*Dave Chapman*)



Lapland Bunting, Titterstone Clee, 26 October 2020 (*Jim Almond*)



Snow Bunting, Long Mynd, 8 December 2020 (*John Martin*)



Corn Bunting, Noneley, 6 February 2020 (*Dawn Micklewright*)

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## SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Shropshire Status:	Common summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	1,295 (BT=929, CR=17, eB=349)

‘Lots for me this year’, commented a systematic and experienced observer when recording just six birds at Aston on Clun on 29 Aug; he went on to record a princely 16 on 7 Sep. The same observer (*J Tucker*) had counted nests in the parish of Hopesay (embracing Hopesay, Aston on Clun and Broome) in 2005, when there were 99 known or believed to be occupied nests; in 2020 he found just 30. One set of observations does not amount to a trend, but this strong indication of a decline is backed up by BBS results for Shropshire, the West Midlands and the country as a whole – declines have been registered in all of these entities over the last decade.

The first sighting of the year was of one at Bayston Hill on 25 Mar (which compares with a 30-year average first date of 27 Mar), the next was of three at Newport on 30th; then no more were reported until 4 Apr, from when observations were daily. Ninety at Crose Mere on 28 Apr and 80 at VP on 11 May were the only spring counts of in excess of 30. There were no breeding season records of particular note until 80 were found roosting in a maize field at Cantlopgrove on 30 Jul, seemingly the first confirmed record for the county of roosting in maize, although the behaviour is well known elsewhere in the UK. The count increased to 120 on 7 Aug, with 110 on 14th and 15th; more conventionally, in excess of 50 were roosting in *Phragmites* at Chelmarsh Scrape on 24 Aug. But let us not forget that in August and September 1967, 11,000 were ringed at a roost in Dawley, and in 1987 an estimated 25,000 were roosting at ASF. Roosts in the thousands were not then exceptional but no roost of more than 1,000 has been recorded since 1990.

Nineteen birds were taken to the Cuan Wildlife Rescue Centre at Much Wenlock this year – a fairly typical number, as is shown on the chart, which is reproduced along with the text for House Martin. There are almost always fewer Swallows taken there than either House Martins or Swifts. This may be because their nesting places (typically in farm buildings rather than on houses) make for fewer human contacts. It is notable however that whereas the numbers of the other two species taken to the Centre showed a marked increase in 2020, this was not the case for Swallow.

Records continued throughout September (with several counts of 100 plus, and a maximum of 180 plus at Cantlopgrove on 8th), but after 100 at Kynnersley on 19th,

there were no counts exceeding 40. Records were virtually daily to 18 Oct, then there was a long hiatus until a single at Queen's Head on the very late date of 21 Nov; the 30-year average last-sighting date is 19 Oct. November dates are pretty exceptional, and to find a later date one has to go back to 23 Nov 1960.

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**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbicum*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Tom Wall  
Number of Records: 882 (BT=733, CR=4, eB=145)

No bird lives out its domestic life more openly, its triumphs and tribulations exposed to our prying eyes, and none perhaps is so much enjoyed by those privileged to harbour them. At Atcham, a resident reported that the local birds first showed up on 22 Apr and added: 'first summer in our new house, hope we will get nesting'; on 12 Jul he reported hatched egg-shells under a nest. On 22 Jul, near Clungunford, another observer noted birds re-visiting a nest previously taken over by House Sparrows, and on 19 Aug he reported a successful outcome. At Stockton Moors, near Newport, there was a far more unusual but much more acceptable usurper – Spotted Flycatcher.

More domestic details follow, but first let's back-track to the start of the season. The 30-year average first-sighting date is 1 Apr, so the first this year, one at Cantlopgrove on 4 Apr, was not far adrift. Thereafter, records were almost daily, but arrivals were staggered, so, although birds were entering nest cups at Maesbury Marsh as early as 6 Apr, and others were dipping under the eaves at Newport Town on 11th, it was not until 6 May that the first birds showed up in Woolston, near the south end of The Long Mynd, where the Swifts beat them to it. At the end of the season, records continued up to 9 Oct, then there was one on 12th at Whitchurch and the last on 20th at Prees Railway Station; presumably it had a departure in mind as it was running late, the 30-year average for the last sighting is 14 Oct.

In between times, there were no mass gatherings but several records of 100 or more: Shifnal Sewage Works was the attraction for an estimated 150 on 30 Apr and 100 on 4 Jun, 140 were at Chelmarsh on 5 Sep, 100 or more at Cantlop on 1 and 8 Sep, and more than 150 at Meaton Lane, near Cleobury Mortimer, on 13th. Another Sewage Works, that at Eardington, proved an attraction too – here 54 were caught and ringed on 6 Jun.

House Martins leave ample breeding evidence: typically, the shells of freshly-hatched eggs are dropped directly beneath the nest entrance, where the excretions of their young start to accumulate a few days later; this enables some monitoring of nesting success. On a house at Kempton, between Bishop's Castle and Clun, there were nine occupied nests, of which seven were in artificial nest cups and two in natural nests. One of the natural nests, then containing young, was raided by a male Great Spotted Woodpecker on 3 Jun; it was thought to be provisioning its own young nearby (for a fuller account see *The Buzzard* number 260). All of the nests fledged one brood (including, following a re-build, the nest that had been raided), but only one of them, two (a second brood in another nest is thought to have succumbed during bad weather in August). Given that House Martins are normally double-brooded, this is a troubling observation and doesn't bode well for the 2021 season.

Nor does the number of Shropshire House Martins admitted by Cuan Wildlife Rescue Centre, Much Wenlock: from 73 in 2019 (already a high figure), it leapt to 135 in 2020. That something was particularly amiss in the case of House Martin is suggested by this major hike not being replicated in the case of Swallow, although there was an uptake in admissions of Swift (see chart).

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### CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Shropshire Status:	Rare resident (evidence of breeding for the first time in 2020)
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Mike Shurmer
Number of Records:	149 (BT=135, CR=1, eB=13)

The rapid rise of Cetti's Warbler to become a familiar part of our avifauna continues apace, with 149 records received from eight sites. It has been recorded annually since 2014.

The bulk of the records were from VP, although none of these referred to more than one bird. At Chelmarsh, confirmed signs of breeding were recorded for the first time, with different juveniles ringed on 11 and 27 Jul (*L Munday*). Two different males were heard singing here on various dates. Other sites where the species seems to be on the way to becoming firmly established are Norbroom Marsh, Shavington Park, Whixall canal floods and Kynnersley, whilst there was also one at Priorslee Lake on 30 Sep and one ringed at Ruyton-XI-Towns Sewage Works on 20 Sep.

There have previously been five or fewer recoveries of this species:

**S496421**

Ringed First-year	08-07-2019	Marsh Lane Reserve, near Hampton-in-Arden: 52°25'N 1°40'W (West Midlands)
Caught by Ringer	17-05-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 49km.W 0y 10m 9d
Caught by Ringer	14-06-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 49km.W 0y 11m 6d

**LONG-TAILED TIT** *Aegithalos caudatus*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Jonathan Groom
Number of Records:	1,443 (BT=929, CR=2, eB=512)

During 2020, 1,443 records were made from 123 observers from approximately 256 locations across the county. Records are up considerably 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, personal observations*) 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 about 25% coming from March and April alone.

Confirmed breeding records were reported from 34 locations. Early nest building was reported much later than in 2019 with the first few records of nest building coming in March: Trefonen (10th), Haughmond Hill and Hints (21st) and VP and Meaton Lane (22nd). The first nest with eggs was reported at Trefonen on the 3 Apr (*AP Dawes*) and then on 11 Apr at Meaton and 26 Apr at Cleeton St. Mary (*both by J Lingard*). Due to Covid-19 restrictions, very little nest recording was permitted during lockdown and so records were few.

The earliest record of fledged young came on 25 May at VP. Though records were numerous through June and even into July, these are unlikely to be newly-fledged young at this stage. Flocking continues throughout the year and into winter where they may join mixed flocks with other tit species. The highest counts of the year were both of 25 birds at Attingham (11 Nov) and The Ercall (13 Nov).

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**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Mike Shurmer  
Number of Records: 47 (BT=40, CR=4, eB=3)

With only 47 records received, the conservation prospects of this species do not seem to be improving. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this year's records was where the species was not recorded, rather than where it was. No records received from the Ercall for the second year running and no records from the Wrekin for the first time. Whilst this may be down to lack of recording in the Covid-19 lockdown, numbers have been gradually reducing at these former strongholds. This reinforces how the distinctive shivering song used to be a much more familiar sound in mature oak woodlands than it is now.

Records showed the typical pattern of appearance of sightings between mid to late April and mid-June. The first records were on the typical date of 24 Apr in the Wyre Forest, with the subsequent records mostly from traditional sites in the south of the county, the majority of which were in the Shropshire Hills. Multiple birds were noted at a few sites, with a maximum of four singing males at Clunton Coppice, Wart Hill and Bucknell Wood. On another sour note, the most at Dowles Brook was only two singing males, well down on the typical maximum count. An interesting series of records involved a male heard singing at Hoar Edge, near Much Wenlock, on 5 and 8 May.

Breeding was noted at Hall of the Forest, Newcastle-on-Clun, where adults were seen feeding young at a nest on 5 Jun, with this behaviour also noted at Bucknell Wood on 12 Jun. There was a late record from Clunton Coppice on 3 Aug.

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**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant  
Author: Mike Shurmer  
Number of Records: 21 (BT=19, eB=2)

Three individuals were recorded this year, meaning that the species has now been found annually since 2015, a significant upturn considering that the only other record was the first for the county in October 2008.

The bird first recorded at Shifnal Sewage Works on 29 December 2019 remained until at least 1 Apr (*J Hill*). It was often heard calling and was seen loosely associating with a large flock of mixed tits, Goldcrests and Chiffchaffs on several occasions. The second individual was sound recorded, also at Shifnal Sewage Works, on 20 Oct (*J Hill*). A further individual was seen at Maesbury Marsh on 5 Dec (*A Griffiths*). The recent pattern of occurrence here, along with the increasing numbers of this autumn migrant to Britain, would suggest that this species may now be expected to appear in most years.

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**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant  
Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Mike Shurmer  
Number of Records: 508 (BT=435, CR=1, eB=72)

Although the decline in numbers and loss of range has been noted in the county, Willow Warbler remains a common bird and a familiar sound of spring. The 435 records across the year are testament to this. Records have a south and west bias, with the species appearing to be suffering more in the north and east. A visit to suitable habitat in April and May, particularly in the Shropshire Hills, will reveal this to be one of the more obvious species as the beautiful descending whistle rings out across scrubby hillsides.

One of our earlier migrants, the first of the year was logged at Shifnal Sewage Works on 28 Mar. It was another week before it was noted at a second site, at Benthall Hall on 5 Apr. Following this, the next two months held the bulk of the records, with 147 records in April and 162 in May. Singing males were notably common at some locations, with double-figure counts on the Long Mynd, at The Stiperstones and Cefn Coch. Records were typically noted as being singing or territorial birds, and the species was recorded at nearly 100 different sites.

Birds continued to be seen regularly through to 19 Sep, with signs of breeding noted at ten sites, through either adults feeding young or fledged young being recorded. As often happens with this species, presumably migrating individuals giving short burst of song late in the summer were noted on a couple of occasions, including in Shrewsbury on 13 Aug and at Tibberton on 19 Aug.

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**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Shropshire Status:	Common summer visitor and passage migrant, very scarce in winter
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Mike Shurmer
Number of Records:	1,664 (BT=1,261, CR=5, eB=398)

Chiffchaff remains a common and widespread species, with 1,664 records received from throughout the county. April and May usually see the highest numbers of records, when it can seem impossible to avoid singing birds. This was the case this year, with 381 records in April and 380 in May. Singing birds can be heard through the majority of the year, with the first heard this year on 12 Feb at Shifnal Sewage Works and the last on 25 Sep at Harlescott, though singing notably dropped off through July and August until the flush of autumn migrants moved through the county.

In the first winter period one was noted regularly at Shifnal Sewage Works, where it often accompanied the Yellow-browed Warbler present there. Further individuals were at VP on 23 Jan and Dowles Brook, in the Wyre Forest, on 2 Feb. As is usual for this species, singing birds were regularly heard from early March, with one along the Newport Canal on 5 Mar heralding the familiar song being heard throughout as number rapidly increased. The highest count in March involved 14 birds at Whixall Moss on 24th, with 13 along the River Severn at Buildwas, including 11 singing males, on the same date was also notable. In April, several double-figure counts were received from Benthall Hall, with a peak of 16 on 8 Apr. Twenty were noted at Maesbury Marsh on 14 May, but the peak count of the year was 25 at The Bog, Cranmere, on 25 Aug.

Breeding was noted at several sites, with a large green caterpillar being carried by an adult at Eaton Constantine on 10 Jun giving an insight into the food being provided for chicks. A strong autumn passage was reflected by 21 being trapped at a ringing session on Chelmarsh Scrape on 6 Sep.

There were more records than is usual through November and December. Those in December are generally considered to be genuinely wintering individuals, and birds were recorded at Bromfield, Whixall Moss, Chelmarsh Reservoir, VP, Chetwynd Park, Eardington and Shifnal Sewage Works. The peak count in this month was four at Eardington on 17 Dec.

The following bird was amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**HHY157**

Ringed Full-grown Male	28-03-2015	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W
Caught by Ringer	15-05-2020	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W 0km 5y 1m 17d

The following birds moved the greatest distances within Britain and Ireland (more than 100 km) in 2020:

**KBB423**

Ringed First-year	01-09-2020	Cefn Coch: 52°53'N 3°07'W
Caught by Ringer	22-09-2020	Old Rectory, Kingston: 50°37'N 1°19'W (Isle of Wight) 280km SSE 0y 0m 21d

**HLB080**

Ringed First-year	06-08-2020	Cressage: 52°38'N 2°36'W
Caught by Ringer	21-09-2020	Litlington: 50°47'N 0°9'E (Sussex) 280km SE 0y 1m 15d

**LNK215**

Ringed Second-year Female	30-05-2020	Hut Wood: c50°57'N 1°24'W (Hampshire)
Caught by Ringer	22-08-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 182km NNW 0y 2m 23d

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**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Mike Shurmer
Number of Records:	119 (BT=105, CR=1, eB=13)

Typically preferring shrubby wetland habitats, Sedge Warblers tend to be found at a broader range of wetlands than Reed Warblers, which is usually reflected in the annual records. Most of the records in 2020 were from the three most recorded sites, as for Reed Warbler – VP, Chelmarsh and Shifnal Sewage Works. There were also several records away from the more expected wetlands, with birds noted at sites including Bayston Hill Quarry, Bicton Heath, the Montgomery Canal, along the River Severn at Cressage and at Aston-on-Clun. This remains a bird that can be found across much of the county, where a range of damp scrubby habitats occur. It is also often noted in arable crops, as was the case this year with a male singing from a cover crop at Wyke on 7 Jun.

The first record of the year involved two at VP on 11 Apr, though the lion's share of the records were in May, when nearly half of the 119 records occurred. Most records involved singing or territorial males, with one to three logged on most occasions. A

maximum of ten was recorded at Chelmarsh on 18 May, with nine by the Keeper's Bridge on the Montgomery Canal on 16 Jun. Other sites where there were five or more territories logged included VP, Whixall Moss, Maesbury Marsh, the River Perry at Milford and the River Severn at Cressage. Following the typical pattern, records become much reduced from the start of July with the only September record being the last of the year at Chelmarsh on 6 Sep.

Notable records involved breeding at Wood Lane, fledged young seen along the Montgomery Canal and River Severn at Cressage and young being fed at Aston Locks. A French-ringed bird was controlled at Chelmarsh on 26 Jul (*L Munday*).

The following bird was amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**Y876914**

Ringed Adult Male	01-06-2014	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W
Caught by Ringer		Six captures between 14-06-2014 and 25-05-2020
		Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km
Caught by Ringer	14-06-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km 6y 0m 13d

The following bird ringed abroad was found here in 2020:

**FRP(PARIS) 8668316**

Ringed First-year	11-08-2018	Rnr Des Marais de la Taute Marais de Cap, Montmartin-En-Graines: 49°15'N 1°13'W (Manche) France
Caught by Ringer	26-07-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 368km NNW 1y11m 15d

**REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Mike Shurmer
Number of Records:	129 (BT=118, CR=1, eB=10)

Records were received from 25 locations. These were mostly from the expected wetland sites which hold suitable reedbed habitats, with VP, Chelmarsh and Shifnal Sewage Works between them claiming 93 of the 129 records. This species can appear at less typical locations away from our more popular wetlands, as records from Burlton Lane Farm, near Shrewsbury, on 24 May (*S Lewis*) and Lilleshall on 16 May (*P Challinor*) demonstrate. A further notable record was a male singing from a stand of partially flooded *Miscanthus* by the Shropshire Union Canal, Tyrley, on 5 May (*G Thomas*).

