



The Buzzard

Shropshire

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Announcements

Sue Williams

It is with great sadness, that the Society must announce the sudden death of Sue Williams on Friday, 31st July 2020. Sue was belatedly diagnosed with cancer and died soon after admission to hospital. As a long-term member, Sue attended mainly the indoor meetings, some field trips and the weekend trips. Sue was also an enthusiastic rambler. Pat Duff kindly represented the Society at her funeral.

Brian Andrews

From the Chair...

SOS and covid-19

I hope that you have come through the Covid-19 pandemic so far sound in body and spirit. As you will be aware, this period has proven problematic for volunteer organisations like the SOS (as well as just about everyone else) as our activities largely involve outdoor, social interactions and people sharing enclosed spaces, such as, meeting halls and bird hides. The first casualties were the meetings and field trips in early spring, closely followed by the summer issue of *The Buzzard*, which requires several people working closely together indoors to prepare for mailing. Venus Pool reserve was closed completely at about the time that organisations like RSPB, the National Trust and WWT shut down their outdoor sites. In addition, many activities in which SOS members play a major role, like the Long Mynd Red Grouse Count and the initial survey work for *Save Our Curlews*, had to be postponed or severely curtailed. As we move beyond what we hope will be the peak of the pandemic, we cannot yet see the way forward to resume normal operations.

We have already decided to cancel all indoor meetings until January because of issues involved with use of our meeting venue and the lack of guidance from the government on safety precautions for such events. The A.G.M. is therefore also postponed until 6th January 2021 at the earliest.

Venus Pool is now open, although the hides remain locked to avoid putting users in jeopardy when they are occupied. Field trips for October, November and December are provisionally still on and the best we can do until the situation becomes clearer is to continually review our activities in the light of any changes in government policy and to keep you informed.

The prime source of up-to-date information on what is on and what is not remains the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com under the "COVID-19 Pandemic News" section of "Breaking News" on the home page. Please visit to keep current with changes in announced events. Of course, the situation is such that, by the time you read this, things may have changed again! Stay safe and stay birding!

John Arnfield



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Save our Curlews Campaign and Appeal

Update since February 2020

The SOS Appeal, grants promised by other bodies, and a substantial contribution from SOS's own funds raised most of what was needed to fund project work in three Community Wildlife Group (CWG) areas in 2020. This would have involved finding and protecting nests, followed by radio-tagging and tracking chicks to find out what happens to them. However, the planned work and fundraising for the shortfall was postponed until next year because of the coronavirus lockdown. All the money raised, including grants approved by other bodies (£5,000 from People's Postcode Lottery through the National Trust's Stepping Stones Project to fund project work in the Strettons area, £2,000 from the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund and £1,000 from the Garreg Llwyd Hill Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund for work in the Bettws-y-Crwyn part of the Upper Clun area), has been carried forward, and fundraising will restart in the autumn, so the complete project can be started in 2021.

Population monitoring

The CWG Bird Surveys were also cancelled until coronavirus restrictions were eased in mid-May, despite this, the planned population monitoring of most of the County's estimated population of 120 breeding pairs by 10 different CWGs continued within lockdown restrictions. Some people were able to conduct their surveys in sections as part of their daily exercise, others exercised in different areas closer to home. A few were able to record pairs from their home, whilst others set up networks of friends and neighbours to report Curlews. Overall, coverage has not been as good as usual. Records have been received from every area and in a few cases, it was as good or even better than last year. Even before we have the analysis, it is clear that Curlews have had another disastrous breeding season.

On 1 June a post-breeding flock of about 20 Curlews was seen near the Stiperstones, and on 22 June nine were seen near Church Stretton. These numbers represent about one-third, and over half, of the breeding population in the respective areas, little grass-cutting or other agricultural activities had occurred by those dates. Suggesting continued a high nest failure rate due to predation.

CWG surveys do not actively look for nests. Of the six nests that were found incidentally, four are known to have been predated. Two nests were fenced, and chicks hatched, but there is no evidence that any fledged. In addition, the nest fields of several other pairs were located. Breeding attempts all ended

before the date when incubation would have been complete. No agricultural activities had taken place in those fields either.

A few other pairs are known to have hatched chicks, and they too have been monitored. It is unlikely that any chicks would have fledged before mid-July, but there have been very few records since the end of June, as Curlews had already left their breeding areas.

