



The Buzzard

Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
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Welcome to New Members

Mrs D S	Huffer	Ludlow
Miss A J	Nicholls	Stanley Lane
Mr M	Harrison	Shrewsbury
Mr T	Summers	Kidderminster
Mr J P	Martin	Shrewsbury
Mr & Mrs A	Cobbold	Shrewsbury
Mr C	Baldwin	Cressage
Mr & Mrs D	Edwards	Dorrington
Mr A	Evans	Little Ness

The Birds of Shropshire; A County Avifauna



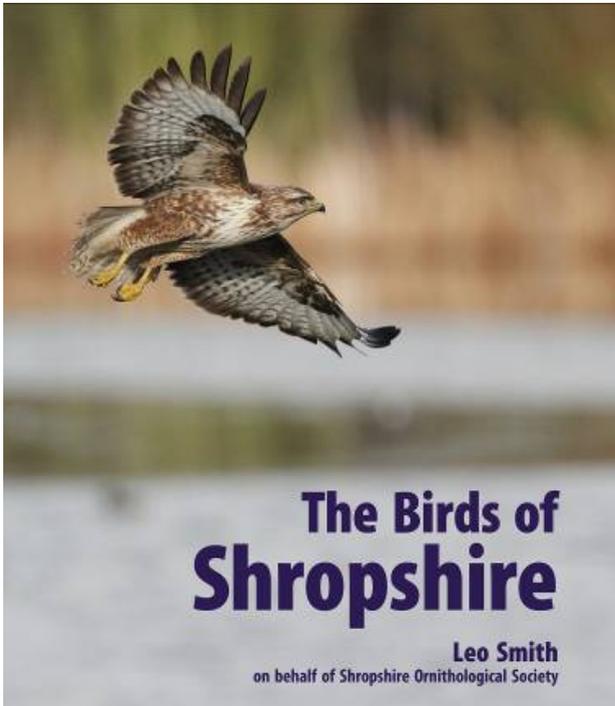
www.shropshirebirds.com

Planned publication date

and pre-publication offer to members

The full manuscript and other contents of the Avifauna, including maps, charts and photographs, were submitted to the Liverpool University Press (LUP) designer some weeks ago. The copy editor appointed by LUP has now been through all the text, and design work is about to start. The first set of proofs should be received for checking before members receive this issue of *The Buzzard*.

The planned publication date is the beginning of December, prior to Christmas



The Birds of Shropshire will be a full colour, easily readable hardback book of 576 pages, written by 27 of the County's most experienced and knowledgeable birders. Stunning images of 220 species and important local habitats have been contributed by 25 local photographers, both amateur and professional. The book has been produced to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Shropshire Ornithological Society.

It includes an account of all 301 species on the "Shropshire List", including migrants, county rarities and birds that have not been seen here since 1950. For those that occur regularly, it includes the results of Atlas fieldwork 2007-13, describing their distribution and relative abundance and breeding status where relevant. The breeding and winter maps will be compared with those shown in *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire* (1992) and with the Shropshire part of the national BTO *Atlas of the Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1986). Historical records from the nineteenth century, and results of specific local studies, have also been incorporated.

For many species it will show that massive changes have occurred in their population and distribution. The book will shape conservation priorities in the County for the next 20 years.

Forewords have been contributed by Amanda Craig, Operations Director for Natural England, confirming the importance of the research for setting conservation priorities and targeting scarce resources; by Dawn Balmer, co-ordinator of the acclaimed *Bird Atlas 2007-11* for the whole of Britain and Ireland, published in 2013 by the British Trust for Ornithology, putting the local book in its national context; and by the previous and current Presidents of SOS, Frank Gribble and Peter Deans.

***The Birds of Shropshire* will be published by Liverpool University Press, a renowned academic imprint. The cover price will be £45, but a pre-publication offer price of £25 + £4.50 postage and packing is being widely promoted.**

Details of the pre-publication offer, including an order form, are enclosed with this issue of *The Buzzard*.

Further copies of the order form can be downloaded from the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com. You might want to pass copies on to any of your friends that have an interest in the County's birds.

Details of the launch will be included in the next issue.

Leo Smith

SOS European Holiday – April 2020

In earlier issues of the Buzzard, I informed members about a proposed holiday to a European destination in 2020, which will be run by Naturetrek, under their usual Terms & Conditions. I now would like to update you all, so that if there are members who may be interested then they can decide whether to join the party.

The holiday will be to South Portugal, from Wednesday, 22nd April 2020 to Wednesday 29th April 2020, flying from Manchester to Faro return. We would be staying at Mertola near the Spanish border, for 3 nights and then travel to Sagres for a further 4 nights. The trip requires a minimum of 6 people, and happily there are 7 people already interested, but there are places for a total of 14. On top of this there is the option of an extension to visit Lisbon, going there by train from Faro and flying back to Manchester on Saturday, 2nd May 2020.