Arrival was slightly earlier than is typical, with the first of the year at Shifnal Sewage Works on 7 Apr. The peak month for records was May, with 48, whilst there were 23 records both in April and June and 19 in July. Records then tailed off a little in August before increasing again to 16 in September, with the last of the year at Chelmarsh on 20 Sep. The highest count was a minimum of 12 pairs estimated at Wood Lane on 15 Jun, with counts of at least eight birds logged at both VP and Shifnal Sewage Works on several occasions.

Breeding was noted at Fenemere, with an adult feeding young on 27 Jun. Fledged young were also recorded at Shifnal Sewage Works. There was no breeding confirmed from other sites, including VP and Chelmarsh.

**Ringling recoveries**

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**Y876903**

Ringed Adult Male            26-05-2014    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W  
 Caught by Ringer            Five captures between 27-07-2014 and 31-05-2020  
    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
 Caught by Ringer            19-07-2020    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
    6y 1m 23d

**D519304**

Ringed First-year Male      20-07-2014    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W  
 Caught by Ringer            Two captures on 01-08-2015 and 23-06-2016  
    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
 Caught by Ringer            11-07-2020    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
    5y 11m 21d

**Z255128**

Ringed First-year Male      11-07-2015    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W  
 Caught by Ringer            Four captures between 18-06-2017 and 19-07-2020  
    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
 Caught by Ringer            02-08-2020    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
    5y 0m 28d

**Z255062**

Ringed Adult                    17-05-2015    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W  
 Caught by Ringer            Four captures between 15-05-2016 and 16-06-2019  
    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
 Caught by Ringer            17-05-2020    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 0km  
    5y 0m 0d

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain and Ireland (more than 100km) in 2020:

**ARJ2613**

Ringed First-year            22-08-2020    Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W  
 Caught by Ringer            31-08-2020    Pett Level: 50°54'N 0°40'E (Sussex) 275km SE 0y 0m 9d

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**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

Shropshire Status:	Very scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Mike Shurmer
Number of Records:	12 (BT=7, eB=5)

After a slight upturn in records in 2019, it was another improved year for this species, with records received from seven widely spread sites.

A migrant was singing from a hedge at Cantlop in the early morning of 12 Apr, adding to the impressive bird list for this site (*TC Lowe*). A singing male was at Wyke, near Broseley, from 15 to 22 Apr, with another at Whitegates Farm, Moretonwood, on 20 Apr (*G Thomas*). A bird was also heard by the County Recorder on his morning run along the Rea Brook Valley in Shrewsbury on 24 Apr (*JP Martin*). The more expected sites of the Stiperstones and Whixall Moss held singing birds on 21 Apr and 26 May, although no records were received from the Long Mynd. Finally, a male was reeling at the Old Riverbed in Shrewsbury on 2 Jul (*JP Martin*).

As seems to be typical of the species here, only the one bird (at Wyke) was logged on more than one individual day, and it remains difficult to draw conclusions as to the true breeding status of this species in the county.

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**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Shropshire Status:	Very common summer visitor, uncommon winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Elizabeth Holmes
Number of records:	1,231 (BT=958, CR=1, eB=268)

Since the 1950s there has been an increasing number of Blackcap overwintering in the British Isles. Ringing recoveries and geolocator tracking (including Delmore *et al.* 2020) has shown birds from mainland Europe, principally southern and eastern Germany, migrating north-westerly to overwinter in Britain rather than the more usual south westerly route to southern Spain. Ringing recoveries have also

found a handful of Blackcaps known to have bred in Britain remaining overwinter. However, this is thought to be currently very rare. This change in Blackcap migratory behaviour has been linked to the overall warming climate in Britain due to global climate change, as well as the increasing provision of food in garden bird feeders during the winter months (Plummer *et al.* 2015).

The records from BirdTrack, eBird and the County Recorder in Shropshire reflect the trends in overwintering Blackcaps, with the chart below showing birds sighted in every month of the year 2020.

The 2020 records first showed an increase in birds from February to March. The BTO has found the majority of sightings of overwintering ringed Blackcap to often peak as late as February and March, suggesting that a proportion of the birds sighted in March could be part of the overwintering population of the county. Only by mid-March did the records show the first indication of breeding birds within the county, with an increase in the number of sightings of multiple birds and the first singing males reported on 22 Mar in Shrewsbury.

March to April then saw the first significant increase in sightings, with an increase of 277 birds from 102 sites, compared with the 35 records from just 17 sites in March.

By May, numbers were at their highest (n= 391) at 164 sites, with 219 reported sightings of multiple birds. Evidence of chick rearing and fledging was also recorded. The first nest with young was found on the 17 May and the first record of a fledged juvenile made on the 19 May.

Through June and July, numbers of sightings recorded declined from 231 to 94 respectively. However, in both months birds were still reported singing and being in groups, including family parties. The decline in numbers of records continued throughout the late summer to early autumn, with just three sightings recorded in October from Shrewsbury, Walcot and Ruyton IX Towns. An increase in sightings can be seen through November and December, indicating the arrival of overwintering Blackcap, with 38 records from 15 sites reported in December. Like the January and February records, December records were commonly accompanied by comments of the birds feeding on fat balls, supporting studies including Plummer *et al.* 2015, that this provision of food is a contributing factor to the increase in the abundance of overwintering in Britain.

## References:-

**Delmore K., Illera J.C., Perez-Tris J., Segelbacher G., Ramos J.S.L., Durieux J., Ishigohoka J., Liedvogel M., 2020.** The evolutionary history and genomics of European Blackcap migration, *eLife*, 2020 Apr 21;9:e54462. doi: 10.7554/eLife.54462.

Plummer, K.E., Siriwardena, G.M., Conway. G.J., Risley, K., Toms, M.P., 2015. Is supplementary feeding in gardens a driver of evolutionary change in a migratory bird species? *Global Change Biology*, 21, 12, (4353-4363).

Individual variability and versatility in an eco-evolutionary model of avian migration: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2020.1339>

[https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/shared\\_documents/gbw/associated\\_files/bird-table-44-2005-focus-blackcap.pdf](https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/shared_documents/gbw/associated_files/bird-table-44-2005-focus-blackcap.pdf)

## Ringling Recoveries

The following bird moved the greatest distance in Britain and Ireland (more than 100km) in 2020:

### ABC1575

Ringed Juvenile Male	11-08-2020	Newport: 52°45'N 2°22'W
Caught by Ringer	28-08-2020	Harvey's Meadow, near Hungerford: 51°24'N 1°30'W (West Berkshire) 162km SSE 0y 0m 17d

The following bird ringed abroad was found here in 2020:

### FRP(PARIS) 9030259

Ringed First-year Female	28-09-2019	Plaisance, Saint-Froult: 45°54'N 1°14'W (Charente-Maritime) France
Caught by Ringer	20-09-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W 738km N 0y11m 23d

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## GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Shropshire Status:	Common summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Elizabeth Holmes
Number of Records:	286 (BT=210, CR=1, eBird=75)

As a summer breeding visitor to the British Isles Garden Warbler were only sighted between April and September (see figure). The first sighting this year was on 7 Apr at Whixall Moss. The first singing bird was then reported three days later at Cockshutt. There was an average of one Garden Warbler record per day in April, from a total of 22 sites, with five reports of multiple birds in the month.

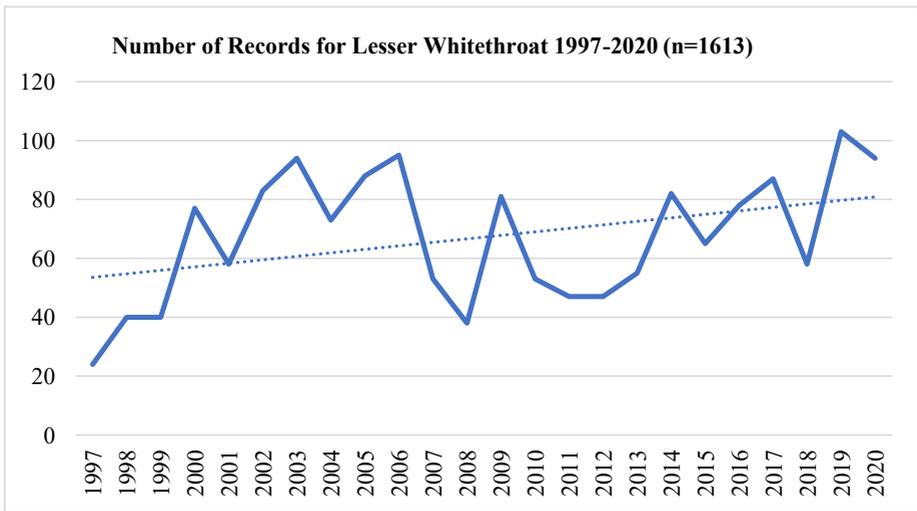
May saw the major influx into the county, with 11 birds reported on 2 May from 10 sites. Sightings were reported every day of the month with an average of five records daily, from a total of 81 sites, with 47 reports of multiple birds.

By June, reports were already on the decline, with 69 reported from 45 sites. However, June saw the first reports of fledged young on the 12th at Priorslee Lake.

The decline in number of reported sightings continued exponentially throughout the summer months as birds departed for their overwintering grounds in sub-Saharan Africa. September saw the last sightings of the species, with the last on the 9th of the month at Chelmarsh scrape.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Curruca curruca*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon summer visitor  
 National Conservation Status: Green List  
 Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
 Author: Gerry Thomas  
 Number of Records: 194 (BT=92, CR=3, eB=99)



The first of the year was at Adderley on 11 Apr followed by other singles in April at Tittenley Pool on 12th, Trefonen on 16th, Wyke on 19th, Ightfield 20th and Bridgnorth on 21st. The first VP record of the year was one bird on 23 Apr with other April records at Hopesgate, Fenemere, Cockshutt, Benthall Hall, Coalbrookdale. Alberbury, Cantlopgrove and Coston. One to five on most days in May and marginally fewer in June when the only breeding activity noted was limited to territorial song by male birds. Almost all records were of one or two individuals. Counts of three were recorded at Hopesgate on 24 Apr, Adderley on 3 and 4 May and Caer Caradoc on 12 Jul.

Fledged juveniles were found at Caer Caradoc on 12 Jul and Wall Farm on 16 Jul but by July reports were few and far between. Four records in August; singles at Chelmarsh on 2nd, Whitcliffe on 8th, Shrewsbury on 20th and Wall Farm on 26th.

In September, birds were caught for ringing on 1st at Shavington Park and on 2nd at Foxholes, Wem. One was found at VP on 5th and another at Wall Farm on 8th. The last record of the year was a calling bird in reeds at The Mere, Ellesmere on 19th.

Lesser Whitethroats are more or less on the edge of their UK range in Shropshire with few to the west or north. So, the impacts of climate change might be expected to be a little more apparent here than further south and east. The species is too scarce in Shropshire for sufficient BBS records to establish a county BBS index. Instead, the chart below shows the number of records (excluding eBird records) from 1997 to 2020 and there is a steady upward trend. Whether this is due to more recording activity or to a true population uptick is not clear.

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### **WHITETHROAT** *Curruca communis*

Shropshire Status:	Common summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Gerry Thomas
Number of Records:	644 (BT=417, CR=1, eB=226)

An earlier arrival than normal this year with the first birds at Isombridge on 6 Apr and Shifnal Sewage Works next day. A single at Wyke on 11th and two birds at Bawhill Wood, Adderley on 12th with three here on 14th. Birds were then found at new locations almost daily through April, usually in ones or twos but with a count of eight at Wyke by 24th, six at Benthall Hall Pools also on 24th and seven counted west of Tibberton on 26th, perhaps records all reflecting the loose colonial behaviour often found in this species in good habitat.

By early May birds were widespread and were found in both lowland and upland situations. Territorial birds were found on The Long Mynd, Oakeley Mynd, Brown Clew and Masons Bank at the higher elevations in the county.

Counts of 12 and five males respectively were made along hedgerows at Dryton and Eaton Constantine, both on 19 May and another 11 were on territory at Rushton, near the Wrekin on 26th. Males were singing on arrival but the first nest found was at Adderley (with young) on 29 May and nest building was also noted at Cantlopgrove on 4 Jun. Fledged young were on the wing near the Lawley bridlepath on 17 Jun and an adult was carrying food at Knockin on 23 Jun.

Other breeding records were widespread with evidence of probable or confirmed breeding from Beckbury, Bentlawnt, Bridges, Brompton, Chelmarsh, Church Stretton, Farley, Priorslee Lake, Rowton, Rushton, Ruyton XI Towns, Stapeley Hill, Shelve, Sutton Maddock, Walcot, Wall Farm, Westcott and VP. A juvenile was found in a Tibberton garden on 26 Jun.

Birds were reported on most days in August albeit in lower numbers. In September two birds were at Adderley on 1st, with other birds at Lilleshall and Chelmarsh on 4th. Three were counted at Wall Farm on 8th and at VP on 10th with the last reports of the year on 20th at Atcham Bridge and Foxholes, Wem.

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**FIRECREST** *Regulus ignicapilla*

Shropshire Status:	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, very rare breeding species
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, RBBP, Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Tom Wall
Number of Records:	3 (BT=2, CR=, eB=0)

Two were mist-netted at Shavington Park on 4 Nov (*R Bromley, AJ Wilson*) and one was seen at Eardington Sewage Works on 17 Dec (*J Reeves*) and reported there again on 20th. This brings the total of birds recorded in Shropshire to 76, of which 64 since 1971. These observations fall into the established pattern of peaks of occurrences in March/April and November/December.

In *The Birds of Shropshire*, it was noted that up to the end of 2014 a total of 11 birds had been caught by ringers. Of these, the sex of seven had been determined and all but one was a male. Since then, one caught at Whixall Moss was found to be a female, but one at Shavington on 30 Nov 2019 was a male, as were both of the two caught there this year on 4 Nov. All were first year birds. The sex ratio is now nine male to two female.

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**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John Arnfield
Number of Records:	764 (BT=535, CR=2, eB = 227)

Goldcrest is a species that characteristically shows large fluctuations in population numbers, particularly in response to harsh wintertime temperatures. The “Beast from the East” in early 2018 led to a marked reduction in reports but numbers have recovered from 232 in 2018 and 371 in 2019 to 764 this year, an increase of more than 300% in two years. Most records are from spring (39%), although no month has fewer than 24 records. The geographical distribution of the species was uniform over the county, with the largest number of records coming from Shifnal Sewage Works (65) and Bank House Farm, Adderley (66). Clearly, Goldcrest is encountering few obstacles to recovery from the effects of inclement weather in 2018.

Evidence of territorial behaviour was observed from 3 Mar until 9 Jun. The only record of nest building was from Atcham (9 Jun), where a bird was seen gathering fine nest material from a washing line! Recently-fledged youngsters were reported from 31 May until 27 Jul, and birds in juvenile plumage were seen from 4 Jul – 20 Sep.

The habitats exploited by this species were varied. Gardens were visited in Tibberton, Newport and Atcham, mostly in autumn and winter. Unusually, a bird was observed on a Newport peanut feeder in February. Sewage works (possibly a source of flies) yielded winter records for Prees, Shifnal and Eardington. Activity was observed in old hedgerows, thickets, apple trees, Yew trees, Holly, Gorse, Scots Pine and Witch Hazel, the latter yielding swarms of flying insects. Flocking with other small bird species was observed as early as 26 Jul in the Whitcliffe area of Ludlow.

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**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John Tucker
Number of Records:	2,560 (BT=1,927, CR=3, eB=630)

A large increase in the number of records again in 2020, thanks in part to those extracted from eBird. The increase in and the sheer number of records are perhaps not surprising when there is a laudable trend towards recording every species during BirdTrack visits – a system which effectively quantifies migrant arrivals and departures but also promotes the recording of complete lists of species for visits and hence picks up records of common species.

A sunny day on 25 Feb prompted one recorder to comment:- “The sun has helped – suddenly they are singing”. Later in the year in the course of a regular 1.6km walk in

the south of the county “song from 13 territories; a maximum for this walk.” Further north 10 territories were reported from the Rea Brook Valley on 2 Jun.

**Ringling Recoveries**

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**EHC109**

Ringed Juvenile	16-07-2015	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41›N 2°40›W
Caught by Ringer	Two captures on 07-07-2016 and 10-10-2016	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41›N 2°40›W 0km
Caught by Ringer	16-10-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41›N 2°40›W 0km 5y 3m 0d

**EAD583**

Ringed First-year	17-10-2015	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28›N 2°23›W
Caught by Ringer	Six captures on 18-12-2015 and 19-07-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28›N 2°23›W 0km
Caught by Ringer	20-12-2020	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28›N 2°23›W 0km 5y 2m 3d

*Due to an editorial error, the species account for Wren was omitted from the 2019 report (ed.). This is the 2019 account in full:-*

**2019**

BBS:	1.63
Shropshire BBS Index:	Present on 100% of 51 plots, 471 birds recorded, average of 9.24 per occupied plot
Author:	John Tucker

There were close to 1,394 records, almost a third up on last year. The imbalance of 62.9% of the records from the north (SJ) might be explained, for such a common species, by a similar imbalance in the distribution of recorders.