The pair on Clee Hill, whose nest was found and fenced for two successive years, had fledged 1-2 young in 2018 and all 3 chicks in 2019. In 2020 they failed to produce any chicks in 2020, when lockdown restrictions made nest finding and protection impossible.

Returns from CWG areas have not been fully analysed yet, but evidence so far suggests that only one pair, just south of Oswestry, has produced any fledged young.

An interim summary has been sent to the *South of England Curlew Forum* for inclusion in its July newsletter.

After analysis of all monitoring returns and reports, a full summary of 2020 will appear in the next issue of *The Buzzard*. However, the interim conclusions, another very poor breeding season, are already clear.

Contribute to the SOS *Save our Curlews* appeal

The interim results of Curlew monitoring in 2020 highlight yet again the need to implement a wide-ranging *Save our Curlews* campaign. We still need to raise a substantial amount to complete all the planned project work in 2021. Further funding applications will be made between now and spring 2021, as the opportunities present themselves. If anyone knows of any funding opportunities, or grant-making bodies we can approach, please let us know.

The Appeal leaflet, sent out with the February issue of *The Buzzard*, can be found on the SOS website. It has so far raised over £3,000 from about 30 SOS members. Gift Aid of about £700 can be claimed on these donations. This is an excellent result, and all donors are thanked profusely for their generosity. Donors should note that we do not intend to send receipts as a matter of course, but we can provide confirmation of donations by email upon request.

The main fund-raising drive will take place in the autumn, but readers are encouraged to make their donations as soon as possible. See the SOS website for details <http://www.shropshirebirds.com/index/bird-conservation/save-our-curlews/>

Saving England's lowland Eurasian Curlews

An article on behalf of the South of England Curlew Forum (Colwell *et al*, BB May 2020) describes the population of about 500 pairs in the areas monitored by forum members, and the related conservation efforts. Shropshire's estimated 130 pairs (in 2018) are more than one-quarter of the south of England total. The article also refers to a new national charity, *Curlew Action*, (www.curlewaction.org) to promote best practice and support the work of the Forum and Curlew conservation nationally and internationally.

In recognition of the urgency and critical nature of *Curlew Action's* objectives, SOS has made a donation of £2,500 to the charity, as the SOS-sponsored 'Save Our Curlews' campaign will benefit from the work of *Curlew Action* through its advocacy, educational activities and practical conservation tools. Readers are encouraged to give priority to the local appeal.

Agricultural intensification (the switch from hay to silage, resulting in grass being cut several times in the breeding season), land drainage and other grassland management has undoubtedly driven the Curlew's decline over many years. The evidence now also suggests that predation levels are such that habitat restoration alone will not be enough to reverse the trend.

Why are predation levels so high? Colwell *et al.* refer to the

“potential relationship between high numbers of generalist predators and the release of around 50 million pheasants and partridges into the countryside every year.”

The Editorial in the 2019 Shropshire Bird Report referred to a paper by BTO scientists on “Associations Between Gamebird Release and Generalist Predators” (Pringle *et al.*), and stated “the sheer biomass of over 40 million Pheasants released for shooting each year is significantly more than double the biomass of all wild bird species breeding throughout the UK. With only a small percentage of these birds being shot and retrieved [estimated at 35%], most of the rest are then available to the medium and large avian and mammalian predators . . . hence potentially causing a real imbalance in the ecosystem.” The paper, “using [BTO] data from the last Bird Atlas and the annual Breeding Bird Survey, showed that large scale variation in avian predator populations (Raven, Buzzard, Magpie, Carrion Crow) is positively associated with gamebird releases so predator numbers are increased by gamebird releases.”

Henrietta Pringle produced a graph for BTO news, and a blog based on the analyses conducted using BBS data. As a guide, “if we start with a hypothetical population of five crows in a 1-km square, the model predicts that

the following year, with no Pheasants, there would be 5.08 crows in the square. If there were 10 Pheasants in the square, there would instead be 5.13 crows in year 2 and if there were 100 Pheasants, there would be 5.62 crows. Similar patterns were also found for Buzzard (with Red-legged Partridge), Jay (with Red-legged Partridge) and Raven (with Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge and total biomass of gamebirds). These figures should be viewed cautiously, but they give some sort of idea of how predator populations could be boosted by gamebird releases, particularly if you extrapolate to larger areas and over many years”.