For the main holiday, costs would cover all accommodation & meals, flights, with 20lb of luggage included, all internal travel including transfers to & from Faro airport, and the services of naturalist guide(s). Costs do not cover Travel Insurance & personal expenses. The extension to Lisbon includes 1st Class Train travel from Faro to Lisbon, B&B Accommodation for 3 nights, transfers to and from the hotel. For those not sharing there will be a single room supplement.

There is a full itinerary available, which has the details of the hotel, what is hoped to be seen in the way of birds, possible mammals etc., the accommodation being used, Naturetrek's terms & conditions etc., and of course the costs involved.

If there are any interested members, who would like to participate, do not hesitate to get in contact with me.

Sue Brealey

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Swallow Arrivals project disappointment

The project aimed to detect the arrival of the *main body* of Shropshire's Swallow population, the dates of which have never been studied despite the fact that the dates of the *first* Swallows are known for almost every year since 1886. This study was predicated on the assumption that the main Swallow arrival dates would be indicated by the increase in the number of people to see (and report) their first. So we asked people to do just that – send us the

date of their personal first Swallow, to the dedicated website (<http://www.lanius.org.uk/swallow/index.php>) or by post to Swallows SY7 8EW.

The appeal for first records went to members of the SOS (800), the Wildlife Trust (5,000) and on Shropshire Radio and we hoped (in our dreams) for hundreds of records – how difficult was it going to be? In the event we have so far received a meagre 143 records, below, and they suggest a peak around 13th-17th April.

Shropshire 2019. Reports of first Swallow of the year (143)

March														
Date	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
Day total	3	0	5	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	3	3		

April																													
Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Day total	1	4	2	5	3	3	6	5	5	6	4	4	11	2	11	9	14	6	5	6	3	0	4	1	0	1	0	1	0

The response was, we feel, very disappointing - but you can still make amends! If you know the date of your first Swallow and have not yet submitted it direct to us, please do so now – we can add your records and refine the detail of the result – thank you.

John Tucker and Rob Rees

Curlew Conservation Projects 2019

The article in the May issue of The Buzzard outlined the results of Curlew Conservation work in 2018, and plans for 2019.

The projects in the Upper Clun and Clee Hill areas, in co-operation with the Community Wildlife Groups, have been repeated this year, but with less time spent on nest-finding, protection and monitoring because the SWT / SOS appeal has been less successful.



It has been a strange year, as Curlews arrived back on their breeding grounds, and settled down, later than usual.

In the Upper Clun, several pairs didn't appear to settle down at all, although they might have done but been predated quickly. One nest was found, the territory with the pair that hatched deformed chicks last year, but permission could not be obtained to fence it (there is no current owner – the owner is deceased, and the legacy is in probate), and it was predated. Therefore no fencing or ringing or radio-tagging has been done in that area.

In Clee, four nests were found and fenced. One clutch of 4 eggs went full term, but didn't hatch, and another clutch was destroyed after sheep with thick coats were released in the field and trampled part of the fence down.

Two clutches hatched. Radio tags were fitted to six chicks, and they have been tracked.

The first pair, on SWT land at Catherton Common, are presumably the pair that used the tree nursery in previous years, as they took the chicks there after hatching. Three of the 4 chicks were tagged. Two have been predated. The third lost its tag, which was found, but it appears this too was predated. The second pair (at the same site where definitely one, probably two, young fledged last year) had three eggs that all hatched, and all the chicks were tagged and tracked. All three young were colour-ringed and fledged; an excellent result.

The main aim of the Clun and Clee projects this year was to gain more information about how the chicks behave and forage, and the threats they face, and we have achieved this on Clee Hill.

One of the six chicks head started and released by Curlew Country in 2017 returned to the area this year, and nested. That project had support from WWT for Headstarting in 2019, and has a blog about the successful release of 33 headstarted chicks in south Shropshire

<https://curlewcountry.org/2019/08/02/the-big-release/>

Ten Community Wildlife Groups have been monitoring their local Curlew populations, and when the results of their efforts have been analysed, and added to the results of the nest protection and radio-tagging, we will consider how to take the projects forward next year.

Over 200 Curlews have been colour-ringed locally, so if you see any Curlews please check them for rings.

Further information available on the SOS website

www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

Shropshire's rookeries in 2019 and 2020

My baseline survey in 2008 identified 545 rookeries in the county and nest-counts were carried out at two thirds of them. This year, 11 years on and to 30 April, I have the results from revisiting around 80% of the previous colonies. There is a considerable volume of data to be crunched but already some indicative trends are apparent.

Most concerning is the number of rookery sites which, when revisited this year, have been found to be still and quiet with no rooks and no nests – the sites have been deserted and are quite dead. In most such cases the trees are still there but the rookery is gone.

The figures currently suggest that over 40% of the 2008 rookeries have disappeared. I don't have nest-counts for all sites in 2008 but from those which were counted then and this year there is a decline by around 30% in the number of nests. It has been suggested that next year the remaining 110 or so sites should be revisited so that a thorough review be undertaken of them all – and I will organise it.