Seven individuals were ringed during a four-hour period on 1 Dec at Shifnal Sewage Works, suggesting how many of these little birds (‘wing’d mice’) lurk, largely unseen and uncounted. Likewise, the presence of 15 singing males on a one-hour transect along the Rea Brook in Shrewsbury on 30 Apr is testament to how many territories there can be.

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## NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Shropshire Status: Common resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: John P Martin  
Number of Records: 1,193 (BT=887, CR=0, eB=306)



Nuthatch – BirdTrack reporting rate in 10-day periods in 2020

This is a well reported and increasing species with 1,193 records received, 195 of them just noting presence (16%). This compares with 762 records in 2019 and 740 in 2018, presumably reflecting overall increased levels of local reporting due to lockdown and the extra eBird data more than Nuthatch abundance.

Song was noted from January to September. Confirmed breeding came from Adderley, Aston on Clun, Bettws-y-crwyn, Brown Moss, Cross Lane Head, Farley, Hope Bowdler Hill, Ironbridge, Meaton Lane, Priorslee Flash, Shavington Park, VP, Whitcliffe, Woolston and Wyke, but was likely to have been very widespread.

High counts during the year included nine at Shavington Park on 19 Mar; six at four sites: Wyre Forest (Dowles Brook area) on 8 Mar; Brown Clee on 7 Nov; Moelydd on 2 Dec and Aston-on-Clun on 15 Dec.

The reasons for the fluctuating recording rate of this species probably reflect varying detectability, which is easier when they are most vocal especially in March and April when territorial behaviour is most prominent, but also in September when young birds are dispersing.

## Ringed Recoveries

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species in 2020:

### TZ38204

Ringed Full-grown Female	28-11-2016	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W
Caught by Ringer	21-09-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W 0km 3y 9m 24d

### TZ38290

Ringed Full-grown Female	10-08-2017	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W
Caught by Ringer	07-09-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W 0km 3y 0m 28d

## TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	412 (BT=284, CR=0, eB=128)

Reporting rate Treecreeper - Shropshire 2020



[www.birdtrack.net](http://www.birdtrack.net)

### Treecreeper – BirdTrack reporting rate in 10-day periods in 2020

The 412 records submitted represent a significant increase from 230 in 2019, 195 in 2018 and 192 in 2017, but presumably mainly reflects overall levels of local reporting and extra eBird records rather than Treecreeper numbers. Treecreeper survival rates are reduced by wet winter weather but the heavy rains and floods early in the year had no obvious negative impact here. 42 of the records (10%) only reported presence.

There were widespread reports of breeding activity. Song was noted between 4 Mar and 8 Jun. Proved breeding was recorded at eight sites but was obviously more widespread. Most sites with breeding season records (at least 70 localities recorded from March to June) are likely to be breeding sites in this fairly sedentary species.

The largest count was of about 10 at Attingham Park on 7 Nov. Otherwise, no count exceeded four birds.

Most reports apparently come from sites with woodland or good cover of mature trees with relatively few from towns and gardens. One at Tibberton West on 17 Jan with another there on 17 Dec were described as rare visitors to this garden. One was hunting on old stone walls of a cottage at Aston-on-Clun in July. Breeding was proved in Rea Brook Valley LNR in Shrewsbury with fledged young on 30 Jun. At well-watched VP, which lacks mature woodland, the species is rather scarce with single individuals recorded from 1 Jan to 16 Feb; 30 Jun; 2 Aug; 28 Sep; and 7–17 Nov.

The reporting rate data for this species shows little in the way of obvious patterns, apart from an increase in early spring when song is frequent, relatively few other species are in song and visual detection is not hampered by leaves on the trees.

### Ringling Recoveries

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species in 2020:

#### JDA164

Ringed Juvenile	27-06-2017	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W
Caught by Ringer	06-09-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W 0km 3y 2m 20d

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### ROSE-COLOURED STARLING *Pastor roseus*

Shropshire Status:	Vagrant
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	16 (BT=13, CR=0, eB=3)

A juvenile was found in a garden in Whitchurch on 17 Oct (*J Kay*), where it remained until 30 Oct and was seen by many visiting birders towards the end of its stay. The fourth modern record following an adult at Minsterley in June 2002 (an invasion year for this nomadic eastern breeder) and autumn first-years at Porth-y-Wain in Oct–Nov 2005, and Shrewsbury in Oct–Nov 2018. All have been found in gardens.

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## **STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

Shropshire Status:	Very common winter visitor, common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	1,452 (BT=1,214, CR= 8, eB=230)

During the first winter period several flocks were in the low thousands, the largest an estimated 6,000 at Adderley in February. At the latter end of the year a few larger gatherings were reported including flocks of around 15,000 at VP and Whixall canal floods in December.

Starling murmurations and their estimated size are a perennial feature of the Bird Report, but a highlight this year was the use of thermal imaging to see right into a December roost at Cockshutt in an ‘unremarkable hedge beside a cul-de-sac’. This provided a good estimate of the flock size (300) as well as an intimate view of the Starlings’ behaviour: ‘...the roost continues to grow...the birds drop into the hedge in batches then disperse along the hedge away from the main take-off and landing area. They repeat the process in reverse in the morning.’

The disparity between the north and south of the county was even more marked than last year: of the 1,354 records only 108 (7%) came from the south. During the peak breeding months of April, May and June the gap was greater still: just 22 of over 400 encounters, around 0.05%, occurred in the south, though some of them did confirm breeding.

Breeding was reported at a good number of sites, the majority in built-up areas, a handful in open country. A pair was visiting a nest box as early as 24 Feb; occupied nests were found from mid-April, and adults seen carrying food to nests from early May. A brood of six in a nest box was ringed on 6 May and the first observation of a fledgling came two days later. Post-breeding flocks are a good guide to breeding success as juvenile plumage is readily identifiable: several observers commented with varying degrees of precision on the proportion of juveniles in flocks, from ‘mostly’, ‘almost all’ or ‘virtually all’ juveniles, to ‘80%-90% juveniles’ and ‘120 out of a flock of 140’. More picturesquely, one group was described as ‘a gang of wandering adolescents’.

### **Ringling Recoveries**

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**LB86845**

Ringed Full-grown Female	01-10-2010	Wellington Park, Montrose: 56°42'N 2°27'W (Angus)
Caught by Ringer	07-06-2020	Sutton, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°44'W 449km S 9y 6m 6d

**LA52207**

Ringed Adult	27-03-2011	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W
Caught by Ringer	Six captures between 06-07-2011 and 01-07-2019 Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W	
Caught by Ringer	15-07-2020	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W 0km 9y 3m 18d

The following birds moved the greatest distance in Britain and Ireland (more than 100km) in 2020:

**LB86845**

Ringed Full-grown Female	01-10-2010	Wellington Park, Montrose: 56°42'N 2°27'W (Angus)
Caught by Ringer	07-06-2020	Sutton, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°44'W 449km S 9y 6m 6d

**LJ88982**

Ringed Adult Female	08-01-2018	Newport: 52°45'N 2°22'W
Alive (Ring read in field)	12-02-2020	Cromer: 52°54'N 1°16'E 245km E 2y 1m 4d

**SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos***

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	LBAP, Red list
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Robert Rees
Number of Records:	1,549 (BT=1,071, CR=2, eB=476)

There were 1,071 reports of Song Thrush submitted through BirdTrack for 2020, compared with 678 for 2019. A further 476 records were provided through eBird. More than twice as many records from BirdTrack (766) were from the northern part of the county (SJ tetrads) with only 305 from the south (SO). Whether this reflects the distribution of birds or distribution of recorders is not possible to assess.

Singing males were reported from the very start of the year – 27 such reports in January from across the county. It had been very mild at the start of 2020, although very wet, so it is likely that they were already claiming territory. In early April, a singing male was heard to be mimicking the songs of Blue Tit, Buzzard and Pied Wagtail in its song at Market Drayton.

The first report of confirmed breeding came from Haughmond Hill (SJ51) on 21 Mar when a nest with eggs was observed. A similar report was made from Meaton Lane (SO77) on 4 Apr. Birds carrying food and/or faecal sacs were reported during

April while the first fledglings that were observed were seen in Plowden (SO38) on 17 May.

The number of reports of sightings declined during August and September, as in previous years, although one pair was observed to be feeding young at Beambridge (SO38) as late as 20 Aug. The warm weather of early summer had obviously allowed an extended breeding season. Twenty-four sightings were reported in August, 18 in September and 32 in October. November's count was 59 and 69 for December. Even though numbers were fewer, singing males were heard throughout. While earlier in the year, most reports were of single birds or pairs, in the latter part of the year groups of birds, sometimes mixed with Blackbird and others were frequently seen feeding together.

### Ringling Recoveries

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species in 2020:

#### RL75520

Ringed First-year	24-10-2019	Newport: 52°45'N 2°22'W
Long Dead	28-06-2020	Newport: 52°45'N 2°23'W 1km 0y 8m 4d

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### MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red list
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Robert Rees
Number of Records:	746 (BT=570, CR=2, eB=174)

There was a significant increase in the number of reports of Mistle Thrush submitted in 2020, up from 423 the previous year to 570 (via BirdTrack), an increase of approximately 35%. A further 174 records were submitted via the eBird portal. They were seen and heard across the county and throughout the year, the first records of a singing male made from Leighton and Whitcliffe, both on 7 Jan.

Singing males were reported virtually every week after that but the first record of confirmed breeding was 24 Apr at Bentlawnt,(SJ30) when an occupied nest was observed. A pair were observed feeding young at Cockshutt (SJ44) on 22 Apr and again two days later, presumably the same pair. By late May, fledglings were seen at several locations: Aston on Clun (SO38), Shelve (SO39), Papermill Bank (SJ55) and Gorstybank (SJ30). The latest report of confirmed breeding was from Chesterton (SO79) where fledglings were seen on 8 Jul.

In the early part of the year, most observations were of single birds or pairs, although on 15 Jun a loose flock of more than 25 birds was seen at Titterstone Clee quarry (SO57). More records of birds flocking together appeared from July onwards, a group of 18-22 recorded on several occasions at Wall Farm, Kynnersley between 6 Jul and 1 Aug.

By November, males had begun to sing again, claiming winter territory or food sources. Reports of singing males came from Leighton (SJ60), Dodecote (SJ62), Overton (SO57) and Small Batch, Long Mynd (SO43) at various dates during the month. In December, Mistle Thrush were observed in mixed flocks with Redwing, Fieldfare and Starling, feeding on stubbles and winter cereal crops, one was seen at Market Drayton (SJ68) defending its winter supply of Holly berries.

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### **REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

Shropshire Status:	Common winter visitor and passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, RBBP, Red list
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Robert Rees
Number of Records:	975 (BT=670, CR=3, eB=302)

There was a total of 670 reports of Redwing submitted via BirdTrack in 2020, a 65% increase on 2019. A further 302 were reported through eBird and three via the county recorder, making a total of 975 records for the year. There was a clear geographical split, with 463 BirdTrack records coming from the northern sector (SJ) and only 188 from the south (SO). This could be because there are more people recording and reporting in the north but the fact that autumn arrivals tend to come from the north and north-east, moving south, may also be a factor.

In the first half of the year, the second half of the 2019-20 season, birds were frequently seen in large flocks, with eight reports of groups of more than 100 birds in January alone. The largest of these was a group of around 450 seen at Annscroft (SJ40) on 2 Jan. Other notable observations were from Meadowley, (SO69) 260+ on 3 Jan, Buttery Reservoir (SJ61), c.250 on 7 Jan and Lower Chorley (SO78) 200+ on 23 Feb. Many of the flocks were mixed flocks including Fieldfare and Starling and precise counts were difficult to determine.

From the end of February, it seems that large flocks began to disperse and most reports were of small groups or numbers in single figures. This is most likely due to birds beginning to prepare for the forthcoming breeding season – some were heard in subsong – or because they had to spread further afield to find adequate food. The wet

spring of 2020 may also have been a factor. The last sightings of this season were a single bird at VP on 7 Apr and three at Adderley on the same day.

The first recorded sighting of Redwing in the new season was on 22 Sep at Wem. In late September and early October, *T Lowe* made several night-time recordings of overflying birds at Cantlopgrove (SJ50). On 12 Oct, he reported “a huge passage, overflying at night, c320 birds, flying north-west.” On 17 Oct he reported a further 400 birds at Cantlopgrove while a flock of 300 birds were seen at Cockshutt (SJ42) two days later. VP also has attractions for Redwing as a flock of 110 were seen there on 22 Oct and another of 200 on 1 Nov.

### Ringing Recoveries

The following bird was ringed abroad were found here in 2020:

#### DKC (Copenhagen)

8244323

Ringed First-year	25-10-2019	Grenen, Skagen: 57°43'N 10°37'E (Nordjyllands) <b>Denmark</b>
Caught by Ringer	21-10-2020	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W 1,015km WSW 0y 11m 26d

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### BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor
National Conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Robert Rees
Number of records:	3,450 (BT = 2,692, CR = 4, eB = 754)

As in preceding years, reports of Blackbird were submitted from 1 Jan through to 31 Dec. A total of 2,692 reports was submitted to BirdTrack in 2020, 45% more than in 2019. Reports were submitted from all corners of the county and understandably, many reports were of sightings made in urban areas or close to human habitation. Blackbirds are such a familiar sight in gardens, in urban and rural locations, and regular visitors to garden feeders that it is unsurprising that there have been so many records including numerous observations of birds carrying food to nests close by.

Away from urban areas, Blackbird populates a wide range of habitats from the low-lying Whixall Mosses to the less hospitable upland terrain of the Stiperstones. It is not surprising that they are most frequently to be found in lower lying and wetter

areas where the softer ground makes the retrieving of the invertebrates that form the largest part of their diet easier.

Although a singing male had been heard as early as 14 Feb, at Annscroft, the earliest evidence of breeding was a female carrying nesting material in a garden at Newport on 4 Mar. The largest reported group of Blackbird in the early spring was at the same location, on 21 Feb, when 17 birds were seen which the recorder thought were probably migrant birds coming to feed after an overnight roost. The first evidence of confirmed breeding was on 22 Mar when a nest with three young was observed at Rea Brook, Shrewsbury. The last report of confirmed breeding was on 26 Aug from Bentlawnt (SJ30) when a group of six fledglings were observed, presumably the second or third brood for that season.

### Ringling Recoveries

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2020:

#### LC86808

Ringed Adult Male	21-12-2017	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W
Dead (hit by car)	15-05-2020	Tregdeveien, Mandal: 58°03'N 7°34'E (Vest-Agder) <b>Norway</b> 880km NE 2y 4m 24d

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020

#### LE51433

Ringed Juvenile Male	24-08-2013	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W
Caught by Ringer	Six captures between 30-10-2013 and 04-12-2018 Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km	
Caught by Ringer	20-03-2020	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km 6y 6m 25d

#### LH11556

Ringed Juvenile Male	08-07-2013	Newport: 52°45'N 2°22'W
Caught by Ringer	20-03-2020	Newport: 52°46'N 2°23'W 1km 6y 6m 8d

#### LE51443

Ringed Adult Male	11-11-2013	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W
Caught by Ringer	Three captures between 29-02-2016 and 12-02-2020 Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km	
Caught by Ringer	23-02-2020	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W 0km 6y 3m 12d

#### LC86444

Ringed Adult Male	21-12-2017	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W
Caught by Ringer	30-07-2020	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W 0km 5y 10m 7d

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**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

Shropshire Status:	Common passage migrant and winter visitor.
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, RBBP, Red list
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Robert Rees
Number of records:	752 (BT=487, CR=1, eB=264)

Four hundred and eighty-three records have been submitted via BirdTrack for 2020, representing an increase by around one third over the previous year. A further 264 entries were submitted via eBird and one through the County Recorder. Roughly two-thirds of the reports submitted via BirdTrack were from the northern half of the county (SJ grid references) with the remainder from the south (SO grid references).

Fieldfares are undoubtedly very sociable birds, with flocks of over 100 birds frequently seen, e.g. 580 birds seen at Harper Adams University, near Newport on 20 Jan. There were few reports of groups of five birds or less. However, they tend to congregate with other thrushes, especially Redwing, and several reporters stated that numbers could only be estimated because of the presence of other birds. While they are known to feed on whatever berries and fruit may be available in the hedgerows, the largest flocks were seen feeding on the ground, often where sheep had been grazing, the short grass making it easier for them to find grubs and worms. They also tend to favour young cereal crops, presumably for the same reason.

The last reported sighting of any Fieldfare for the 2019-20 season was on 22 Apr at Lyth Hill (SJ46) where a group of 14 was seen. This was just 2 days later than the last sighting in 2019. The first arrivals of the new season were seen on 9 Oct at Shifnal (SJ74) when again, a group of 14 were observed. This was very much in line with previous arrival dates which had fluctuated between 3 and 11 Oct in the previous eight years. Large flocks were seen again in this autumn season: 400 at the Stiperstones on 16 Oct, 300 at Bicton Hill on the same day and 800 at Cantlogrove on 17th. A flock of 270 were seen at Whixall floods on 5 Dec when overflying at dusk towards a communal roost.