As yet there is no similar research on gamebird releases sustaining fox populations, but the GWCT website refers to the number of foxes “controlled” and reported through the national gamebag census stating, “*There has been a continuous increase in the bag index since 1961, leading to it being more than three times higher in 2009 than in 1961.*” Pheasant release increased 10-fold over the same period. With considerable understatement, the website article concludes “The widespread rearing and releasing of gamebirds has probably improved fox food supply in autumn and winter.”

A paper by RSPB research scientists, “A review of predation as a limiting factor for bird populations in mesopredator-rich landscapes: a case study of the UK” found “that predation, mainly by foxes and non-native mammals, can limit the numbers of ground-nesting species, such as waders, gamebirds, and seabirds” (Roos *et al.*, 2018). This, together with preliminary results of the RSPB’s Curlew Trial Management project, led to the RSPB starting a review of its policy on

“the most intensive forms of gamebird shooting, especially driven grouse moor management (which involves shooting our native red grouse) and large-scale release of non-native game birds, primarily pheasants and red-legged partridges, now in excess of 57 million birds annually”.

So far, the RSPB membership and partner organisations have been consulted on a set of conservation principles, and the staff team are currently finalising the scientific reviews of the evidence of impacts from the two most intensive forms of shooting (driven grouse and high density gamebird releases), to assess these shooting styles against the conservation principles. The final phase will involve reviewing the RSPB’s existing policy on driven grouse shooting and developing a new position on gamebird releases. It is planned to announce the results of this review at the virtual AGM in October.

Curlew predation and pheasant release in Shropshire

In Shropshire, the *Curlew Country* project found 33 nests in the two years 2015 and 2016. Only three nests in each of the two years hatched any chicks. The other 27 nests all failed, with more than half being predated by foxes, just under a quarter by badgers, with Carrion Crows and agricultural operations accounting for the rest. None of the chicks fledged and monitoring by the CWGs found no evidence that young fledged from any other nest in either of the two years.

Save our Curlews campaign work in Upper Clun and Upper Onny in 2018 and 2019 found 11 nests; 10 were fenced, and eight produced chicks (of the other two, in one case the fence was knocked over by sheep, and in the other the eggs didn't hatch). Eighteen chicks were radio tagged and followed, and 4-5 from two broods (both from the same territory, in successive years) fledged, but the other 13 were all predated (at least 3, probably 8, by foxes, 3 by avian predators (at least one, a Buzzard), and two by unknown predators). None were lost to agricultural activities. Again, monitoring by the CWGs found no evidence that young fledged from any other nest in either of the two years. The fledging rate in each of these areas is therefore not enough to sustain the population, with predation the major problem.

The 2008-13 Atlas showed breeding evidence for Pheasants in 854 of the County's 870 tetrads, with it absent in both the breeding and winter seasons only in urban Telford. The range (tetrad occupancy) had increased since 1985-90, and BBS showed a 69% increase in the local breeding population between 1997 and 2014. The feral population was estimated at 43,400-45,000 breeding pairs.

In 2018, figures obtained from the Animal and Plant Health Authority (APHA), a Government Agency, showed that 726,000 pheasants were released in Shropshire in that year alone.

Going back to the figures for the increase in the crow population in Henrietta Pringle's paper (an increase of 10% in a 1km square if 100 Pheasants are released) the average number of Pheasants released in every 1km square in Shropshire is more than twice that number, over 200 every year. Unfortunately, the only geographical breakdown of the County total was to main postcode area, so it is not possible to do a detailed correlation of where the Pheasants are released with where the few remaining Curlews are breeding unsuccessfully, but as there are over 300 times more Pheasant nests than Curlew nests, + the remainder of the released Pheasants, for foxes to predate, it is almost certain that the loss of Curlews is just collateral damage. Hopefully the RSPB's review of shooting policy will prove the casual link and provide a sound framework for regulation of Pheasant shoots,

particularly limitations on the numbers that are released but not shot and picked up.

Leo Smith
SOS Save our Curlews Campaign Co-ordinator

The BB paper *Saving England's lowland Eurasian Curlews* (Colwell et al.), the research papers and the Pheasant release figures referred to in this article can all be found on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

Thanks to BB for making the paper available now. There is usually an embargo of two years before articles are free online, but this one has been released now given the potential conservation benefits of doing so.