There is still time to submit reports of rookeries this year, to <http://www.lanius.org.uk/rook/index.php> - every site is important.

John Tucker

Where have all the rookeries gone?

The rookery resurvey I organised this year (SRS19) means that I can compare the number of sites, and in many cases nest-counts, with the similar survey in 2008 (SRS08). The results are being checked so the following numbers may change slightly.

In 2008, and subsequently over a few years, SRS08 logged around 548 colonies. From 2019 fieldwork I have records from 77% of the 2008 sites and 47% of them have disappeared. That is, on the return visit to the 2008 location the colony is simply gone. The reduction in the number of nests lost is difficult to determine and is underestimated because not all sites were nest-counted in 2008 but is down by at least 33%.

I have to be careful with the analyses and I am still working though the data because rookeries can move. So a site which is found to be absent from where it was last recorded and appears 'dead' may in fact have shifted position and may be lurking not far away. It is very difficult to determine sites which really have moved (what I call 'shifted') sometimes by as much as 1km – unless the site is monitored every year - and very few are. Thus a site no longer occupied may not be extinct – perhaps the birds have shifted to another place not far away.

This year two sites are known to have shifted, one at Ryton XI Towns and the other east of Shrewsbury. The former is known well enough to be pretty sure that the same birds moved 750m from the NW to the SE of the village. The other site was in the wet hollow by Weeping Cross roundabout outside Shrewsbury, first recorded in 2008 and still there in 2018. In 2019 what must be the same birds literally upped-sticks and moved 1km north to trees at Shrewsbury Crematorium, next to the college. (Perhaps they read the Planning Application pinned to the fence at Weeping Cross).

The results look significant enough to require an extension of the survey into 2020 in order to revisit all the remaining 110 or so 2008 sites, and at the same

time check on those 1975/76 survey sites which have not been looked at since then. I will organise that work this winter so that the core of rookery surveyors and I will achieve 100% coverage. Then what will the results show?

Every report is useful and my thanks go to everyone who has helped by visiting rookeries and counting nests, some stalwarts have visited hundreds of sites.

John Tucker

Watch out for Woodies

Recent observations of Woodpigeons, by an observer with an elevated view of what appears to be a flightpath over Condoover, in concert with a Dutch visible migration monitoring website (Trekellen.org), are producing intriguing data. Woodpigeons appear to move in the autumn, in ways currently not understood.

In late October 2018 the following flocks were recorded heading SW over Condoover, in the mornings; on 21st - 2,200 birds, 22nd - 7,800, 23rd - 2,020, 28th - 5,930 and in early November on 2nd came 9,402 in the same direction. The flock of 350 heading south over Whixall on 22nd Oct might have been part of the same general trend. Complimentary to the movements SW and slightly later, also at Condoover, 1,082 flew in the opposite direction, NE, on 10th Nov. On 29th Oct, in the morning, a total of 154 flew NW over Beambridge in 40 mins and on the following day 377 flew N over the same place at the same time.

The movements SW might be explained by northern continental birds heading for Britain and perhaps beyond to Iberia. However such an explanation is at odds with the view expressed in *The Migration Atlas* (Wernham *et al.* 2002) relating that ringing recoveries show the species to be highly sedentary, the same article allowing that more work is needed to explain the mass movements which are observed.

Observers are urged to watch out for and report movements of Woodpigeons in the autumn, noting both numbers and flight direction. It appears that this species has much to be accounted for.

This article is based on the author's account of the Woodpigeon prepared for the 2018 *Shropshire Bird Report*, reproduced here with permission of the Editor.

Reference

Wernham, C., Toms, M., Marchant, J., Clark, J., Siriwardena, G. & Baillie, S. (2002). *The Migration Atlas. Movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland*. T & AD Poyser.

John Tucker



John Mackintosh or O“John Mack” as his friends all knew him, was one of the true gentlemen of the ‘old school’. He was also a very private man and even his recent critical illness had come as a big shock when we heard the sad news of his passing. He never shared his problems.

He had been a colleague of mine in the Ludlow Wildlife and Ornithological Trusts for more years than I can recall and his infectious enthusiasm on our forays onto Cramer Gutter – for Early Marsh Orchids in the Spring, Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries in the Summer and the elusive Marsh Gentian and Bog Bush-Crickets in August, will remain forever with me and those fortunate enough to have shared those pilgrimages with him and his wife Pauline. I am indebted to him for his continual help with my projects: In the 90’s he allowed me unrestricted use of his garden and house to photograph the myriad bird-feeders supplied to me by CJ Wildlife for catalogue shots; his colony of Tree Sparrows at Lawton were a particular asset to these.