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**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant, has bred
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	16 (BT=15, CR=1, eB=0)

There were far fewer records (16) than last year's 42, presumably because of far fewer visits to Titterstone Clee, the main regular passage site. Most were spring passage records.

The first of the year was from Titterstone Clee, on 21 Mar, a few days before lockdown started, and there was one near All Stretton a day later. The other spring migrants were all seen in April: five (four males and a female) in upper Ashes Hollow on 5th, one in Shrewsbury and another on The Wrekin on 13th, two at the top of Batch Valley, on the slope below Jinlye ("where they have been seen on passage in eight of the last nine springs") on 15th, three feeding amongst scattered hawthorn scrub on Long Mynd on 21st, one at Longdon-on-Tern on 22nd, and two at Cleeton St. Mary on 26th.

There was no evidence of breeding, and there has not been any since 2003. Around a dozen pairs bred regularly on the Long Mynd until 1999.

The three autumn passage records were all singles in October: at Cantlopgrove, on a visible migration watch on 9th, and at Titterstone Clee on 16th and 23rd, the last for the year.

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**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of Records:	163 (BT=130, CR=2, eB=31)

Even in this Covid restricted year there were 163 records from no fewer than 79 sites. The 132 records (excluding eBird) compares with 58 and 99 respectively in 2018 and 2019 and was the highest number for several years. Most sites had four or fewer records with just five having larger numbers (Colstey Wood, 5+; Hopesay, 5+; Overton 5+; Wall Farm Kynnersley, eight; and Woolston, six).

The first birds were reported from Woodseaves, Market Drayton and Whitcott Keysett on 5 May followed by Brown Clee, Benthall Hall Pools and Tittenley Pool on 6th. Records then increased as more birds arrived from the 15th onwards. The last bird of the year was a juvenile at Shakenhurst on 4 Oct.

Birds with nests/young were recorded at Atcham, Cressage, Wall Farm, Weston Wharf and Whitcott Keysett, while a further twelve sites held recently-fledged juveniles or larger juveniles still being fed by adults: Attingham Park, Brockhurst Farm (SJ52), Clungunford, Deuxhill, Dudmaston, Howlett, Kinlet, Meadowley, Newcastle, Ruyton XI Towns, Shakenhurst, and Tibberton Moor.

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**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

Shropshire Status: Very Common resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: John Tucker  
Number of records: 3,207 (B=2,467, CR=4, eB=736)

There were 3,207 records submitted, not far short of twice the number in the previous year. The reason for the increase may again (as, for example with the Wren) relate to more BirdTrack ‘complete species’ lists being submitted; the advantage being enhanced monitoring of migrant arrivals and departures dates, although with the secondary effect of multiple records of almost ubiquitous common species such as this.

The first nest building this year was reported on 21 Mar from Haughmond Hill and a nest with eggs was found in a garden in Shrewsbury on 7 Apr within another at Woolston on 16th, perhaps a little later than usual. Fledgling Robins are popular garden birds. One was being fed on 6 May, again in a garden in Shrewsbury, with another reported on the same date in very different habitat at Oakeley Mynd. Other fledged birds were found at numerous localities in late May and June although the only nest with young was at Cockshutt on 16 May. Being multi-brooded, nesting usually continues through to July with the latest fledged juvenile reported on 30 Jul at Cantlopgrove.

**Ringling Recoveries**

The following bird was amongst the oldest reported in 2020:

**Z176411**

Ringed Juvenile	23-08-2015	Shavington Park, Calverhall: 52°56'N 2°33'W
Caught by Ringer	05-12-2020	Shavington Park, Calverhall: 52°56'N 2°32'W 1km 5y 3m 12d

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**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of Records:	90 (BT=82, CR=1, eB=7)

Craig Sychtyn again produced the first Shropshire record (for the fourth year) with a bird seen on 5 Apr. Over the next week, all records were from the south of the county with birds at Bucknell Wood, Bushmoor Coppice, around Clun, Mardu and Whitcott Keysett. Candy Wood, Venusbank (near Hope) and Rhyd-y-Croesau produced records from SJ tetrads.

Due to Covid restrictions, many nest box projects suffered from severely reduced or no visits during the peak of the breeding season and so outcomes this year are under-reported. The presence of nests or young was noted at six sites – Bridges, Clunton Coppice, Bushmoor Coppice, Bettws-y-crwyn, Medlicott, and Wyre Forest, as well as at Shropshire Ringing Group amalgamated sites around Newcastle and Folly Brook. The largest counts of adults were at Clunton Coppice (11), Bettws-y-crwyn (12) and Hall of the Forest, Newcastle (15). Observations fell off quickly in June with only two records in July (two at Wall Farm and one at Meadowley). The last birds, singles, were at Clunton Coppice, 3 Aug, and Minton Batch, 7 Aug.

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**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Shropshire Status:	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, has bred
National Conservation Status:	Red List, RBBP
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Bob Harris
Number of Records:	28 (BT=25, CR=2, eB=1)

Twenty-eight records were received from just seven sites; with all records being of singles or just simply ‘present’. The first for the year was on Titterstone Clee on 9 Jan (*J Reeves*), with a single here again on 23-24 Feb, and 4, 6 and 22 Mar. All of these sightings were considered to be the same over-wintering individual. Another presumed winterer was a female or immature seen by many observers at Bromfield between 19–29 Feb and reported again on 6 Mar (*P Davies et al*).

Spring migrants were males found at Bucknell on 13 Apr (*A Lloyd*) and on The

Wrekin on the same date (*J Reeves*) whilst a further bird on Titterstone Clew on 23 Apr was a female (*J Reeves*).

Later in the year females or immatures were at Bridgnorth on 14 Nov (*R Hammonds*) and Ball Mill Farm, Oswestry on 22 Nov (*A Griffiths*). A male was found on Christmas Eve at Ellesmere (*C Long*).

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**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Amber List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 333 (BT=302, CR=9, eB=22)

The first bird arrived on the 6 Apr (Isombridge), three days later than last year. The next were on 9 Apr (Moelydd and Whitcott Keysett) and then the floodgates opened. By the end of the month birds had been reported from 35 additional sites, mostly in ones or twos, or simply present; except for Cleeton St. Mary, Gorstybank, Oakeley Mynd and Stiperstones all reporting four and Venusbank (near Hope), and Trefonen reporting five. Into May and another 42 sites were added, again mainly ones and twos, but with ten at Bridges and twelve at Brown Clew.

Considering all records of nests eggs and fledglings until the end of June, to exclude post-breeding dispersal, breeding was reported from fifteen sites with all but Snailbeach and Trefonen being in the south of the county. Many nest box schemes were not visited this year or were visited late (due to Covid restrictions) so the full extent of breeding is probably underestimated.

Birds started to move and depart in August with many records being only of single birds. The last birds of the year were on the 5 Sep when two were at VP and one on the Long Mynd.

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**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Red List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Leo Smith  
Number of Records: 37 (BT=30, CR=2, eB=5)

The first record of the year came from Wall Farm (Kynnersley) on 19 Apr and was a passage bird. It was followed by three on the Long Mynd (location not specified) on 21 Apr and one near Cleeton St. Mary on 26th. There were three early – mid-May records, of one at Titterstone Clee on 3rd and another on 19th, and one at Bury Ditches in between, on 14th.

The Long Mynd is the only regular breeding site for this species, and all 11 records between 20 May and 17 Jul were from various parts of this National Trust property: Ashes Hollow (three singing males at the top of the Hollow on 1 Jun), Batch Valley, Cardingmill Valley (a pair on 12 Jul),

Pole Cottage (two adults feeding two juveniles on 3 Jul), Townbrook and Wild Moor (a pair and another male on 20 May).

There were then three further records in July; two from the Stiperstones on 17th and 31st, and one from Hidmore on 23rd, followed by the penultimate record for the year with one at Townbrook on the Long Mynd on 15 Aug.

Intensive monitoring by The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project found an estimated 52 breeding pairs in 2019, a few more than previously thought. Work in 2020 was limited but concentrated on areas not well covered in previous years, and found perhaps six further pairs, in Sleekstonebank Hollow (one), the eastern upper tributary of Ashes Hollow, east of Long Synalds (one), a side valley to the east of the mainstream in the lower part of Ashes Hollow (three) and Wild Moor (one).

The Whinchat conservation project on the Long Mynd, part of “Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons”, was approved by the National Lottery, but the start was postponed until next year.

Return passage was again well documented, starting with two at Park Farm floods on 30 Aug, then, all in September, four at the same site on 1st, and three on 3rd and 6th, one on the Stiperstones NNR on 1st, at Noneley (two on 3rd and one on 4th), two at Whixall Moss on 6th, and two at VP on 26th and 27th.

The last for the year was unusually late, one on the Long Mynd on 22 Nov. A photo was submitted to confirm the ID (*D Chapman*).

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**STONECHAT** *Saxicola rubicola*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 401 (BT=353, CR=2, eB=46)

Even with Covid travel restrictions in place records were received for all months of the year from over 70 sites. Many records were just of ones or twos with larger numbers only received from larger or more established sites; or following breeding. In the first winter period, six were at Llanfair Waterdine on 16 Mar with counts of more than four received from Caer Caradoc, Clee Hill, Lawley and Whixall Moss.

First breeding records, with fledged young, started at the end of May (from at least 18 sites) with maximum counts of ten+ from Llanfair Waterdine, eight at Wild Moor, Stapeley Hill /Bentlawnt and Whixall Moss and five+ and four+ from Lower Short Ditch and Masons Bank respectively. Numbers started to fall at the end of September with counts back to ones and twos as family parties split up.

The Long Mynd and Whixall Moss maintained the greatest daily numbers over the winter period with other records from Brown Clee and the Stiperstones.

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**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Shropshire Status: Uncommon passage migrant, scarce summer visitor  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Bob Harris  
Number of Records: 110 (BT=91, CR=0, eB=19)

Slightly later than last year, the first birds were reported mid-March, at Tern Hill on 16th and Whixall Moss on the 20th. Two appeared at Wyke on the 24th with one at Tibberton two days later. The next birds were all in April – 20 sites – with the largest number, six, at Caer Din Ring on the 15th. Four were at Stapeley Hill, Wyke and Wall Farm, Kynnersley with the rest all one – three.

As expected, fewer were observed in May /June with one, sometimes two birds, at 14 sites, predominantly on higher ground in the south of the county. The first juveniles appeared in July with birds at Bicton Hill, Bodbury Hill, Caer Caradoc, Llanfair

Waterdine and Stiperstones. Individuals or pairs persisted at many sites until October with a record 18 seen at Titterstone Clee on 1 Sep. The last observation of the year was a single at The Stiperstones on 11 Oct (a week earlier than last year).

The larger, darker, Greenland race (*leucorhoa*) produced six records of possibly eight birds. Spring records were two at Cantlopgrove on 29 Apr and one at Cockshutt 14 May. On autumn passage two were reported again at Cantlopgrove on 25 Sep with one on 27th; one at Myndtown 29 Sep and one at Leebootwood on 1 Oct.

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**DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status	Amber List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	280 (BT=267, CR=4, eB=9)

Almost 300 records were a substantial increase on the previous two years, but they were again dominated by a few regularly watched locations. Records came from all months of the year, but the usual pattern of most in the first five months, while pairs were establishing territory, building nests, and feeding young, was disrupted, with the highest number in both May and November, and the slightly smaller April number was more or less equalled in six other months.

Only 16 records came from the north, from seven sites (seven records and two sites fewer than last year): Cound Brook at VP, Longnor, Rea Brook Valley (Shrewsbury), River Ceiriog near Chirk and River Morda near Morda. A pair was seen at Longnor, a regular site, and two on the River Ceirog on 23 Jan and 26 Jul may have been a pair, but there was no other evidence of breeding. There were no records from the upper River Tern, and apart from Cound Brook they have largely disappeared from the Severn catchment.

The 265 records from the south, 95% of the total, came from 58 sites, compared with 39 last year, mainly on the streams and small rivers, in particular the rivers Clun, Onny and Teme. Most records were of one or two birds, and the 22 counts of three or more from only seven sites appear to be either family parties or two/three pairs along a stretch of river.

Breeding was not well documented but was confirmed near Aston on Clun, Bitterley, Buttonoak, near Clungunford, Dowles Brook (Wyre Forest), Haybridge, Hints,

Hopton Wafers, Long Mynd (Cardingmill Valley), Nineveh (Shropshire side of river), Ratlinghope, Silvington, Upper and Lower Forge (Mor Brook), Whitcliffe and Wistanstow. The report of one “collecting food and visiting presumed nest (three times) on Mor Brook” is particularly welcome, as it may herald the recolonisation of fast-flowing tributaries of the River Severn in the south-east.

Nestbox 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. Dippers usually nest early, so they would have almost all fledged by the time the Covid-19 restrictions were eased in mid-May, but ringing was still restricted by the BTO. Therefore, In the former area, no monitoring took place.

In the latter, 24 potential nest sites were monitored, the great majority being nestboxes under bridges. Eight sites were, or had been, occupied, 16 were vacant and the status of seven more is not known; some of the latter are prime sites and likely to have been used: three active nests were found, others were judged to have been active by field signs or local information. All known nests were in boxes, and three colour rings on breeding adults were read. No comparison is possible with previous years. The occupancy rate appears low, but perhaps not quite as low as might have been feared after the poor 2019 season.

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 most project work in the whole area was suspended.

The average length of the territories is approximately 1 km. 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.

Strettons area Community Wildlife Group started monitoring the population between Longnor in the north and Marshbrook in the south, with a view to initiating a nest-box scheme when current nest sites have been identified. Three were found at previously-known sites, and four were found at new sites. The nests of two pairs could not be found, as they probably nest under bridges in private gardens, in Church Stretton itself, and Little Stretton. Three previously-known sites were not visited, but it is likely at least two were occupied. The population in the area is therefore estimated at nine to 11 pairs. Two of the found nests each produced four fledged young, four more almost certainly produced fledged young (they were about to fledge from the nest), and the unfound nest in Little Stretton produced at least two fledged

young. The final found nest was predated. A pair near Leebotwood laid a second clutch, but the outcome is unknown. Nine colour-ringed birds were found: five were read, but four did not provide a good enough view.

Colour-ringing has been going on since 2014, across the whole of the Teme Catchment, but also on the Cound Brook around Leebotwood and Longnor. Each ring is on the left leg, and the letter and two numbers on each ring are unique, so if the ring can be read it will add to what is known of the life history of individual bird. Observers are requested to report them.

### Ringling Recoveries

The following birds were amongst the oldest reported in 2020

#### RL15093

Ringed Nestling Female	16-04-2012	Llannano: 52°21'N 3°20'W (Powys)
Caught by Ringer	Four captures	between 14-05-2017 and 06-11-2019 River Unk, Cefn Einion, Clun: 52°28'N 3°03'W 23km ENE
Caught by Ringer	22-09-2020	River Unk, Cefn Einion, Clun: 52°28'N 3°03'W 23km ENE 8y 5m 6d

#### RL15243

Ringed Adult Female	04-10-2012	Horderley: 52°28'N 2°52'W
Caught by Ringer	05-01-2020	Horderley: 52°28'N 2°52'W 0km 7y 3m 1d

#### RL15484

Ringed Nestling Female	07-05-2013	Upper Treverward: 52°23'N 3°04'W
Caught by Ringer	01-10-2013	Bucton, Leintwardine: 52°20'N 2°54'W (Herefordshire)12km ESE 0y 4m 24d Alive (Colour rings seen)
	22-04-2014	Brampton Bryan: 52°20'N 2°55'W (Herefordshire)12km ESE 0y 11m 5d
Caught by Ringer	07-10-2015	Brampton Bryan: 52°20'N 2°55'W (Herefordshire)12km ESE 2y 5m 0d Alive (Colour rings seen)
	16-04-2016	Brampton Bryan: 52°21'N 2°55'W (Herefordshire)11km ESE 2y 11m 9d Alive (Colour rings seen)
	21-01-2020	Brampton Bryan: 52°21'N 2°55'W (Herefordshire)11km ESE 6y 8m 15d

#### RL42158

Ringed Nestling Female	14-05-2013	Onibury, Ludlow: 52°24'N 2°48'W
Caught by Ringer	09-10-2015	Affcott, Craven Arms: 52°28'N 2°50'W 7km NNW
Caught by Ringer	04-01-2020	Upper Affcott, Craven Arms: 52°28'N 2°48'W 8km N 6y 7m 21d

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**TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Michelle Frater
Number of Records:	102 (BT=97, CR=1, eB=4)

The number of sites at which Tree Sparrow was recorded dropped slightly from 21 last year to 19. Once again the majority were in the south of the county, and by an even larger margin than last year: only eight of the 101 encounters took place in the north, all at different sites.