Birding in an Emergency

Is there a climate and ecological emergency? Reading the December 2019 issue of *British Birds*, I learnt from Mike Clarke, that an estimated 23% of bird species studied so far worldwide are negatively affected by climate change, while Javier Caletrío passed on a warning that without urgent and drastic emission-cuts, a third of animal species could be lost by 2070. That sounds like an emergency to me. My Oxford dictionary defines an emergency as 'a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring drastic action'.

So, what 'drastic action' are we, the birdwatching community, currently taking? Javier Caletrío is concerned that the Birdfair is 'normalising high-carbon holidays', but should we even perhaps be questioning our attendance at such events? And should we perhaps stop driving out to our Wetland Bird Survey counts or Breeding Bird Survey squares to document the climate-related changes in our bird populations to which our exhaust pipes have just contributed?

But perhaps I have got it wrong. Our political leaders aren't advocating drastic action, aren't planning for the systemic change to which Mike Clarke refers, and they should know best. Perhaps there are degrees of emergency, and this isn't a real one threatening worldwide environmental breakdown. Or perhaps, despite what Pacific Islanders and Australians may say, it is not yet current.

But if we *do* think it is real and current, what should we, the birdwatching community, be doing about it? All three of our national organisations, the BTO, RSPB and WWT, have business models which to varying degrees are predicated on the mobility and consumerism of us, their membership, as well as that of the wider bird-loving public. How should they respond? And what about our county societies and bird clubs? And us as individual birdwatchers?

Tom Wall

Common Sandpiper: shifting baselines

Ron Summers and his co-authors are correct in referring to the Common Sandpiper as ‘a widespread breeding species in the uplands of northern and western Britain’ (Summers *et al.* 2019). Such is their status today, but we must not forget that they were once more widespread.

In 1888, H. G. Bull described the species as ‘common on all the principal streams’ of Herefordshire. In 1899, H. E. Forrest, writing of Shropshire, reported that Common Sandpipers might be found on ‘most of our rivers and brooks, especially near the Welsh border’. And in 1910, T. A. Coward and C. Oldham, writing of Cheshire, stated that the Common Sandpiper ‘abounds in summer on all the streams and reservoirs in the hill country of east Cheshire and on all the meres and many of the rivers of the plain it is common’.

Clearly, this was indeed at one time a ‘common’ sandpiper in these three Midland, and largely lowland, counties. In all of them it is now close to extinction as a breeding species, but we must not lose sight of its former distribution and status. Shropshire provides a telling example: in 1906, C. S. Meares found five or six pairs and at least four nests on the Cound Brook, south of Shrewsbury, at perhaps 85 m above sea level, where in 1911 his brother, D. H. Meares saw ‘numerous pairs’, finding three nests and several recently hatched young (Tucker & Tucker 2012). The extent of the reach that they searched is unclear, but it would have been at the very most 12 km long and probably a lot less.

Bird Atlas 2007–11 (Balmer *et al.* 2013) showed a 20% contraction in the breeding range across Britain & Ireland since the *1968–72 Breeding Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) while *The Birds of Shropshire* (Smith 2019) showed an 83% contraction in the breeding range between 1985-90 and 2008-13. Today, there would be no hope of finding Common Sandpipers nesting on the Cound Brook, but for this and all declining species we need to keep earlier baselines in mind. Only when we understand what we have lost, can we start to address the question as to why, and then begin to find ways of clawing a little of it back.

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Tom Wall

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The Great Spotted Nestpecker

In June 1782, Gilbert White, author of *The Natural History of Selborne* recorded in his Journal that his brother had nailed-up several large scallop shells under the eaves of his house to see whether House Martins would build on them: 'These conveniences had not been fixed half an hour, before several pairs settled upon them; and, expressing great complacency, began to build immediately'.