Later, in the 2000's he was instrumental in helping me save Foldgate Lane from destruction by Bennett's development, by identifying the bats I had recorded roosting in the Oak trees. This saved the whole lane from being annexed by the Tuffin's site. He was also a staunch supporter of my campaign to prevent the felling of two, fine, 55 year old Oaks on Whitcliffe Common on the tenuous grounds of view enhancement by the incumbent custodians, and was devastated that we partially failed when one was clandestinely felled after we had scented success.

With his academic background in (and passion for) the study of small UK mammals John had been an active member of the Mammal Group and County Recorder until recently. Those along with all of the other wildlife-oriented and climbing groups with which he was associated will be welcome to attend a memorial walk with his family, in tribute to John. This will be held at Cramer Gutter, Catherton Common, on Sept 1st this year. Precise details will be announced nearer to the date, but please mark your diary now.

Some of us were also fortunate enough to share John's enduring appetite for mountaineering: he had been a prominent and active member of the University of Birmingham Mountaineering Club. And a weekend spent with him ascending Glyder Fach from Llyn Ogwen towards Tryfan will remain with us forever on account of the unrelenting, if warm, Welsh rain and the impressive drying room at our climbing hut – organised originally by John himself I believe.

John's sensitive and sympathetic conservation ethos has been greatly treasured and will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of calling him a true friend. His legacy will however, endure.

Gareth Thomas
Photography Patricia Astill

Field Trip Reports

Suffolk & Norfolk

Thursday, 30th May to Sunday, 2nd June, 2019

On the first day (Thursday, 30th May 2019) of the weekend Field Trip to Norfolk & Suffolk, a group of 16 members arrived at Lackford Lakes Nature Reserve run by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Whilst this reserve was visited last October, it was interesting to return during a different season. On arrival some members had heard that a Nightingale was present so once everyone had arrived, the group walked off towards the area where it was hoped to find this elusive bird, and this proved to be just before arriving at the Double Decker hide. Nearer the hide, the Nightingale started to sing; only its initial phrase, and was certainly not seen, deciding to keep to the deep scrub.

Once in the hide overlooking 'The Shallows', members had really good sightings of Kingfisher while it flew between different perches. Whilst moving to Bernard's Hide for lunch a Hobby was seen in flight along with Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Greylag Goose, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow & Moorhen.

Seeing no further birds from Paul's Hide, we walked back to the Reception Centre for a small break, while watching the feeding station. Heading back into the reserve towards Bess's hide through Ash Carr, a Cuckoo was heard and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was noted. At Bess's hide overlooking the 'Long Reach', there were not that many birds apart from Little Grebe, Tufted Duck, and Swallow. A quick visit to Fuller's Mill hide, also a damp squib. At the eastern end of the reserve towards Steggall's hide, a Treecreeper.

The group travelled to Lowestoft where we lodged at the Premier Inn. A meal at the pub before bed and 51 species seen.

On Friday, 31st May 2019, the group travelled to RSPB Minsmere.

The weather started out at 12°C, with clear blue skies, feeling warm and windy. By 2.30pm the weather became more cloudy and therefore feeling much cooler. The group started along the north wall towards the sea. Nearer the Visitor's Centre, where we saw Sand Martins flying in & out of their nest site.

When amongst the large reed beds, Reed Warbler & Sedge Warbler were heard, but not seen possibly due to the wind keeping them well down into the reeds. The group waited in the hope of seeing Bearded Tit, to no avail although several Reed Bunting were noted along with small flocks of Linnet flying overhead. Splitting up, some of the group walked on to the East hide,

overlooking the East Scrape, where a great many birds were added to the days list including Avocet, at least 3 Little Tern, several Mediterranean Gulls and Kittiwakes. Having seen as much as possible, a visit to the North hide.



Avocet

At the hide, overlooking the West Scrape, beside several species including Canada Goose, Mute Swan, and Dunlin, a surprise pair of Bar Headed Geese were seen with three chicks, guarding them from Carrion Crows. While having lunch near the Visitor's Centre, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Great Tit were added to the list, and a Cuckoo was heard.

A walk to the Bittern Hide we had wonderful views of Marsh Harriers in flight, and diving into the reeds as they were blowing in the wind. Patient observation was rewarded with a view of Bittern rising slowly up and taking flight.

Some of the group walked to the Island Mere hide and saw Green Woodpecker.

Around closing time of the Visitor's Centre, the group gathered to go towards Dunwich Heath. On the way, a series of cars were noted, and after investigation, the group were able to get really good views of a pair of Stone Curlew with a couple of chicks in a field within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the reserve. The habitat was excellent for these rare birds with a number of rabbits around to keep it in good condition.

At Dunwich Heath, down the lane that leads into the heathland we had good views of Stonechat and a couple of the group had very brief views of Dartford Warbler & Nightjar. A good day, about 60 species, the group retired to the local pub at Dunwich before returning to Lowestoft.

On Saturday, 1st June 2019, We took another 45 minutes drive, north this time, to Hickling Broad; a reserve run by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT). We were met with sunny blue skies and a temperature of 13°C. Here the group divided walking around the reserve each making their own way.