Although Tree Sparrow is a gregarious species, worryingly few of this year's counts reached double figures. The average number of birds per encounter was below five, and that figure is flattered by a small number of larger counts; over 40% of observations involved just one or two sparrows. Also striking was the absence of substantial post-breeding flocks taking advantage of harvest feeding opportunities: the only gatherings were 20 or so including juveniles at Molverley in August and at least 10 at Upton Cressett in September. The highest count anywhere was 43 in February on bird-feeders at a site in the Clun Forest where varying numbers were recorded throughout the year.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites in the south-west, Bicton Hill, Chapel Lawn, Oakeley Mynd and Whitcott Keysett, at Meadowley in the south-east and at Rowton in the north.

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**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	John Tucker
Number of records:	2,244 (BT=1,719, CR=4, eB=521)

Almost two and a half times the number of records received last year, though for such a common and ubiquitous species it can be difficult to extract meaning, despite its Red Listing at national level; the species appears to thrive here.

Of the records directly attributable to OS National Grid squares SJ or SO, respectively the north and south of the county, SJ outnumber those from SO by 2.3:1,

in parts probably attributable to the northern preponderance of built-up areas and the corresponding high number of recorders.

The same diligent recorder of Trefonen, mentioned last year, in 2020 reported ‘16 young from six broods, a further clutch failed to hatch’ while another recorder near Tibberton reported 18 birds, ‘the highest count I’ve had in the garden in 25 years’. Sparrows were reported colonising the isolated cottage at Coston and on 23 May near Ludlow one was reported gathering food for nestlings by ‘flycatching’, an energetically expensive way to gather food which must have been at high density in the air at the time. A third brood was reported from Adderley on 2 Jul.

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species:

**TT27831**

Ringed First-year Male	28-08-2016	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W
Alive (Colour rings seen)	Three sightings	between 06-04-2017 and 01-05-2019
		Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W 0km
Caught by Ringer	14-06-2020	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W 0km 3y 9m 17d

**TW45341**

Ringed Juvenile	28-05-2019	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W
Dead (Hit Glass)	20-06-2020	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W 0km 1y 0m 23d

**TW79468**

Ringed Juvenile	06-08-2020	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W
Dead	04-09-2020	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W 0km 0y 0m 29d

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	2,565 (BT=1,814, CR=3, eB=748)

A common and widespread species with a substantial increase in the total number of records from 1,213 in 2019 to 1,817 (excluding eBird), in all months of the year. Usually recorded as singles and twos in the first winter period with regular counts of three to six individuals. Counts of seven at Whitchurch on 19 Jan, 14 in maize stubble and manure heaps at Harper Adams University College Farm, Edgmond, on 20 Jan, 10 at Adderley on 25 Jan, seven VP on 14 Feb and seven at Benthall Hall on 29 Feb.

Onset of breeding activity was noted as early as 8 Jan with several bursts of territorial

song from a male at Ironbridge and where the weather was noted as “unusually mild”. This was followed by two males engaged in territorial song at Sheinton on 19 Jan and two males singing in adjacent territories at Ironbridge again 12 Feb. Seven, including three engaged in chasing and wing-flicking, were counted at Tibberton on 13 Feb with other breeding activity in February at Annscroft, Randlay, Shrewsbury, Ironbridge, Eyton on Severn and Eaton Constantine. Pairs were noted also at Newport and Chetwynd Pool on 28 Feb and eight at VP on 6 Mar included singing birds. Song was regularly recorded throughout March, increasing in late March, early April. Fourteen Dunnock were noted at Adderley on 23 Mar, an alpha male was mate-guarding a female and wing-flicking and issuing sub-song in response to a beta male at Ironbridge on 19 Mar. Other counts included eight at Rea Brook Valley on 20 Mar and 12 were at Benthall Hall Pools on 31st.

Breeding was first noted at Cockshutt on 29 Mar and comprised nest-building, subsequently recorded at Oakeley Mynd on 22 Apr. Confirmed breeding was well documented and comprised birds at Woolston on 24 Apr with May records from Newport, Cantlopgrove, Shrewsbury, Cockshutt, Ironbridge, Cross Lane Head, Plowden, VP, Bicton, Shifnal SF, Belle Vue, Whitcott Keysett and Ludlow. Further breeding records in June were from Benthall Hall Pools, Peel Wyke, Wall Farm, Kynnersley Moor, The Lawley and Oswestry. The species has a long breeding season and records continued into July at Chelmarsh Scrape and Eardington NR and into August from Brompton on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Cockshutt on 23<sup>rd</sup> and finally Bentlawnt 26 Aug. The cessation of breeding activity was indicated by an adult in moult at Eaton Constantine 7 Aug and final summer song at Shrewsbury on 12 Aug.

Small numbers were routinely recorded in the second winter period but 12 were noted at Adderley on 2 Oct and 19 Oct, 14 there on 22 Nov and 15 at Rea Brook Valley on 7 Nov. Song was occasionally recorded, including birds at Eaton Constantine on 4 Oct and 25 Dec. Wing-flicking display as well as song occurring on the latter date. Other singing birds were noted at Rea Brook Valley on 4 Dec and 11 Dec and at Shrewsbury on 22 Dec.

**FLAVA WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	203 (BT=176, CR=2, eB=25)

A total of 203 records was received, up significantly on 56 and 125 received in 2018 and 2019 respectively. The Yellow Wagtail's breeding distribution in Shropshire has a marked affinity to the North Shropshire Plain and the Eastern Sandstone Plain and just 9% were from sites in the south of the county (SO grid references).

The first record of this attractive summer migrant was of one unusually early bird on 21 Mar at Whixall canal floods. This was followed by birds typically occupying arable breeding sites or passing through wetlands and included one at Cantlopgrove on 8 Apr, with two there on 10 Apr and three on 12 Apr. Two males were at Polemere on 13 Apr with four males in horse paddocks there on 16 Apr and another individual calling. Two were at Crosemere on 14 Apr; one at Walford and one at Isombridge on 17 Apr; three at VP on 18 Apr and eight "foraging in kale stubble with 14 Pied Wagtail" on the same day at Cockshutt. A single in a wheat field at Sandford and two Ryton XI Towns were found on 21 Apr. The first record in the southern half of the county was one by the River Onny at Wistanstow on 22 Apr. New sites continue to be occupied late April and typically comprised farmland habitats such as heat and oil-seed rape fields.

Early evidence of breeding activity comprised pairs at Kingslow and Cantlopgrove on 3 May and Childs Ercall on 12 May. Yellow Wagtail were displaying at Puleston on 17 May and probably nesting at Baggy Moor on 19th. Breeding was subsequently confirmed at Cantlopgrove on 25 May; Monkmoor Pool on 26 May; Lilleshall on 28 May; Woolston on 8 Jun and in a wheat field at Sutton Maddock on 8 Jun. Four in a potato field at Prees on 13 Jun probably included breeding birds with other breeding confirmed in June at Beckbury, Knockin, Camp Farm, Chesterton and Childs Ercall Airfield.

Passage in late summer included several records of birds flying over, with one at Dodecote on 14 Aug and 31 Aug, one flying south at Tibberton West on 16 Aug and one at VP on 5 Sep. High counts during passage included seven at Polemere on 2 Aug, seven at Cantlopgrove on 9 Aug and 14 Aug with five there 3 Sep. Nine were found at Underdon Quarry, Bridgnorth on 10 Aug. An exceptional count of 28 following a plough was made at Boreton on 6 Sep and 22 were in a ploughed field at Cantlopgrove on 22 Sep. Departure dates were notably later than 2019 with two to four recorded at Park Farm floods between 11 Sep and 15 Sep and a final individual there on 21 Sep, one at Wall Farm 22 Sep and the final record of two at Cantlopgrove on 27 Sep.

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**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	600 (BT=495, CR=0, eB=105)

A total of 600 records were received, with the 495 (excluding eBird), up substantially on 185 and 211 received in 2018 and 2019 respectively, in all months from a range of wetland, farmland and urban habitats.

In the first winter period, records were mainly of one to three birds on wetland sites but one at Stapeley Hill on 3 Jan fed on a manure heap with a Pied Wagtail.

Breeding activity was first noted on 23 Feb with a pair at Adstone Hill. Pairs were subsequently recorded at Rea Brook Valley on 11 Mar, Hopton Wafers on 21 Mar, Meaton Lane on 22 Mar, Whitcliffe on 1 Apr and Clungunford on 5 Apr. Nest-building was first recorded on 16 Mar at Rea Brook Valley and pairs and breeding activity was regularly noted thereafter throughout April.

Breeding was confirmed in May at Pentre on 3rd, Upper Forge on 8th, Buttonoak South on 10th, Shifnal Sewage Works on 12th (and on 16 Jul), Nineveh on 16th (and 13 Jun), Farley on 19th, Carding Mill Valley on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ironbridge on 24<sup>th</sup> and Long Mynd on 26<sup>th</sup>. Further confirmation in June was from Newcastle-on-Clun on 2<sup>nd</sup> and two more nearby sites around there on 5<sup>th</sup>. Other breeding records were from Wistanstow on 12 Jun and 30 Jul, Buttonoak North on 27 Jun, Aston on Clun on 10 Jul and Prees Higher Heath on 21 Jul. Breeding extended further into late summer than 2019 with breeding last confirmed on the River Onny at Wistanstow on 12 Aug.

Passage away from upland streams and lowland river breeding sites was evident in late summer with seven at Shifnal Sewage Works on 6 Aug, increasing to 17 on 27 Aug. Six were still there on 5 Sep and six were noted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 25 Sep.

Grey Wagtail was recorded mainly as singles and some twos in the second winter period with some threes. One was “catching insects around a new wildlife pond” at Tibberton on 12 Oct and one was “rooting around the edge of a covered maize clamp” with a Pied Wagtail at Cherrington 31 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.

## Ringling Recoveries

The following birds moved the greatest distances in Britain and Ireland (more than 100km) in 2020:

### ALL7481

Ringed First-year	10-09-2020	Middleton Nature Reserve: 54°01'N 2°54'W (Lancashire)
Alive (Colour rings seen)	20-12-2020	Priorslee Flash, Telford: 52°41'N 2°25'W 152km SSE 0y 3m 10d

### S638503

Ringed First-year	12-09-2018	Shifnal Sewage Works: 52°39'N 2°23'W (Lancashire)
Alive (Colour rings seen)	10-01-2020	Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff: 51°27'N 3°10'W 144km SSW 1y 3m 29d

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species:

### AHK0802

Ringed Juvenile	05-07-2020	Powick Treatment Works: 52°09'N 2°14'W (Worcestershire)
Freshly dead (hit glass)	22-08-2020	Tuckhill, Bridgnorth: 52°29'N 2°19'W 37km N 0y 1m 17d

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## ALBA WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

### Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Glenn Bishton
Number of Records:	1,477 (BT=983, CR=0, eB=494)

A total of 1,477 records were received, up significantly on 302 and 479 in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Recorded in all months and in a variety of habitats including lakes, pools, meres, reservoirs, rivers, brooks, canals, sewerage treatment works, farmland, hills and built-up areas. In the first winter period Pied Wagtail was associated mainly with farmland and wetlands, usually in ones and twos, but 25 were recorded on flooded pasture with spent silage at Moreton Say on 2 Jan. Three were in recently-harvested beet at VP on 7 Jan, 17 at The Lawley on 10 Jan, 10 feeding on fallow soil and a manure heap at Edgmond on 20 Jan. Seventy fed in the filter beds at Prees Higher Heath Sewage Works on 25 Jan with 10 at Moreton Say on 27 Jan, rising to 20 on 1 Feb. Forty fed in a field as it was ploughed at Charlton Hill on 4 Feb, and 11 were at Annscroft on 14th. Fifty-five headed southeast over Tibberton in groups to their roosting site on 29 Feb 15; 15 were at Whixall canal floods on 20 Mar and eight at Crose Mere on 22 Mar.

Breeding activity was first noted as early as 19 Jan with a pair at Sheinton. Subsequent pairs were noted at Edgmond Canal on 1 Mar, Buildwas on 9 Mar, Shakenhurst on 8 Apr and Hopesgate on 11 Apr. Song was noted at VP on 21 Mar and nest-building at Adderley on 28 Mar. Breeding activity increased as April and May progressed and breeding was confirmed at Adderley on 8 May and 29 May, Childs Ercall Airfield 12 May, Chelmarsh Reservoir 21 May and 24 Jul, Monkmoor Pool and Papermill Bank 26 May, Bicton, Masons Bank and Weston Lullingfields 1 Jun, Benthall Hall Pools 3 Jun, Hope Bowdler Hill and Buildwas 4 Jun, Wem 5 Jun, Brown Clee Hill and Farley 7 Jun, Heath 8 Jun, Cantlopgrove 10 Jun, VP 11 Jun, Wistanstow and Medlicott 12 Jun, Beambridge 16 Jun, Lawley 17 Jun, Cothercott 20 Jun, Morville Heath 25 Jun, Polemere 28 Jun and Eaton-on-Tern 12 Jul. At Prees Higher Heath Sewage Works 30 birds were recorded on 21 Jul with other breeding records at Shifnal Sewage Works on 27 Jul, Shakenhurst 31 Jul, Cross Lane Head 3 Aug and finally Whitcliffe on 8 Aug.

Flocks, passage movement and large gatherings at roosts, probably augmented by birds from the highlands of northern Scotland and England, was first apparent on 21 Aug when 50 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir, 43 there on 5 Sep increasing to 70 on 25th. Seventy followed a plough at Boreton on 6 Sep. 16 were in horse paddocks at Cherrington Green on 9 Sep; 20 at Park Farm Floods on 11 Sep and 15 Sep; 32 in horse paddocks at Tibberton on 24 Sep and 39 at Cantlopgrove 25 Sep increased to 57 on 28 Sep and 69 on 2 Oct. Also in October, 24 were at Rednal on 5th, 30 at Prees Heath Sewage Works on 17th, 23 “heading to roost in groups” at Tibberton on 20th and 22 at Eardington on 23 Oct.

Farmland continued to provide important feeding habitat as autumn progressed with 36 in a newly-cultivated field on 25 Oct and 44 in horse paddocks on 1 Nov at Cherrington Green. 61 birds followed a plough at Cantlopgrove on 27 Oct whilst in November 14 were at Granville on 30th, 20 at Walcot on 1st, 20 at Annscroft on 4th, 14 at Attingham on 7th and 11 in a sheep fodder crop at Albrighton on 9th. 14 were at Boreatton on 29 Nov; 15 around a manure heap at Worfield on 20 Dec, 37 at Cockshutt also on 20 Dec and 21 at Crose Mere on 29 Dec. On 30 Dec 11 were feeding around the River Severn floods at Eyton on Severn and the same number in a flooded field by the River Meese at Tibberton. One at Woolston 24 Dec was ‘almost complete albino’.

### **White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba***

Eighteen records from seven sites, mainly in spring with one autumn and one winter record. The first spring record was one at Whixall canal floods on 15 Mar. This was followed by one at Shifnal Sewage Works on 13 Apr with further sightings on

16 Apr, 17 Apr and 19 May. Individuals were at Polemere 18 Apr, VP with Pied Wagtail and Yellow Wagtail 18 Apr, Cantlopgrove 27 Apr, 29 Apr, 1 May and 3 May, Brown Clec 6 May and Upper and Lower Forge 8 May.

An autumn individual was recorded at Cantlopgrove on 28 Sep and the only winter record related to one at Shifnal Sewage Works on 21 Nov.

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**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	742 (BT=511, CR=1, eB=230)

Over 700 records were received, continuing the substantial increase, year on year, since 2017. They covered every month in the year but with obvious increases during the months of March to April and September to October, when these pipits are flocking to and from their breeding grounds. In total, there were about 60% from sites in the north but with a distinct seasonal shift, with most April-August records from breeding sites in the south.

There were 77 counts of 20 or more, but only one in January (20 at Sheinton on 19th) and February (42 at Leighton on 4th). Larger movements started in March with 60 at Bayston Hill Quarry on 13th, 30 at Venusbank (near Hope) on 16th, 40 on the Long Mynd on 22nd, 26 at Wyke on 24th, and 40 at Bentlawnt on 30th, and, in April, 42 at Benthall Hall on 1st, 55 at Cantlopgrove on 4th, 30 at Cockshutt on the same date and 30 at Crose Mere on 16th. Numbers built up on the Stiperstones, with BBS transect counts of 50 in SO39U on 20 April, and 42 in SJ3700 on 27th.

Apart from the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones, there were then no large counts until the largest in the year, a post-breeding flock of about 100 at Titterstone Clec on 1 Sep.

Breeding season records (mid-April – July) totalled 101, and came from 47 sites, 17 in the north (Adderley, Benthall Hall, Bentlawnt, Cefn Coch, Cothercott, Crose Mere, Edgmond, Gorstybank, Moelydd, Stiperstones North, Tittenley Pool, Trefonen, Venusbank (near Hope), Westcott, Whixall Moss, Wrekin and Wyke) and 30 in the south (Anchor, Betchcott, Bicton Hill, Bridges, Brown Clec, Bury Ditches, Caer Caradoc (near Chapel Lawn), Caer Caradoc (near All Stretton), Catherton Common, Cleton St. Mary, Darnford Brook, Edenhope Hill, Hall-of-the-Forest, Hidmore,

Hope Bowdler Hill, Hughley, Llanfair Waterdine Turbary, Masons Bank, Medicott, Middleton Priors, Pentre (Chapel Lawn), Ragleth, Ratlinghope, Rhos Fiddle, Shelve, Stapeley Common, Stapeley Hill, Stiperstones NNR South, The Long Mynd and Titterstone Clee. However, there were multiple records from several different parts of each of the larger sites (Long Mynd, Stiperstones, Brown Clee and Titterstone Clee).