A decade or so ago I followed suit and attached three scallop shells under the eaves of our house in Kempton, near Lydbury North, but it was some years before a pair of House Martins built a nest on one of them. The nest has been used every year since then, and on 27 May this year I found the shells of four eggs under the nest, so I knew that the young had hatched. But on 3 June I saw that the nest had been badly damaged and then witnessed it being visited by a male Great Spotted Woodpecker. Presumably he had already made off with two of the young because I found the nest to be empty and two moribund young were lying on the ground below. Not long afterwards juvenile woodpeckers were to be seen in our garden and it may be that the attack on the nest corresponded to the peak in the feeding demand of the woodpecker brood.

This behaviour by Woodpeckers has been observed previously, although it is not as frequent as the widening of the entrance hole of a nest box in order to extract the eggs or young of Blue or Great Tits. However, in the 35 years we

have shared this house with House Martins we have never experienced this problem before. This adult male Woodpecker, or another, was subsequently seen trying and failing to get its head into two House Martin nest boxes containing broods, one of House Martins the other of Wrens. Fortunately, these boxes were plenty strong enough to resist an attack. Interestingly, the box containing the House Martin brood was subsequently visited on at least two occasions by a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker, but again to no avail. Back at the scallop shell, by 13 June the nest had been rebuilt, presumably by a different pair, and by the end of July a brood had been successfully reared to fledging.

The images are a photo showing the nest before the attack, a mock-up of the state of the nest after the attack and a photo of the nest after the re-build with the area of new mud just discernible.



Tom Wall

Swift Season 2020

House Martins started arriving back in April and at the end of that month there were reports of the first Swifts back at their nest sites, so it was, compared to recent years, an early start to the Swift season. The fine weather in April and May was ideal for the birds and they started breeding relatively early this year, although cooler weather at the start of July during the height of chick feeding season has led to reports of many dead chicks – presumably as there was insufficient food around. The second and third waves of Swift arrivals have swelled numbers and, as we write – barely a fortnight before the bulk start their migration south – there are reports of good-sized screaming parties' mornings and evenings.

It is good to see an increasing number of articles about these summer migrants in a wide range of publications and again some of these coincided with the third Swift Awareness Week which ran from 27th June to 5th July. David Lindo chatted to Edward Mayer and more recently there was an excellent presentation by Nick Baker with RSPB England from Chagford Church where Swifts are again nesting. Catch these again at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68a0nrJgVjo> and <https://www.facebook.com/RSPBEngland/videos/1814890908653179/>

So, with all the high-profile news about Swifts it is pleasing to hear that there were increased sales of Swift boxes and call systems during the lockdown. However, it is not all good news – with all words that are written and spoken by so many about Swifts why do we see so many nest sites being blocked during the breeding season? Why has the message still failed to reach those house owners or their contractors about doing work during breeding season? A few examples from this year:

- A TV aerial erected right in front of the entrance to a Swift nest site
- A house where Swifts were nesting had scaffolding put up as the owners were having work done on the barge boards. Fortunately, a neighbour knew there were Swifts and spoke to the contractors doing the work and they understood the problem. This had a positive outcome as the contractor was himself interested to hear about Swifts and has now installed boxes on his own property.
- A local hospital put scaffolding up just as House Martins were feeding young. Again, fortunately, a concerned resident was able to contact the scaffolders and contractors and the work has stopped allowing the parents to access the nests again to feed chicks. Speed is essential here - chicks cannot be left for long without food and parents are in danger of abandoning them if access is denied for too long.
- Swift boxes were taken down so that a building could be renovated. Scaffolding was put up, then a while later the boxes removed. This time there was no-one on hand to remind the owner of the building or the contractors to check the boxes when the scaffolding was erected. By the time the boxes were looked at the chick had been dead for some time. Putting Swift boxes up and then a) wanting to do work in Swift season and b) not checking them for Swifts or any other birds is beyond words.
- Further afield there are the usual tales of housing associations ripping roofs off in gay abandon during Swift season and the very stressful task of someone trying to find the right person to contact and get work stopped – not easy when contractors and materials have been scheduled.
- New soffits and fascia's being installed while Swifts were actively feeding young in the nest. A concerned neighbour raised the issue after the work was complete, but the result was young were trapped inside the nest and the adults could not access them.

We all need to be aware of the plight of building dependent species and be prepared to intervene when we see nest sites being blocked. Better still is to make people aware that these birds' nest there because that's where they nest – not all birds nest in trees or bushes - and that they are to be cherished.