A few of the group walked from the Visitor's Centre through a woodland to the reedbed area and to Secker's hide. Blackcap were heard in the woodland and Blackbird, Great Spotted Woodpecker were noted. Out of the Woodland, what were initially taken for butterflies in flight we realized, to our delight, were actually Swallowtails. For some it was the first time these had been seen and they proved just as lovely as they had hoped.

From the Secker's hide, Cetti's Warbler was heard, Coot, Gadwall, Egyptian Goose, Mallard were noted. At Cadbury hide, a Water Rail and Reed Warblers was heard, and Reed Bunting were noted. In the hide overlooking a scrape, a Grey Heron, a Great White Egret and Little Egret were on view. At one point a Bittern emerged from the reeds and flew across the scrape over towards the broad river. Marsh Harrier was also seen, along with an unexpected Hooded Crow and a Kingfisher darted by. Towards the Visitors Centre, the characteristic call of the Common Crane could be heard, and after a good look around they were eventually seen. A great spot. After lunch at the Centre, everyone walked to the Water Trail departure point.



Water trail boat trip

From here; two boats, The Swallow & the Little Tern took us on a pre-booked boat trip around the Broad. Each went to separate areas of the Broads that included two further hides not accessible any other way. One of the boats slowly made its way amongst pleasure boats and yachts to a 60-foot tower with spectacular views. It revealed the extent of the reed beds, owned by NWT, the National Trust and others. There were not many birds to be seen here but a Buzzard flew over. On the way to the next hide the boat passed a flock of over 30 of Mute Swans. We arrived at an enclosed scrape invisible from the river with various waders including 20 Black Tailed Godwits and a couple of Avocets, Shelduck and various other ducks. After about 20 minutes we continued in the boat down a narrow break in the reeds listening to Reed Warblers to the second hide. At the far-left side of a scrape we noted Greenshank, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. A Chinese Water Deer emerged from the far side of the scrape, making its way along the edge before disappearing back to the reeds. A first for many of the group. On the second boat the groups came across a Swallowtail Butterfly lying on the water. This was carefully rescued and left on a tissue to dry out; eventually the butterfly fluttered its wings and flew away. This boat also had the misfortune of the engine screws becoming stuck due to low water levels.

We spent two and half hours on the boats exploring the Broads from that angle before going to the Bittern hide, where we found little else than a group of 7 Little Egrets. The walk back to the Visitor Centre provided the only actual sighting of a Reed Warbler singing away.

Overall it was a good day with about 46 species and evening meal in a pub on the way back to Lowestoft.

On Sunday, 2nd June 2019, we left the hotel and travelled to RSPB Lakenheath Fen. Arriving around 11am, we set out along the East Wood trail. Hearing, along the way, Blackcap and Whitethroat and seeing, Blackbird, and a Kestrel hovering near the railway line. At the New Fen Viewpoint. We saw a Hobby over the distant fen, Marsh Harrier flying around the river; a Bittern, Tufted Duck, Great crested Grebe, around the Fen and amongst the reeds. Reed Warbler were heard and seen flying quickly between reed beds. After a couple of hours, with the long journey home ahead we left via the Visitor Centre.

Everyone appeared to have enjoyed the weekend, the boat trip at Hickling Broad and the 90 species. We hope the next weekend away will be just as successful.

Author and photography Sue Brealey

Field Trip Report to Upton Warren Nature Reserve Sunday, 23rd June 2019

A small group, four of us, arrived at the Moors Car Park, on a dry, cloudy day with a forecast of the possibility of rain. At the car park waiting to see if anybody else would come, we heard a Cetti's Warbler singing and saw it flying between shrubs. Along the way towards Moors Pools, Chiffchaff, a Blackbird, Collared Dove & Woodpigeon. On the left of North Moors Pool, a new path leads to a new hide. This overlooks the reed beds which on this occasion were quiet, but did offer good views of Reed Bunting on various bushes & reed tops, and Reed Warblers flying between the reed beds. From the next hide, elevated over Amy's Marsh we enjoyed views of various duck, Gadwall, Canada and Greylag Goose, and Mute Swan. A good number of Black-headed Gull were on nests, and we were able to observe juveniles looking for food from their parents. Other birds seen included Green Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron and Moorhen. We walked back to the car park via a new route which circles around the North Moors Pond.

Before leaving, in cars, to visit the Flashes a Buzzard was seen flying over the reserve. Here at the elevated hide overlooking the Second Flash we took lunch noting several Avocet including a few juveniles, and an Oystercatcher on a nest. There were Coot, Cormorant and Shelduck, but as could be predicted these were vastly outnumbered by Black-Headed Gulls with their young. As the weather appeared to be closing in we decided to conclude the day, after about 33 species.

Sue Brealey

Bird Notes

Apr, May and Jun 2019

Egyptian Goose One or two were seen intermittently at Venus Pool or in the nearby fields between 8 Apr and 30 Jun. Other reports came from Chetwynd Park and Clarepool Moss.