Breeding is easy to confirm, but was poorly reported, and came from only nine sites (Bicton Hill, Brown Clee, Caer Caradoc (near All Stretton), Cefn Coch, Long Mynd, Nipstone, Rhos Fiddle, Stapeley Hill and Titterstone Clee). Probable breeding was reported from four more, but it almost certainly occurs at the vast majority of sites with breeding season records.

There were 27 counts of more than 20 in September, only seven from sites in the south, continuing with 30 at VP on 10th, 60 at Northwood on 16th, 50 at Lower Overton on 20th, 48 at Cefn Coch on 18th, 40 at Cockshutt on 16th, and a maximum of 95 at Cantlopgrove on 24th, from four counts over 40 from there in the month.

In the last three months of the year there were 26 counts of more than 20, from 18 sites (eight in the south): Annscroft, Attingham, Benthall Hall, Bromfield, Brown Clee Hill, Cantlopgrove, Chelmarsh, Cound, Eardington, Long Mynd, Lower Overton, Oerley reservoir, Pepperhill (Calverhall), Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn, Silvington, Tibberton, Trefonen and Wolverley.

Meadow Pipit is hard to census on its breeding sites because they are numerous and very mobile, but numbers are declining because of a continuing loss of breeding habitat, rough grazing and meadows. It was found in far fewer tetrads in the 2008–13 breeding bird Atlas than it was in 1985–90 and is on the *Amber List of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*.

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### **TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Leo Smith
Number of Records:	86 (BT=75, CR=2, eB=9)

Eighty-six records were received, slightly more than last year, but they came from 53 separate locations, a big increase compared with 36 in 2019, itself a big increase on the previous two years. Most were from upland sites in the south of the county, with

only 12 sites in the north: Adderley, Benthall Hall, Brook Vessons, Cantlopgrove , Cefn Coch, Lordshill, The Wrekin, VP, Wall Farm (Kynnersley), Westcott, Whixall Moss and The Wrekin. Of these, three sites are at the north end of the Stiperstones, and three of the records are of migrants (two obtained by sound recording of migrating flocks).

Twelve April records came from five sites: Meaton Lane, the first for the year on 4th, with 8+ including some singing, on the 11th, singles at Benthall Hall and Caer Caradoc on 10th, Bucknell Wood (three on the 12th) and two on Long Mynd (valley unspecified) on 21st. Habitat was rarely noted, but forestry clearfell, a favoured habitat, was occupied at the Anchor and Sowdley Wood.

The only double-figure count was 10+ at Meaton Lane on 2 May. Other counts of two or more came from Batch Valley (five on 14 Jun), Bridges (three on 4 Jun), Brook Vessons (2+ on 20 May), Brown Clee (four on 6 May), Bucknell Wood (as above), Clunton Coppice (five on 25 Apr), Hopesay (five on 19 Apr), Wenlock Edge (Roman Bank – three on 2 Jun), Westcott (three on 19 May), Whitcliffe (2+ on 22 Jun), Shelve (three on 17 Jun) and Wyre Forest (Pound Green – four on 20 Jun).

Breeding was poorly documented and was only confirmed at Cefn Coch (again – a nest with eggs on 16 Jul) and at The Bog (Stiperstones) and Meaton Lane, where recently-fledged young were seen. However, many records were of singing males holding territory, or displaying males, indicating probable breeding at Brown Clee, Bucknell Wood, Clunton Coppice, The Wrekin, Wall Farm (Kynnersley), Wenlock Edge (Roman Bank), Westcott and Whitcliffe, and agitated behaviour was noted at Shelve on 29 May. Indeed, it seems likely that most records relate to breeding birds which arrive direct to the breeding grounds and, in Shropshire, have been rarely recorded on passage.

There were five August records, from Clunton Coppice on 3rd and 8th, a migrant at Cantlopgrove on 9th<sup>th</sup> and VP on 24th. A nocturnal sound recording from Adderley on 19th was followed by the last of the year, obtained by the same method at the same place, on 1 Sep.

Reports of Tree Pipit are becoming increasingly sparse. 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 of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern*.

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**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Red List
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of records:	2,263 (BT=1,581, CR=4, eB=678)

Widespread, reported from 335 sites. The largest numbers occurred in the first winter period and finches attracted to wild bird food crops planted at Wall Farm and VP were high on the list. At Wall Farm numbers peaked at 200 on 10 Jan, falling to 70 by 27 Jan, with monthly maxima of 50 on 3 Feb and 30 on 5 Mar. At VP monthly maxima were 65 on 27 Jan, 70 on 20 Feb and 22 on 4 Mar. Elsewhere 70 were at Pole Cottage on 10 Jan, 60 at Shipton on 8 Feb and 100 at Balmer Heath on 14 Feb. In March most flocks had dispersed and few totals exceeded 20 but Benthall Hall bucked the trend with 180 on 1 Mar rising to 220 eight days later.

The first song was at Annscroft on 7 Feb, nest building was noted Whitcott Keysett on 31 Mar and Trefonen on 2 Apr and a bird was visiting a probable nest site at Cockshutt on 14 Apr. No nests were reported but an adult was feeding young at Bicton on 7 Jun and recently-fledged young were reported at seven sites between 7 May (Shifnal STW) and 2 Aug (Brompton).

Following the breeding period few totals exceeded 20 until November, a flock of 70 at Wolverley on 2 Oct and a series of counts at Cantlopgrove between 6 Oct and 28 Oct were the exceptions. At the latter site totals of 170 on 26 Oct and 135 in three hours on 28 Oct were of birds migrating in a south-westerly direction. A dense flock of 100 were feeding in a ploughed field at Overton on 17 Nov and 120+ were at Bagginswood on 29 Nov. In December, 65 were at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 17th and 110 at Benthall Pools on the 18th, towards the end of the month 150 were at both VP on Christmas Eve and at The Cliffe, Nesscliffe on 28th.

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**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common, occasionally irruptive winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Schedule 1, Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of records:	108 (BT=93, CR=0, eB=15)

The total of 108 reports may suggest a good year but 46 of these probably concerned just two individuals, a male at VP between 3 Feb and 1 Apr (25 reports) and another of unknown gender at Oakeley Mynd from 14 Oct to 30 Dec (21 reports).

Although two flocks of 50 had been reported in December 2019 it proved to be a disappointing winter. The highest counts were from the vicinity of Pole Cottage on the Long Mynd where one of the December flocks had been located, between 1 Jan and 12 Jan there were five reports in double figures with a maximum of 35 on the last date and in February 15 on 5th and 10 on 11th were also at this site. The remaining reports, mainly of singles came from just eight sites with 5+ at Brown Clee on 3 Jan and four at Belton Farm, Whitchurch on 23 Apr being the highest numbers, the latter birds were also the final ones of the spring.

A single at VP on 7 Oct was followed by another at Cantlopgrove two days later. They were more widespread at this time than earlier in the year with reports from 22 locations but again numbers were very low, 50 at Wart Hill near Craven Arms on 5 Nov was the only flock on note. Five flew north-west over Cantlopgrove on 13 Oct, five were at Market Drayton on 26 Oct and 5+ at Kinlet Bank on 21 Nov with mostly singles elsewhere.

One observer from Poles Coppice noted that the Brambling were feeding on Beech mast. A male at VP was a regular at the feeding station in the first winter period and in November singles visited gardens at Tibberton and Trefonen but food items were not recorded.

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## **HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Shropshire Status:	Rare, occasionally irruptive winter visitor, has bred
National Conservation Status:	RBBP, Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of Records:	33 (BT=30, CR=2, eB=1)

A big increase in the number of reports up from four in 2020 but the majority are from just two sites. -At Horderley, 15+ were first reported on 7 Feb (*T Lowe*) with 10+ on 8th and at least 7 on 22nd. Small numbers remained in the area until 23 Mar when one or two were present.

Smaller numbers were reported by multiple observers at the traditional location of Whitcliffe Common, from 6 Jan to 16 Mar with a peak of 4+ on 25 Feb (*B Daniels*

*et al*). Elsewhere in the first winter period one was at Broseley from 13 to 29 Mar (*I Heard*) and a female at Eaton Constantine from 20 Mar to 20 Apr (*L Karma, C&M Adey*).

There was just one further accepted record in the autumn when two were flying north-west with a flock of Redwings over Cantlopgrove on 17 Oct (*T Lowe*).

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**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Amber List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green list
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of Records:	813 (BT=676, CR=3, eB=134)

Found at 142 locations, the number of reports varied considerably throughout the year. The period from April to June was the most productive with a third of all reports, with the highest number (106) in May. This coincided with the start of the breeding season when singing males of most species are conspicuous but this is not the case with the Bullfinch which has a quiet and seldom heard song and is generally unobtrusive. The average count during this period was 1.6 which ties in with breeding pairs and females incubating. As breeding progressed and young fledged average count reported increased to 2.26 in July to September, this continued to increase and reached 2.36 during the final three months. The last quarter also saw an increase in reports 79 in November and 101 in December possibly due to increased visibility once leaf-fall commenced.

Eight were at Holly Banks, Melverley on 6 Jan and six were at Rea Brook Valley on 1 Jan and 20 Mar and Venusbank, near Hope on 22 Mar. Later in the year nine were at Clunton Coppice SWT on 3 Aug, 11 at Rea Brook Valley on 7 Nov and 31 Dec and eight in Shrewsbury on 29 Dec. None of these reports refer to flocks and many will be accumulated from walks.

Three fledglings in a garden in Church Stretton on 10 May was the first confirmed breeding record, this was followed by a pair and a juvenile at Whitcliffe Common on 4 Jun and fledged young at Rea Brook Valley and Shifnal STW in July.

Many records were from gardens but only one garden from Shrewsbury and another at Trefonen reported the use of feeders, the latter one for the first time even though Bullfinch were a regular visitor. It may be that garden feeding has now become commonplace and is no longer reported. Feeding on Dandelion seeds, Ash keys and

Hazel buds was also noted.

At Priors Halton one observer lamented the loss of a tangled corner and length of old overgrown hedge, where she had previously observed Bullfinch, the hedge was 'being reduced to the usual couple of feet of bare stems' as she passed.

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## **GREENFINCH** *Chloris chloris*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident  
National Conservation Status: Green List  
Shropshire Conservation Status: Red List  
Author: Allan Dawes  
Number of Records: 1,294 (BT=977, CR=4, eB=313)

Recorded from 181 locations, this species remains widespread albeit in reduced numbers. Only 47 of the 1,294 observations were of more than ten birds. Three of the highest totals in the first winter period came at the beginning of the year when 25 were at Bicton on 4 Jan, 40 at Pontesbury the next day and 22 at Newport on 9 Jan. In March 28 caught for ringing at Market Drayton on 14th was the only other large number at this time. One was taken from a Sunflower feeder by a Sparrowhawk at an Alveley garden on 2 Feb.

One was singing at Newport on 1 Mar and 14 additional records of song and display were received before the end of the month. Nest building was observed at Rea Brook, Shrewsbury on 4 Apr, fledged young at Cross Lane Head on 4 May and adults feeding young at Atcham on 10 May. Song and display continued until 18 Jul and fledged young were reported from 11 further sites up to 19 Aug, some with the issues noted in the Goldfinch account.

The first late summer flock was of 20 with another pair nearby at Bawhill Woods, Adderley on 5 Jul and 25+ were feeding in a newly cut oil-seed rape field at Lee Brockhurst on 14 Aug. Twenty-five were at VP on 24 Aug, 30+ at Eudon George on 20 Sep and 50, the largest flock of the year, was found at Wart Hill, near Craven Arms on 5 Nov.

### **Ringling Recoveries**

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species:

#### **TZ38264**

Ringed Juvenile Female	09-07-2017	Sutton, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°44'W
Caught by Ringer	19-05-2019	Sutton, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°44'W 0km

Freshly dead	07-02-2020	Sansaw Heath: 52°47'N 2°43'W 12km N 2y 6m 29d
<b>TZ38864</b>		
Ringed Juvenile Female	14-09-2019	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°41'N 2°40'W
Freshly dead (hit glass)	06-05-2020	Upton Magna: 52°43'N 2°39'W 4km 0y 7m 22d
<b>NF47173</b>		
Ringed Adult Male	08-09-2019	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W
Freshly dead	27-01-2020	Bicton: 52°43'N 2°38'W 2km 0y 4m 19d

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**LINNET** *Linaria cannabina*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Rachel Bromley
Number of Records:	956 (BT=584, CR=8, eB=364)

Large flocks were seen throughout the early months of the year. One of c150 birds was on set-aside at Wall Farm on 3 Jan. Groups of 100+ were seen four more times at Wall Farm throughout the year, including c200 on 10 Jan. The largest flock of the year of approximately 300 birds was seen mixed with Chaffinch at Rhyn Park on 5 Jan. Multiple sightings of large flocks waiting to roost were reported near Tibberton, with a high of 163 birds recorded on 13 Mar. Flocks in Tibberton were typically counted whilst birds were flying pre-roost, or in trees before roosting in nearby Holly. Large flocks were also counted on telephone cables and when feeding in fields.

First records of singing were on 25 Mar at Cockshutt, which was later than last years' unusually early first record on 27 Feb on Haughmond Hill. Reports of singing males were frequent from the end of March until last reported on 17 Jul at Chesterton, in a feeding group.

First evidence of nestbuilding was on 7 Apr, when a female carrying nesting material was seen at Ercall Heath. Further nest building was seen at Oakeley Mynd, on two occasions at Callow Hollow, at Meaton Lane, at Pentre and in Sowdley Wood on 7 May, the latest record. A nest was recorded on 2 May and 9 May at Meaton Lane. The first juveniles were reported on 31 May in two separate places; a recently-fledged bird was caught and ringed at Chelmarsh and a fledgling was seen at Nipstone. Birds were seen visiting probable nesting sites on 10 Jun at Titterstone Clee. A bird was seen on the nest on 3 Jul at Bawhill Woods. Juveniles were seen throughout July, and an adult was seen feeding a juvenile on 10 Sep at VP.

Flocks continued to be seen on set-aside or stewardship patches, with a flock of 30 on the stewardship field at Eardington on 23 Oct, c30 on a set-aside at Tibberton Grange on 3 Nov, 50+ on a set-aside on 17 Nov near Tibberton Moor and c100 on a stewardship field near Tibberton on 30 Nov. Flocks were also seen feeding on dandelion heads and stubble fields. Large flocks of 250, 160, and 60 were seen in stubble field and on autumn sown crops at Arlescott and Wyke on 13 Oct. 140 were on an autumn sown crop at Benthall on the same day. Two birds were seen feeding on a lawn at Berrington on two occasions in July.

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**LESSER REDPOLL** *Acanthis cabaret*

Shropshire Status:	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Rachel Bromley
Number of Records:	227 (BT=143, CR=0, eB=84)

Lesser Redpoll continues to be a winter visitor for Shropshire. Reports dropped off quickly after March and began to increase again towards the end of September.

From April to August birds were seen at Pontesbury, Stiperstones, Bridges, The Bog, Cefn Coch, Gobowen, Whitcliffe Wood, Shavington Park, and Hall-of-the-Forest. Some of these sites are potential breeding areas, and some possible evidence of breeding was reported this year. Singing was recorded on 4 Jun at Cefn Coch, on 19 Jul at The Bog and an adult male with breeding plumage was seen in Bridges on 4 Jun.

In the early months of the year groups exceeding 10 birds were seen at Brockton, Meaton Lane, Market Drayton, Adderley, Shakenhurst, Haughmond Hill and Whixall. The largest flock at this time was of 75 birds, seen at Whixall on 2 Jan. Groups exceeding 10 were more frequently seen at the end of the year in the additional locations: Aston Lock, Attingham Park, VP, Brown Clee Hill, Newport Cemetery, Tibberton, Lilleshall, Walcot and Wenlocks Wood near The Wrekin. The largest flock of the year was 150 birds, recorded on 15 Dec at Boreatton. Large flocks were also seen in the Wyre Forest area, with a group of 100+ recorded at Meaton Lane on 4 Oct. Nine, 24, 16 and 30 birds were caught for ringing in Market Drayton throughout the year.

Feeding has been seen on a variety of trees, including Alder, Larch, Birch and mixed conifers. Feeding was reported on Artemisia heads in the bird cover crops at VP on 20 Jan. There were a few reports of birds using feeders. Birds were seen feeding

on Sunflower hearts with Greenfinches and Goldfinches in Tibberton on 30 Jan and Birds were also reported feeding on the ground below a feeder on 14 Jan at Ruyton XI Towns. Single birds were seen on the Niger feeder at VP on 3 and 10 Feb.