So – although the 2020 breeding season is almost over for our summer migrants – do look out for these situations which occur every summer and act where necessary. Although covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act the law is never enforced and with trapped or hungry birds speed really is of the essence.

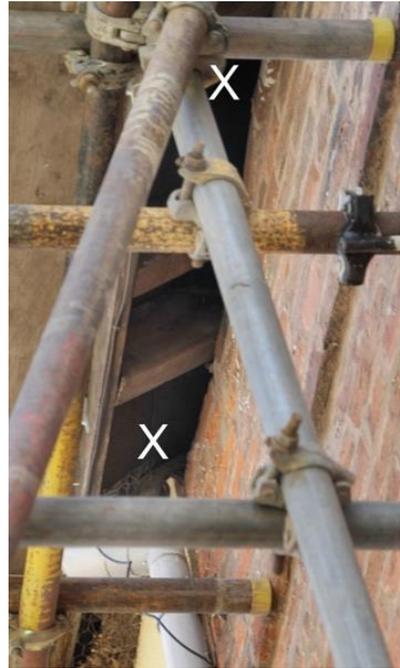
Contact details -

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Sarah Gibson – Oswestry Swift Group

Carol Wood – Bridgnorth Swift Group

Peta Sams – Shropshire Swift Group



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/shropshireswiftgroup>

Swallows in Trouble?

At a farm in Aston on Clun, outbuildings that in 2015 accommodated seven nesting Swallows had none this year while an abandoned barn complex 150m away with eight nests in 2015 had just one. The only other sizable colony in the parish, at a farm near Hopesay, the nests were down from ten to two. There are other local examples of losses.

If you have similar or markedly different evidence with Swallows this year, please let me know. Thank you. john.tucker@lanius.org.uk

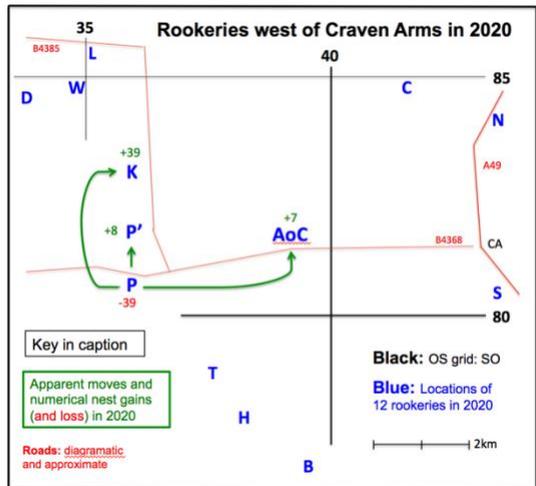
John Tucker

A Tale of Four (or so) Rookeries.

Resurveying rookeries has been stalled by COVID-19 this year but with time to contemplate I think there are some issues less than clear, for lack of good evidence and a seeming dearth of attention in the literature; there is no mention of it in BWP. For example, to what extent do individuals from one colony mix with or move to another colony? Without identifying individuals, it is impossible to examine but this year something happened, offering a clue.

Map

NW to SE: L = Powys Inn, Lynbury North, W = Walcot Park, D = Lower Down, K = Kempton, P = Purslow, P' = Purslow, AoC = Aston on Clun, S = near Stokesay, C = Cheney Longville, N = Newington, T Three Ashes/Twitchen, H = Hopton Heath and B = Broadward Hall.



Up to and including 2019

- In **Aston on Clun** (AoC, see Map) a rookery was recorded with 11 nests in the BTO/SOS survey of 1975/76 and had 42 in 2005 since when it has been in decline, with 29 in 2019.
- At **Kempton** (K), 3.5km north of west of AoC, a rookery was recorded with 16 nests in 1975 while in 2008 it had two sub-sites with 65 though by 2019 the total was down to 40.
- At **Purslow** (P), 3.4km south of west of AoC, no rookery was recorded in 1975 though one has thrived with between 41 and 55 nests since at least 2008 with a handful in a sub-site about 200m east at the Hundred House Inn. Purslow had 41 nests in 2019.

In summary, in 2019 AoC was down to 29 nests, Kempton had 40 and Purslow 41.

In 2020:

- The main **Purslow** colony was inactive having collapsed from 40 nests to its satellite group of three by the Hundred House Inn.