Red Grouse Most records came from The Long Mynd where up to four were counted on 7 May. One was seen at The Stiperstones on 25 May.

Grey Partridge Pairs were present at Wall Farm on 20 April and at Childs Ercall Airfield on 12 May.

Common Quail Up to four were heard in fields near Noneley from 10 May and they continued to call throughout May and June. Singles were also reported at Prees, Brunslow and Venus Pool during June.

Black-necked Grebe (photo) A pair were found at The Mere, Ellesmere on 26 Apr and whilst elusive, they remained for the next few days



White Stork One was reported in flight over Wem on 6 Apr.

Cattle Egret A summer plumage bird was present near Ellesmere, often seen in fields adjacent to Ellesmere Marina between 7 – 19 Apr.

Great White Egret Singles were seen at Wall Farm on 24 Apr, Whixall Moss on 16 May and Priorslee Lake on 24 May.

Little Egret Two were seen at Maesbury Marsh on 2 Apr and Aston Locks on 5 Apr. Singles were also seen at Lime Grove on 9 Apr and Venus Pool on 30 Jun.

Osprey The first sighting of one was on 3 Apr at Leighton and then a distinctive bird with damaged primary was seen intermittently at Venus Pool between 4 – 10 Apr.

Golden Eagle One was reported flying over the Wrekin on 27 Jun.

Marsh Harrier Three reports of singles, all in May, came from Whixall Moss on 14th, Choulton on 17th and Preston Montford on 19th

Hen Harrier A ringtail was reported at Whixall Moss on 11 May.

Montagu's Harrier An adult male was seen on The Long Mynd on 16 May

Oystercatcher Many reports from the usual locations. Two chicks hatched at Venus Pool on 24 May but were predated during the following week.

Golden Plover (photo) A large flock of up to 118 birds was seen in the Thresholds area between 9 – 11 Apr.



Grey Plover Two males were present at Whixall Floods between 15 – 18 May.

Ringed Plover Two were present at Venus Pool on 3 Apr. Other records then followed from the floods at Noneley on 10 May and at Whixall Floods where four were present on 17 May.

Little Ringed Plover The first returning birds were seen at Venus Pool on 3 Apr and Wall Farm on 5 Apr. Reports soon followed from several other sites but no breeding success was reported.

Dotterel (photo) A pair was found in an area of bracken stubble adjacent to the Burway on 2 May where they remained until later the following day. Three others were seen in Minton Batch on 3 May.



Whimbrel Three were present at Wood Lane on 20 Apr and another three flew over the Long Mynd on 1 May. Two were seen at The Buttery on 6 May.

Bar-tailed Godwit Three were identified by call whilst migrating north by night over Condover on 23 Apr.

Black-tailed Godwit Passage birds were seen at Venus Pool (1) on 8 Apr, Wall farm (2) on 12 Apr and Whixall Floods (1 'Limosa') on 16 May. Seven were present at Venus Pool on 30 Jun.

Ruff One was present at Whixall floods between 16 – 18 May.

Dunlin Three records of two birds were received, firstly at Wall Farm on 18 Apr, Whixall Floods on 10 May and then Venus Pool on 4 Jun. A report of a single came from Whixall floods on 7 May.

Little Stint One was found on the floods near Noneley on 9 May. It was still present the following morning but flew off early afternoon.

Woodcock Three were seen at Haughmond Hill on 6 June then up to two at Black Hill from 8 Jun. A single was present at Walcot Woods on 27 Jun.

Common Snipe The final sightings came at Venus Pool (2) on 13 Apr and Wall Farm (5) on 20 Apr. A very late report of one came from Whixall Moss on 10 Jun.

Common Sandpiper Most records came from Venus Pool where one or two were seen from 15 Apr. Four were present at Polemere on 15 Apr and three at Chelmarsh on 6 May.

Green Sandpiper One was present at Wall Farm on 15 Apr, another was heard near Condover on 10 May. Up to two were seen at Venus Pool from 25 Jun.

Common Redshank Singles were noted at Whixall Floods on 12 Apr, Polemere on 8 May and Venus Pool on 9 Jun. Three were present at Whixall Floods on 10 May and two at Medlicott on 3 Jun.

Greenshank Singles were seen at Venus Pool on 18 Apr and Polemere on 17 May. Two were present at Whixall floods on 10 - 11 May.

Kittiwake One was present at Priorslee Lake on 28 Apr.

Little Gull Seven were busy feeding on passage at The Mere, Ellesmere from 8 – 9 Apr. Two remained there until 12 Apr.

Common Tern A single was reported at The Mere, Ellesmere on 8 May.

Arctic Tern One was present at White Mere on 9 Apr and then torrential rain prompted nine to drop in, feeding over White Mere during 27 – 28 Apr. A single remained until 30 Apr.