### Ringing Recoveries

The following birds moved the greatest distances in Britain and Ireland (more than 100km) in 2020:

#### AKN4953

Ringed First-year	01-10-2020	Whixall and Fenns Mosses: 52°54'N 2°45'W
Caught by Ringer	12-10-2020	Beachy Head: 50°44'N 0°15'E (East Sussex) 318km SE 0y 0m 11d

#### AKL4685

Ringed Juvenile	01-09-2020	Fontburn Nature Reserve: 55°13'N 1°56'W (Northumberland)
Caught by Ringer	11-10-2020	Whixall and Fenns Mosses: 52°54'N 2°45'W 263km SSW 0y 1m 10d

#### V248956

Ringed Full-grown Male	25-01-2020	East Barcloy, Clovend: 54°51'N 3°45'W (Dumfries and Galloway)
Caught by Ringer	11-10-2020	Whixall and Fenns Mosses: 52°54'N 2°45'W 226km SSE 0y 8m 16d

#### AVB0970

Ringed Adult Female	24-10-2018	Whixall and Fenns Mosses: 52°54'N 2°45'W
Caught by Ringer	26-10-2020	Thorpe Marsh: 53°34'N 1°06'W (Yorkshire) 132km ENE 2y 0m 2d

#### ADJ6485

Ringed First-year	14-03-2020	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W
Caught by Ringer	07-07-2020	Ashley. Wray: 54°05'N 2°33'W (Yorkshire) 134km N 0y 3m 23d

### 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:	Allan Dawes
Number of Records:	76 (BT=63, CR=1, eB=12)

Both the number of reports and sites were down slightly from the previous year, but unusually the reports and locations were almost evenly split between northern (37 reports 17sites) and southern (39 reports 19 sites). The increase in sites in the north is explained partly by an increase in sightings from areas surrounding Cefn Coch and

by dispersing or passage birds.

Most of the reports in the north-west were from Cefn Coch, seven on 20 Jan included a singing male and 15 on 4 Jun included fledged young. Nearby birds were found at Llanforda, Oswestry Racecourse, Craig Fforda Woods and Baker's Hill where 20 in flight on 27 Nov, thought to have come from nearby Larch trees, was the highest number in this area. In the north-east eight were at Adderley on 8 Jul, between two and four were subsequently seen in the area until the final report from this site on 14 Oct. Also, in October two were flying east over Whixall Moss on 17th and a single was at Market Drayton on the 26th.

In June one in Shrewsbury on the 12th and six at VP on 22nd were probably passing through as was one flying north at Cantlopgrove on 13 Oct and four flying south-west at this site on 10 Nov. One flying low in Rea Brook Valley on 2 Nov was lost to sight but may have settled. Four at Haughmond Hill on 26 Sep and two further east at The Ercall on 13 Nov were in more usual habitat.

Straddling the north/south divide there were five reports from The Stiperstones between March and September and the highest total of the year was from this area on 7 Jun when 28+ were seen at Lordshill, Snailbeach.

Fifteen reports came from the Bury Ditches/Black Hill area. At Bury Ditches 15 on both 15 and 18 Jan and 13 on 25 May were the highest counts, with five at Black Hill on 11 Feb and three at Sowdley Wood on 1 Mar. The final report from this area was of two on 19 Jul.

Six reports from The Long Mynd from February to December were of only singles or pairs. Four reports from Whitcliffe and Overton were equally spread through the year with 'possibly up to 10' at the latter site on 3 Feb. At Brown Clee there were 12 on 14 Oct and 6+ on 22 Dec and singles at Topley Wood, Wenlock Edge on 21 Sep and Eardington STW on 17 Dec. At Meaton Lane, Wyre Forest there were twelve reports throughout the year with a maximum of eight on 12 Oct.

Pairs were noted at several sites and a territory at Overton, but the only confirmed breeding was that at Cefn Coch noted above.

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## **GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

Shropshire Status:	Very common resident
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of Records:	2,395 (BT=1,773, CR=3, eB=619)

Reports were received from a total 329 sites during the year. Numbers were low at the beginning of the year with an average total of just seven. Thirty-nine at Tibberton on 2 Jan, 50 at Whitcott Keysett on 25 Feb, 60 at Haughmond Hill on 26 Feb and 50 at Bawhill Woods, Adderley on 13 Apr were the largest counts in this period, the latter possibly boosted by returning migrants. Those at Whitcott Keysett were in a mixed flock with Siskin and Lesser Redpoll feeding on fallen Alder cones.

Song was first heard at Ironbridge on 17 Mar with many more noted singing in the final week of the month. Nest building commenced on 15 Apr at Cross Lane Head. On 16 May young were being fed at Walcot and a pair with two recently-fledged young was feeding on sunflower seeds at Newport. Other than two females with brood patches trapped for ringing at Chelmarsh Scrape, the remaining 16 breeding records were all of fledged young the last of which was for 4 Sep. Whilst the Goldfinch has a long breeding season some of the 'FL' records would appear to refer to juveniles rather than 'recently-fledged' young. See the Breeding Code definitions in the Appendix.

Although 43 were at Bawhill Woods, Adderley on 12 Jun it was late August before larger flocks began to be reported. At Wall Farm there were c100 on 18 Aug, 120 at VP on 24 Aug and 65 feeding on Mugwort and Chicory in a stewardship field margin at Cherrington Moor on 30 Aug. In September 170 (the largest flock of the year) was at Bentlawnt on 6th, 60 were feeding on Black Knapweed and thistle on the roadside verge at the Old Racecourse, Oswestry on 10th and 89 were between Atcham Bridge and Wroxeter on 20th. Numbers fell slightly as the year ended but a few large flocks were still to be found; 50 at Whixall canal floods on 7 Oct, 60 at VP on 7 Nov, 51 at Trefonen on 21 Nov, 70 at Walcott on 28 Nov and finally a 'flock of c80 landed briefly in a snowstorm but not long enough to count' at Newport on 29 Dec.

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**SISKIN** *Spinus spinus*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident, fairly common winter visitor
National Conservation Status:	Green List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Green List
Author:	Allan Dawes
Number of Records:	499 (BT=396, CR=0, eB=103)

The number of reports was up considerably from 340 in 2019. Fluctuations in this and other species that feed on tree seeds is expected as these crops are often erratic, but it is the change throughout the year that is noteworthy. The year starts with fewer reports, there are then more than usual in the summer months and a very large increase in the autumn. The September increase corresponds with the BirdTrack reporting rate for England which increased much more sharply from the beginning of the month compared with the historic mean. Perhaps reflecting a good breeding season and poor seed production further north in the UK, Scandinavia or the Baltic.

Many flocks were present at the start of the year. At Aston on Clun the observer noted 'one flock of 50 with others around' on 23 Jan and c50 were in Alders at Big Pool, Dudmaston on 26 Jan. In February a noisy flock of 60 was at Hopton Titterhill on 1st, 74 at Aston Locks on 2nd, 50 at Horderley on 7th and 90 at Haughmond Hill on 26th. After 120 at Black Pool Overton on 5 Mar, which the observer thought an underestimate, numbers dropped abruptly, most reports were in single figures with 25 at Shakenhurst on 14 Mar an exception.

During the breeding period many reports indicated birds in suitable breeding habitat, singing and a few pairs were also noted, these were mainly from the south-west with a few from Wyre Forest and the north-west. Despite the increase in reports at this time there was only one confirmed breeding record, this was from Church Stretton on 7 Jun and it was coded FL (Recently fledged), the observer noted 'the first for several months'.

The September influx included flocks of 70 at VP on 10th and 50 at Market Drayton on 15th. Whether these flocks dispersed or passed through is unknown, but other than 70 flying southwest over Whixall on 17 Oct, 25 at Market Drayton on 26 Oct was the highest total for the month. Numbers increased towards the end of November when 60 were in trees by the marsh at Chelmarsh on 27 Nov and 60+ at Clebury Mortimer the next day. In December 40 were at Pen-yr-estyn on 21st and New Year's Eve saw 40 at Aston on Clun and 120 in Alders at Trefonen.

## Ringed Recoveries

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain and Ireland (more than 100km) in 2020:

### S903195

Ringed First-year Male	17-02-2018	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W
Caught by Ringer	07-03-2018	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W 0km
Caught By Ringer	25-06-2020	Shebster: 58°33'N 3°42'W 635km N 2y 4m 8d

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## LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare passage migrant
National Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Not assessed
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	3 (BT=3)

A first-winter was seen and photographed on Titterstone Clee on 25 and 26 Oct (*N Skilbeck, JA Almond*). The third modern record, following one in 1979 and the second in 2019, all of them in autumn and all in the hills.

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## SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Shropshire Status:	Very rare winter visitor and passage migrant
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	30 (BT=27, CR=1, eB=2)

A female was well watched on Titterstone Clee from 22 Feb to 8 Mar (*D Stafford et al*). In late autumn one was seen near Robin Hood's Butts on the Long Mynd on 10 Nov (*H Hathaway*) and another, or perhaps the same, was on Black Knoll at the other end of the Mynd from 6 to 9 Dec (*N Jones, JP Martin et al*).

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## CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Shropshire Status:	Uncommon resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	159 (BT=136, CR=3, eB=20)

The largest flocks early in the year were all in the first week of January with 70 at Bank House Farm, Shrawardine on 4th (an isolated count but much the largest flock of the year); 48 at Wall Farm (42 of them by an uncropped barley field) on 3rd; and 40 at Walcot on 5th. Good, albeit somewhat reduced, numbers remained at Wall Farm, with 27 on stubble on 27 Jan and 19 on 17 Feb. Elsewhere, the only records in the first two months were of single individuals at Isombridge on 18 Jan and Harper Adams University College Farm on 20 Jan.

Thirty-four at Knockin on 23 Mar was also a good count – this species is often a late breeder so flocks can occur well into the spring. Between March and August there were an encouraging 98 reports of birds in potential breeding sites, most relating to single singing birds as follows:

SJ22: Sweeney Mountain;

SJ32: Bryn-y-wystyn; Knockin (five were singing here on 15 Jun with 11, including recently-fledged young, present on 23rd); Lower Hordley (three); Maesbury Marsh; Shotatton (two); Woolston (up to six, four singing);

SJ39: Benthall;

SJ40: Polemere;

SJ41: Ford (two); Hollybank, Cruckton (two).

SJ42: Boreatton (four); Noneley area (nesting in rape crop); River Perry (Mill House to Milford) (two);

SJ43: Northwood (two);

SJ50: Boreton, Condoover;

SJ51: High Ercall;

SJ53: near Prees and Ightfield Heath;

SJ61: Isombridge (up to five); Tibberton Moor (up to five);

SJ62: Bolas Heath (five singing on edge of bean field); Childs Ercall Airfield (up to 12); Dodecote; Eaton-on-Tern (two); Ercall Heath (potato field); Meeson (Barley);

SJ70: Beckbury (three in wheat, four in oats, one in potatoes); Green Acres Farm, Kemberton (up to eight);

SJ71: Edgmond (two); Lilleshall; Pitchford Lane;

SJ72: Camp Farm; Puleston; Whitleyford Bridge;

SO79: Chesterton; Eardington; Hopstone (two); Kingslow (in rape crop).

After the breeding season nine at Cherrington on 6 Sep increased to 17 on 1 Nov (where hay fed to horses); then 36 on 12th and 41 in weedy stubble on 30 Dec. Probably the same flock was also seen at Tibberton where regular from mid-October

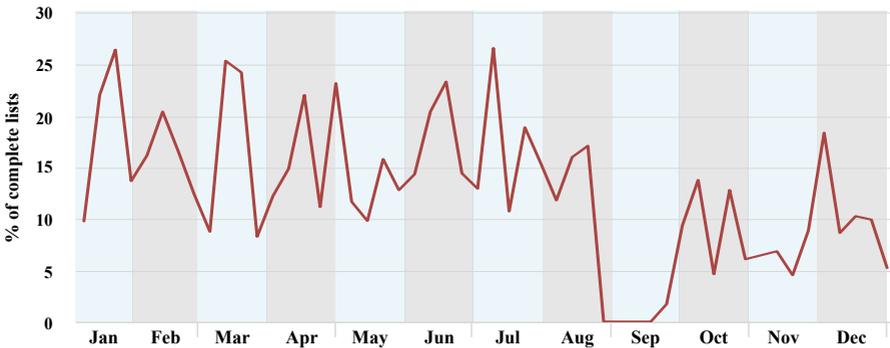
to the end of the year peaking at 32 flying over to roost on 28 Dec. Also noted regularly at Walcot with up to 26 from 28 Oct to late December. At Maesbury there were 20 on 19 Nov including one in song.

Elsewhere numbers were much smaller with seven at Long Common near Halfpenny Green; four at Isombridge; and one at Little Wytheford in October; two at Cressage in November; one at Wall Farm from September to November; three at Green Acres Farm, two at Eardington, 1-2 at Betton Abbots; and one at Adderley in December.

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

Shropshire Status:	Common resident
National Conservation Status:	Red List
Shropshire Conservation Status:	Amber List
Author:	John P Martin
Number of Records:	894 (BT=605, CR=7, eB=282)

Reporting rate Yellowhammer - Shropshire 2020



Yellowhammer – BirdTrack Reporting rate in 10-day periods in 2020

In January and February there were 91 reports from 28 localities. At VP there were regular reports of up to 60 or more in both January and February in the bird food crops. Elsewhere there were 60 at The Birch Moors, Edgmond on 1 Jan with 37 in cereal and maize stubble there on 20th; 40 at Clunton on 17 Feb; 25 at Benthall Hall on 29 Feb; 15 at Gorstybank on 3 Feb; 13 at Eaton Constantine on 25 Feb; and flocks of 10 to 12 at Wall Farm Kynnersley west, Melverley floods, Dryton and Ticklerton. Single-figure counts were noted at 17 additional localities. Numbers were generally much reduced thereafter, with the VP flock down to 15 on 22 Mar, but there were 20 at Hamperley on 11 Mar and 40 there on 5 Apr.

Song was first noted at Aston-on-Clun on 9 Mar. Records of confirmed breeding came from: near Clungunford; Hollywaste; Hopstone; Meadowley; Prees Heath; Rowton; Shelve and The Hooks, Nagington Grange. Other reports in the breeding season, taken as April to July, came from over 100 additional sites, which is somewhat encouraging, although might partly reflect higher levels of local recording this year.

After the breeding season the 25 reports in August and September all referred to single-figure counts, including some late breeding records. The first eight returned to VP on 20 Sep (the first at the site since five on 2 Apr). They were again in the bird food crops here until the end of the year with numbers again picking up in December with 50 on two dates. Elsewhere there were 43 in cereal stubble at Rushton on Oct 20; 16 in stubble and autumn sown crops at Arlescott and Wyke on 13 Oct; up to 30 at Walcot in Dec; 28 at Cressage Bridge on 19 Dec and 12 at Chelmarsh on several dates in Nov. Smaller groups of one to 10 were noted from about 50 other sites in the second winter period.

The varying detectability of this species through the year as shown by data from complete BirdTrack lists, below, shows they are more conspicuous when singing, as would be expected, but also that they are elusive in early autumn when moulting (post breeding moult usually complete by October).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max count	60	60	15	5		8	4	15	50

**Monthly maxima at Venus Pool**

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Shropshire Status: Common resident  
 National Conservation Status: Amber List  
 Shropshire Conservation Status: Green List  
 Author: John P Martin  
 Number of Records: 660 (BT=458, CR=0, eB=202)

In January and February, there were reports from 20 localities, at 16 of them relating to between one and nine individuals. The exceptions were: at Wall Farm where there were 26+ on 10 Jan; at a roost at Chelmarsh where c.100 were estimated on the evenings of 5 and 12 Jan, but with birds dropping into various areas it was difficult to get a precise count; and at VP where numbers remained high from late autumn 2019, peaking at 60 on 1 Jan with 50 into early Feb. Numbers were lower in March with 11 at Maesbury March and 20 at Benthall Hall on 1st; 20 at VP on 9th and 14 by the River Severn at Buildwas on 25th.



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## Feral Species/Escapes

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### *Bird Report Editor*

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 escapees or birds not obviously cared for.

These are included as a record, in the event that self-sustaining populations become established in the future. Waterfowl and gamebirds are overwhelmingly the main species groups in this section, the former still being popular with bird keepers.

### **Fulvous Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Two birds, perhaps the same pair as seen at Stanwardine-in-the-Fields in April 2019, were free-flying on the Melverley floods on 14 Mar.

### **Swan Goose** *Anser cygnoides*

A single gander ruled the promenade at The Mere, Ellesmere for much of the year.

### **Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus*

One at Bridgnorth on 11 Jan. A single bird on river floods at Eyton-on-Severn on 25 Feb was probably the same individual which was at VP on 15-17 Mar.

### **Blue-winged Goose** *Cyanochen cyanoptera*

One bird was associating with Canada Geese at VP from 1-20 Jan. Presumably the same individual that was recorded in 2019.

### **Muscovy Duck** *Cairina moschata*

A number of birds were found this year in scattered localities but at different times, suggesting some records may refer to the same individuals.