Meanwhile:

- At **Purslow N** eight nests appeared in an oak tree about 1km north of Purslow on the road to Kempton, as new small colony.
- At **Kempton** the two sub-sites held 79 nests, an increase of 39 on the previous year.

- At **AoC**, which had been declining for 15 years, numbers increased by seven to 36 nests, the most for 11 years.

The increases on the previous year of seven nests at AoC, 39 at Kempton and the appearance of the new eight nest colony 1km north of Purslow, contributing perhaps 54 nests in all, suggest a redistribution of Purslow birds to the three neighbouring sites, see Map.

Further afield:

It seemed appropriate to check the situation at the nearest eight sites slightly further afield; three to the NW, three to the NE and E and two to the S – see Map and its key for the site names. Nest numbers were similar to those in 2019 at four sites (L, C, N and B), insignificantly different at two (D and H), noticeably lower at one (W; 43 to 32 nests) and site S, discovered in 2019 with 4 nests, is now extinct. The history of site T, discovered on 29 April 2020, is unknown.

In conclusion:

Purslow's dramatic collapse from 41 nests in 2019 to 3 this year has coincided with the appearance of a new colony 1km north (8 nests), a considerable addition into the Kempton complex (39) and an addition to Aston on Clun (7), a total of 54 nests. The additional nests apparent in the moves, being more than those from Purslow, could be accounted for by a general population increase following the relatively mild winter of 2019/20. Or there might be another explanation entirely.

Acknowledgement

My thanks to Tom Wall for his regular recording of nests at Kempton over many years and for discovering the Twitchen site in 2020.

Rookeries Resurvey "2019-20"

The two-year, 11-years-on from 2008 resurvey of county rookeries, should have been completed this year but COVID-19 hit and most of the work was not carried out. In the hope that we can return to the field in 2021, I will reorganise the task and contact the 20 or so volunteers early next year. My thanks go to all the volunteers for staying with the project, which seems to be promising some startling results.

John Tucker

No Departure Data Analyses?

Readers will be aware of SMAD (Shropshire Migrant Arrival Database) the list of all known first arrival dates of migrant birds; the very first was a Cuckoo on

9 April 1871. The list is kept up to date annually and is available on Histo at <http://pgt7.uk/sos/general/sos2016tuckerree.html>.

A great deal of work has been done on the arrivals data – they have a chapter in *The Birds of Shropshire* and a more detailed statistical treatment by Allan Reese and me appeared recently, see below. In 2014-15, at the time I was extracting the nineteenth and twentieth century data on arrival dates, a volunteer Stan Courtney very kindly began the process of finding the *last* recorded dates.

The strong point in support of analysing arrivals data is their finite nature but departure dates are much less precise. All winter there are no swallows and then one day there are, so write down that date and submit it. However, with departures it is much vaguer unless you record every time you see a Swallow it is almost impossible to pin down the last day you did see one.

Stan's departure data have been looked at by Allan Reese who worked on the arrivals data, but the records are very sparse for in the early days of birding, few noted and submitted their last record dates and that is still true today. Therefore, statistical analyses of the current data would be meaningless and has not been undertaken.

There is some suggestion that migrants are remaining in the county later and it may relate to climate change and a resulting lack of urgency to depart. However, I thank Mr Courtney for his work extracting the dates – it did seem a good idea at the time and the results have been saved.

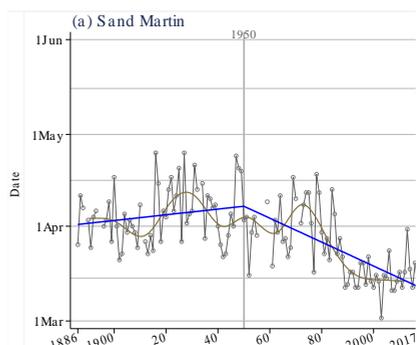
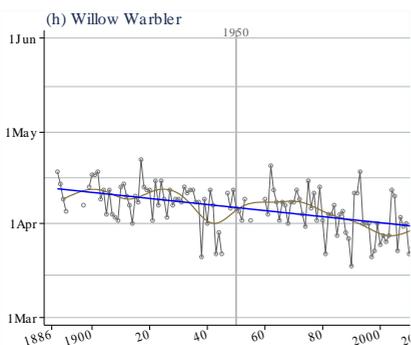
There may yet be a way to look again at departure dates – using BirdTrack records. An increasing number of recorders submit Complete Lists of all birds encountered on all their field trips. These lists, analysed nationally, give remarkably precise measures of arrival and departure dates and their variation between years. With enough take-up of the Complete List system in Shropshire, notably in the autumn period, it may be possible in future to examine dates of last county records with a degree of accuracy currently impossible. If that happens then it may be possible to return to Mr Courtney's early data and see what a careful comparison with modern data reveals.