Black Tern UK passage was well represented in Shropshire with up to seven seen at either White Mere or Colemere between 7 – 8 May. Two were present at Venus Pool on 8 May and a single was seen at White Mere on 17 May.

Cuckoo The earliest records were at Tibberton on 17 Apr, followed by more at various locations over the next few days. There were numerous reports throughout the county from nearly fifty locations - a good year for Cuckoos?

Barn Owl Records of single birds came from seven locations: Tibberton, Condoover, West Kempton, Venus Pool, More, Calverhall and Aston on Clun.

Tawny Owl Seen or heard at nineteen locations with breeding success at some of these.

Little Owl Singles were reported at five locations: Wall Farm, Condoover, Cantlop, Coxall Bridge and Whitcott Evan.

Long-eared Owl Two records were received during the quarter, one at The Long Mynd on 16 May and the other at Prees Heath on 4 Jun.

Short-eared Owl One was seen at The Long Mynd on 12 Apr. A second sighting was reported near Bridges on 19 Apr.

Common Swift The first birds (2) were seen on 18 Apr at Shawbury, then at Shrewsbury and Preston Montford on 1 May. The highest count was 85 at Venus Pool on 8 Jun.

Wryneck One was present in a Trefonen garden on 13 Apr.

Merlin Two records of singles came from Bicton Hill on 14 Jun and Fenemere on 23 Jun.

Hobby The earliest arrivals were reported from Silvington on 27 Apr and Maesbury Marsh on 28 Apr. The latter sighting involved three birds, two males displaying to a female. Hobbies were then regularly reported throughout the county during May and June.

Willow Tit Records of single birds came from five sites: Mary Knoll, The Lawley, Middletown Hill, The Wrekin, and Venus Pool.

Sand Martin Some exceptional counts, associated with heavy rain, were noted at The Mere, Ellesmere, during April and early May. An estimated c1200 were present on 4 Apr and counts of 600 were made on 27 Apr and 8 May.

House Martin Two were reported at Priorslee Lake on 3 Apr followed by ten at The Mere, Ellesmere on 4 Apr. The highest count was 250 at Priorslee Lake on 26 Apr.

Cetti's Warbler A pair were present at Newport canal on 20 Apr. Other records came from Ironbridge on 22 Apr and Norbroom Marsh west on 30 Apr - 16 May.

Willow Warbler The first returning birds were seen at Telford on 1 Apr and Venus Pool on 6 Apr. Records steadily increased thereafter and c40 were reported at Wyre Forest on 28 Apr.

Wood Warbler The first records came from a site in South Shropshire on 21 Apr and then Wyre Forest shortly after. Up to four were present at Clunton Coppice.

Yellow-browed Warbler One was present in an area of the Wyre Forest with no general access between 17 – 21 Apr.

Sedge Warbler The first reported was a singing male at Venus Pool on 16 Apr. Up to seven were present at Whixall floods on 14 May.

Reed Warbler The earliest record came from Venus Pool on the 18 Apr. Numerous records thereafter with up to seven at Maesbury Marsh and Aston Locks during mid-May.

Grasshopper Warbler One was present at The Stiperstones on 25 May and another was heard in Ashes Hollow, Long Mynd on 9 Jun.

Garden Warbler The first report came from The Lawley on 12 Apr. There were numerous sightings throughout the County thereafter.

Lesser Whitethroat Well recorded from over 20 locations. The earliest sighting came from Trefonen on 17 Apr.

Common Whitethroat The first reports were on 18 / 19 Apr at five locations. Numerous records followed.

Firecrest One was reported at Plowden Woods on 20 May.

Ring Ouzel The first sighting came from The Long Mynd on 3 Apr followed by two at Titterstone Clee on 6 Apr. The latter site was well watched with up to five seen on 11 Apr. The last report was on 25 Apr.

Fieldfare The last record was ten seen near Condover on 15 Apr.

Redwing The final sighting, a single, came from Rea Brook Valley on 12 Apr.

Spotted Flycatcher The earliest report was at Earl's Hill, on 11 May. There were three breeding pairs plus two individual birds in the Bridges area on 21 May

Pied Flycatcher (photo) The first record was on 7 Apr at Craig Sychtyn (one week earlier than at the same location in 2018). Reports followed from numerous locations with the highest count being seventeen at 'Hall of the Forest', Newcastle-on-Clun on 3 Jun.



Common Redstart The first record came at Clunton on 3 Apr. Highest counts of eight came from Bridges on 1 Jun.

Whinchat The first report was a single on 2 May at the Long Mynd. Numbers increased and six were reported there on 20 May. A single was also seen at Venus Pool on 12 May.

Wheatear The first report came from Drovers Rest on 3 Apr and Titterstone Clee on 6 Apr. The highest count was eight on a ploughed field at Rhyn Park on 19 Apr.

Tree Sparrow 34 were seen at Stybank, Newcastle on 14 Jun. Regular counts of up to 6 were reported from Pentre throughout the quarter.