A white morph spent a couple of months on the canal at Newport from 29 Jan to 22 Mar. A single bird was found at Market Drayton on 16 Apr and three were on the Llangollen Canal at Lyneal on 16 May. Two white birds were found at Mereside, Shrewsbury on 8 Apr and were seen regularly until 24 Nov, with three here on 14 and 26 Dec.

### **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa*

Fewer records this year than in 2019 and none from VP. No positive records of breeding either.

An obvious escapee with only one set of primaries was on the Severn at Shrewsbury between Greyfriars and English Bridges on 9 and 11 Jan. Two sightings of a drake at Ironbridge on the river were on 16 Jan and 21 Mar with presumably the same fully-winged individual at Buildwas on 16 May and here too on 28 May. By 23 Jun it was back at Ironbridge and just going into eclipse plumage. A single drake was back on the Severn at Greyfriars Bridge, Shrewsbury on 15 Oct and was seen a few times until 12 Dec.

### **Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris*

A small population near Hope, with up to 11 birds counted between Venusbank, south of Hope Valley and Lady House Farm, at Hopesgate. Birds were seen on several dates from 25 Mar to 4 Sep.

### **Reeve's Pheasant** *Syrnaticus reevesii*

A single bird at Bratton on the north-west side of Telford on 22 Mar.

### **Lady Amherst's Pheasant** *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

A male at Worthen on 27 Apr.

### **White-naped Crane** *Antigone vipio*

This rare species has a wild population of about 5,400 individuals, breeding in restricted areas of wetlands on the Mongolia/China/Russia border area and further east in Ussuri on the China/Russia border. Loss of wetland habitat to agriculture has precipitated a relatively recent decline but steps are now being taken to protect the remaining breeding areas in the wild. Small numbers winter in China and Japan but the majority do so in the Korean demilitarised zone! So, they seem safe enough at least in winter.

White-naped Cranes do well in captivity, living over 40 years and breeding well with the right husbandry. The International Crane Foundation has now released 62 captive-bred chicks back into the wild population on the Mongolia/Russia border.

A bird keeper in Cheshire was unfortunate enough to lose one of a breeding pair, which turned up near Ightfield on 7 Jul and was seen a few miles away towards the Cheshire border on 16 Aug.

**African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

A single bird was on the floods at Molverley in January.

After captive escapes in France a feral population of over 1,000 pairs was established by 2005 but the species was found to be a significant threat to coastal breeding tern and gull colonies. An eradication programme was started in 2007 and has successfully eliminated birds from much of France, including the Camargue.

**African Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus*

A bird was seen sitting on a post near at boardwalk at Whitcliffe Wood on 8 Aug. It was thought possible its owners were nearby!

**Common Mynah** *Acridotheres tristis*

A bird was photographed in a Puleston garden on 31 May. An abundant feral species in many countries.

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## Shropshire County Checklist

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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 2020 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.

### Changes to the county rarity status (as 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021):-

The following taxa now require rarity descriptions or supporting evidence accompanying submitted records:

<b>Barnacle Goose</b>	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
<b>Turtle Dove</b>	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
<b>Blue-headed Wagtail</b>	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>
<b>'Channel' Wagtail</b>	<i>Motacilla flava flava x flavissima</i>

The following taxa now no longer require rarity descriptions or there are changes to those records which do require descriptions:-

<b>Nightjar</b>	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
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No longer requires a description from breeding localities but we may ask for supporting evidence of migrants away from these areas

<b>Caspian Gull</b>	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>
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Considered too numerous to qualify as a county rarity so we no longer require descriptions for this species. We urge observers to take care over its identification, which remains challenging, so it is worthwhile trying to properly document all sightings with photographs

<b>Hen Harrier</b>	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
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Now only requires a description for sightings between May and August

<b>Hawfinch</b>	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
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Considered currently too numerous to be considered a county rarity

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](http://www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/species-taxa)).

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrrix</i>	Rare visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2016
Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Scarce resident		2020
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2020
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Uncommon resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2020
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Rare summer visitor		2020
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Very common naturalised resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2020
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident		2020
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Rare naturalised resident, has bred, possible vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident		2020
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
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	2020
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	Rare naturalised visitor, very rare breeding species		2020
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Scarce summer and winter visitor		2020
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Scarce naturalised resident		2020
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>	Rare passage migrant, very rare summer visitor	County Rarity (except for males in breeding plumage)	2019

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, very rare breeding species		2020
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	Scarce winter visitor, rare summer visitor		2020
Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	Uncommon winter visitor		2020
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Fairly common resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2020
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species		2020
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2020
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	Very rare naturalised visitor	County Rarity	2020
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Scarce winter visitor, has bred		2020
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		2020
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
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 (Nocturnal records require recording or sonogram)	2020
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2017
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2016
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Scarce resident, uncommon winter visitor		2020
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		2020
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Fairly common summer visitor		2020
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrnhaptes paradoxus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Common resident		2020
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Very common resident		2020
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Rare summer visitor	County Rarity	2019
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common resident		2020
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Rare resident, scarce winter visitor		2020
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	2016
Little Crake	<i>Zapornia 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		2020
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident		2020
Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	Rare visitor	County Rarity	2019
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2020
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
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 oedichenus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2019
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
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		2020
White-tailed Plover	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	1984
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, has bred		2020
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Scarce passage migrant		2020
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Scarce passage migrant		2020
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Uncommon summer visitor, scarce winter visitor		2020
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Scarce passage migrant, very rare winter visitor		2020

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
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		2020
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
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		2020
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2002
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
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		2020
Jack Snipe	<i>Limnocyptes minimus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species		2020
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		2020
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.		2020
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1995
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor; has bred		2020
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		2020
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2011
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Common winter visitor, uncommon breeding species		2020
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		2020
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, has bred		2020
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2018
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucooides</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2018
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Uncommon winter visitor		2020
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Rare winter visitor		2020
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2020
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species		2020
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>Sternula 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.		2020
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Rare passage migrant		2020
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)	2020
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

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
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	2020
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	2020
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
Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2020
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, scarce non-breeding resident		2020
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	2020
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	2020
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2015
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Rare visitor		2020
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor		2020
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Rare passage migrant		2020
Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	2020
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Scarce resident		2020
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity (except for observations at Whixall Moss)	2020
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.	County Rarity (May to August records only)	2020
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Scarce resident		2020
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2020
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2016
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident		2020
Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
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)	2020
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2013
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	Scarce resident		2020
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Common resident		2020
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1983
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Rare resident, scarce winter visitor		2020
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Scarce resident and winter visitor		2020
Ring-necked Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Rare naturalised visitor or escapee	County Rarity	2020
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	1995
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor excubitor</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
(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		2020
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Common resident		2020
Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Very rare irruptive winter visitor	BBRC	1968
Chough	<i>Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	Very common resident		2020
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Very common resident		2020
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Very common resident		2020
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2010
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Rare irruptive winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Common resident		2020
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	Scarce resident		2020
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Very common resident		2020

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Very common resident		2020
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		2020
Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2017
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Fairly common summer visitor		2020
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common summer visitor		2020
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Common summer visitor		2020
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Rare, non-breeding, resident		2020
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Common resident		2020
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Pallas's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1987
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita collybita</i>	Very common summer visitor, scarce winter visitor		2020
(Siberian Chiffchaff)	<i>Phylloscopus collybita tristis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	
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		2020
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2020
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		2020
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Very common summer visitor, uncommon winter visitor		2020
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Common summer visitor		2020
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2020

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	Common summer visitor		2020
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	2020
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Common resident		2020
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Very common resident		2020
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Common resident		2020
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
Rose-coloured Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2020
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Very common winter visitor, common resident		2020
White's Thrush	<i>Zoothera aurea</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Scarce passage migrant, has bred		2020
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Very common resident		2020
Black-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus atrogularis</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2007
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Common winter visitor		2020
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Common winter visitor		2020
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Very common resident		2020
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2020
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Very common resident		2020
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		2020
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2020
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Fairly common summer visitor		2020
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2020
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Uncommon passage migrant, scarce summer visitor		2020
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2011
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Very common resident		2020
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Very common resident		2020
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flavissima</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2020
(Blue-headed Wagtail)	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	

Species (Subspecies)	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
('Channel' Wagtail')	<i>Motacilla flava x flavissima</i>	Vagrant, has bred	County Rarity	2019
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	Common resident		2020
(White Wagtail)	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	Scarce passage migrant mainly in spring		2020
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Fairly common resident		2020
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2020
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Very rare passage migrant and winter visitor	County Rarity	2016
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2011
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Very common resident		2020
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Fairly common, occasionally irruptive, winter visitor		2020
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Rare, occasionally irruptive, winter visitor, has bred		2020
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Common resident		2020
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	Very common resident		2020
Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2004
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Common resident		2020
Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident		2020
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		2020
Two-barred Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	Very rare irruptive winter visitor	BBRC	2014
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Very common resident		2020
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident		2020
Lapland Bunting	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2020
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Very rare passage migrant and winter visitor	County Rarity	2020
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Uncommon resident		2020
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Common resident		2020

<b>Species (Subspecies)</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Shropshire Status</b>	<b>Rarity Reporting</b>	<b>Last Occurrence</b>
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		2020

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## List of Contributors

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The following contributed records to the Society in 2020. 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.

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*County Bird Report Editor*

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## Scientific names of species mentioned in the text

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Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Barley	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>
Birch	<i>Betula</i> species
Black Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>
Field Vole	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>
Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Fumitory	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex</i> species
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex europaeus</i>
Larch	<i>Larix</i> species
Maize	<i>Zea mays</i>
Miscanthus	<i>Miscanthus</i> species, the sterile hybrid <i>Miscanthus x giganteus</i> being extensively grown as a biofuel crop
Niger	<i>Guizotia abyssinica</i>
Noctule Bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>
Oats (cultivated)	<i>Avena sativa</i>
Oil Seed Rape	<i>Brassica napus</i>
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
Potato	<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>
Scots Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>
Trichomonosis	Disease caused by the protozoan <i>Trichomonas gallinae</i>
Wheat	<i>Triticum aestivum</i>
Witch Hazel	<i>Hamamelis</i> species
Wormwood	<i>Artemisia</i> species
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>

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## **Officers and Management Board** April 2020 to March 2021

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“Buzzard” Editor: Tim Devanney

County Bird Report Editor: Gerry Thomas

Website Manager: John Arnfield

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## Indoor Meetings and Field Trips 2020

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### Indoor Meetings:

January No meeting (planned for September *in lieu* of January)

5 February Britain's Owls: Behaviour, Monitoring & Surveying Dawn Balmer

4 March Shropshire Curlew Project Amanda Perkins

# The April AGM and Indoor Meetings for the remainder of 2020 were cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

### Field Trips:

23 February Sowdley Woods & Clunton Coppice Dave Pearce

15 March Moore Nature Reserve Estelle Hughes

# The Field Trips for the remainder of 2020 were cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic

### Indoor Programme: Church Stretton Branch

27 January In Search of Flower Kissers Michael Leach

24 February Wilderland, Wildlife & Wonder from the Shropshire Borders Andrew Fusek-Peters

# As above, the programme for the remainder of 2020 was cancelled due to the Pandemic

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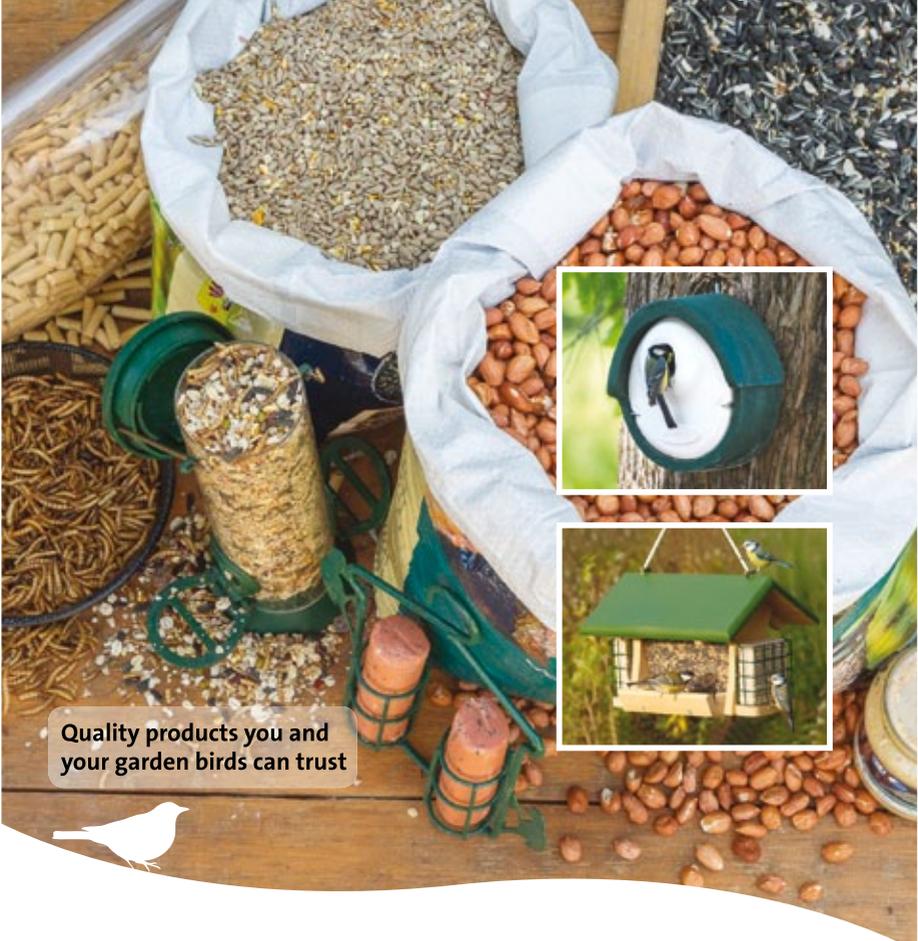
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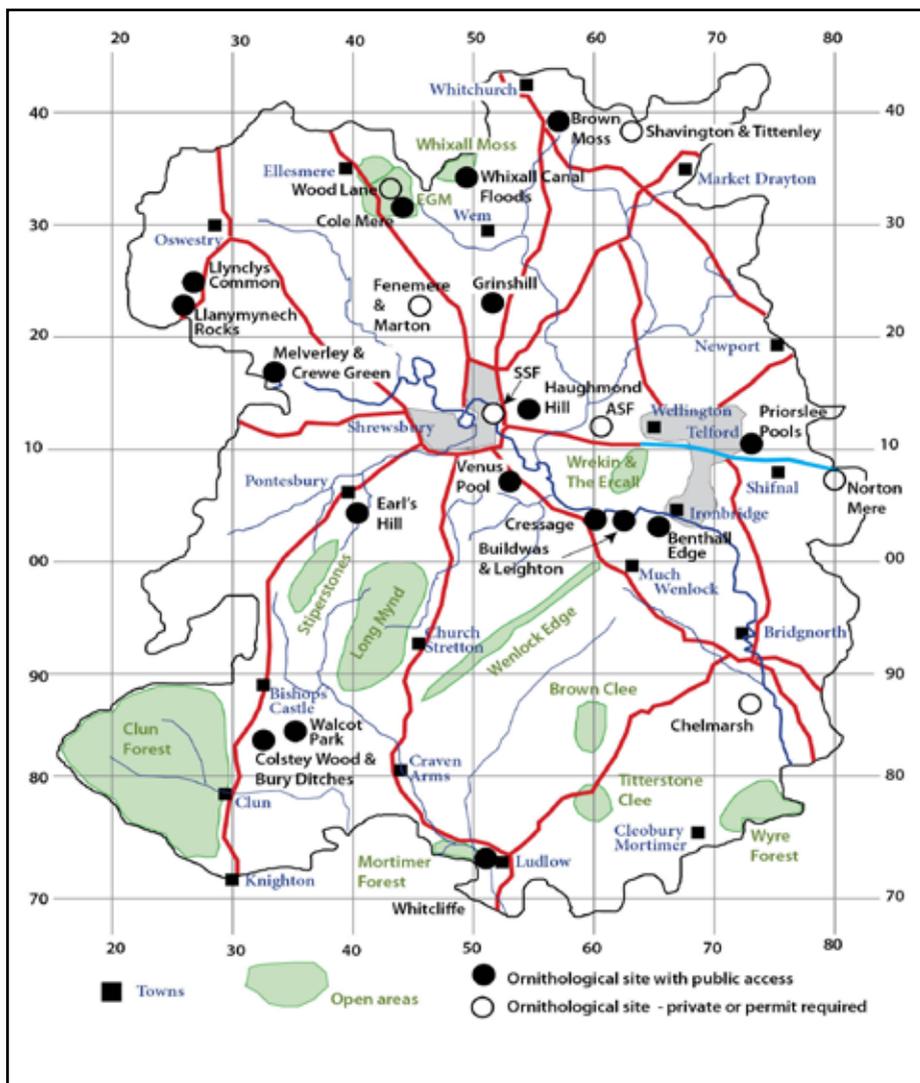
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