Yellow Wagtail The first reported bird was seen near Polemere on 7 Apr. The highest count of eight, came from the fields adjacent to Noneley floods.

Channel Wagtail A striking male (*Motacilla flava* x *M flavissima*) was seen intermittently in the fields near Noneley (as above) between 20 Apr – 30 May.

Tree Pipit Records came from thirteen sites, with the first at Meaton Lane, Cleobury Mortimer on 7 Apr. Highest count 24 on 28 Apr from the Wyre forest.

Brambling Up to seven continued to be seen at Venus Pool until 21 Apr.

Hawfinch Three were present at Glenburrell, Craven Arms on 23 Apr.

Common Crossbill Most reports came from the Wyre Forest area with a maximum count of 30+ at Meaton Lane on 7 Apr. 10 were present at Bury Ditches on 20 May.

Corn Bunting Reported from over twenty locations throughout the quarter. The highest count of 10 came from Noneley on 7 May.

Some sightings are subject to acceptance by the records committee

Records for Bird Notes are extracted from the quarterly Birdtrack report for Shropshire. Due to the volume of records produced, common species are not normally included.

Records **must be recorded** by observers in Birdtrack by the 10th of the month following the end of each quarter to ensure consideration for inclusion. Given the short timescale for processing 'Bird Notes' it is not always possible to process personal lists.

All rarities should either be entered into Birdtrack or submitted to the county recorder.

compiled by and photos Jim Almond

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Correction and Clarifications

Omitted credit in the last Buzzard (256) Elizabeth Holmes was the author of *A study of the plastic ingestion and associated diet of great skua (Stercorarius skua) breeding on Fair Isle Shetland, through the dissection of pellets pp10 - 13*

Indoor Meetings

Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, Lyth Hill Road, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury at 7:15pm

For more details visit: <http://www.shropshirebirds.com/indoor-meetings/>

2 October

Steve Watson

Peregrines and Goshawks

A detailed look at and comparison between the lives of two our most prolific predators

6 November

Ashley Grove

Birding in the Gambia

A look at the amazing birdlife in this West African country

4 December

Helen Mugridge

Tanzania

A journey through Tanzania looking at the endless array of birds and animals

Indoor Meetings Church Stretton Branch

Indoor Programme for 2019

Church Stretton Branch

All meetings are held on Mondays in the Methodist Church Hall starting at 7.30pm

Tea and Coffee on arrival

28 October

Peter Carty

Nature Conservation and The National Trust in South Shropshire

25 November

Ben Waddams

The Meres and Mosses of North Shropshire

Upcoming Field Trips

13 October Kingsbury Water Park and RSPB Middleton Lakes Car

Organiser: Sue Brealey

Full Day – Meet at Broomey Croft Pool Car Park

Postcode for SatNav:
B76 0EF

Directions: Take M6 south then M42 north. At J6 take A4097 Kingsbury Road to Marston, turn left into Bodymoor Heath Road. Go past the main entrance and go over M42 and find a second entrance on the right. Follow the lanes until the car park is reached at the end. Grid Ref: SP 203 970.

See www.countryparks.warwickshire.gov.uk/country-parks/kingsbury-water-park

RSPB Middleton Lakes

Postcode for SatNav:
B78 2AE

24 November Mere Sands Wood NNR & Lunt Meadows Car

Organiser: Estelle Hughes

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 10am

Postcode for SatNav:
L40 1TG

Directions: Take M6 north to J27. Turn left onto A5209 & follow it to Burscough and turn right onto A59. Follow A59 to just south of Rufford, and turn left onto A5246 (Holmeswood Road). The reserve is on the left. Car Park Charge £2.00 Grid Ref: SD 447 159

See www.lancswt.org.uk/nature-reserves/mere-sands-wood-nature-reserve

Lunt Meadows NNR

Postcode for SatNav:
L29 7WL

See www.lancswt.org.uk/nature-reserves/lunt-meadows-nature-reserve

Note: If using the bridges at Runcorn, please note that there are tolls and payment will need to be paid at the following website: www.merseyflow.co.uk/pay-for-crossing & follow the instructions. This needs to be done on the day of the crossing otherwise fines could be incurred.

Grid Ref: SD 353 017

15 December WWT Martinmere By Coach

Organiser: Sue Brealey

Full Day – Meet at Shirehall Bus Stop to leave at 8.15 am sharp

Postcode for SatNav:
L40 0TA

Costs: - £15.00 per person for the coach plus entry fees for non-members of WWT

See www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/martinmere

Telephone Numbers for Organisers and Leaders:

Sue Brealey 01939 262450 / 07713 164463

Estelle Hughes 01948 840902 / 07817 243693

Please send contributions or suggestions for *The Buzzard* to **Tim Devanney:**

buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk

Copy deadline for the Winter 2019 issue is: 1 November 2019

Views expressed in The Buzzard are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the SOS or its Committees, unless otherwise stated.