Migrant Arrival Dates – new analyses

Readers of *Birds of Shropshire* (BoS) will be familiar with the analysis of migrant arrival dates in a chapter written by John Arnfield and me (pages 17-21). That work established that many migrant birds are arriving earlier than they were a century ago. John Arnfield carried out the analyses using the nineteenth century and modern dates stored in SMAD (online on Histo) known at the end of 2014, one of the most comprehensive data sets in Britain.

The SMAD data set is maintained annually with modern annual dates. In addition, subsequent to 2014, further arrival dates were added from two nineteenth century ornithological diaries which surfaced more recently – those of Charles Gawen (1888-1911) and the Meares brothers (1892-1949). The expanded SMAD data set, with the additional early records coupled with modern ones up to and including 2018, was subjected to a more detailed analyses by Allan Reese, a consultant statistician, and the results were published recently in the BTO journal *Ringing and Migration* (34(1):1-7).

The results agree in general terms with the early arrivals demonstrated in BoS, but they take the analyses further and examine in more detail the smoothed medium-term changes and in particular, for some species, the long-term trends before around 1950 and after that time. Two examples are shown here, the long-term continuous trend to earlier arrivals Willow Warbler and the 'broken stick' pattern of the Sand Martin with the trends to arrive later until around 1950 and subsequently earlier, to the extent that they are even now arriving 16 days earlier than they did a hundred years ago.



Field Trip Reports

Moore Nature Reserve 15 March 2020

This reserve is situated between the Manchester Ship Canal and the River Mersey, a large reserve with varied habitats: five large lakes; extensive woodland; meadows and wetlands and boasts all three species of Woodpecker.

Much of the site has been under threat in recent years from a proposed extension to Warrington docks, with rumours of a playground, cycle park and much that would adversely affect the tranquillity of the place.

However, today with three stalwarts, many species were recorded when we met in the carpark as we took the mandatory coffee and biscuits! Three Dunnock flitted in a low hedge, Song Thrush, Greenfinch, Blackbird, Robin and Wren were singing and a Cormorant and pair of Mallard flew overhead along with Black-headed and Lesser black-backed Gull.

Our eagle-eyed member spotted a Treecreeper and we had Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tit. A small flock of Redwing fed in a hawthorn tree in Dog Field, where canines can run off the lead, which is situated alongside the carpark.

Taking the track to the feeding station we added Chaffinch and from Lapwing Lane Hide overlooking Lapwing Lake we recorded a pair of Mute Swan, Moorhen, Coot, Widgeon, a few Canada and Great-crested and Little Grebe with a female Goldeneye, but no male.

We arrived at the feeder station, where the feeders are mounted on large poles in the water, which a pair of Teal had all to themselves. On the feeders we had Coal Tit, Nuthatch, two more Treecreeper, Willow Tit and Jay.

Re-joining the main track, we met a couple of birders who had seen Green and Lesser-spotted Woodpecker that morning, so we stood at 'Woodpecker Corner', where two years ago we'd seen and photographed the latter very close, but, sadly, no luck. We heard a Great-spotted Woodpecker drumming and saw a Goldcrest, singing and feeding in an ivy-covered tree.

We added Grey Heron, Gadwall and Kingfisher from Canal Bed Hide and Buzzard as we climbed up the bank and along 'Gorse Alley'. A Great-spotted Woodpecker was preening in a dead tree and two Stock Dove flew across. The melancholy song of a Mistle Thrush was heard, and Magpie and Jay perched in the trees.

At the final hide, previously Lapwing Hide, now renamed Sedge View (all the hides are now roofless because of vandalism), four Oystercatcher flew around, calling noisily and a Chiffchaff sang from a willow as we returned to the carpark for lunch.

Two of us carried on viewing the series of lakes on the other side of the reserve, but there was little to add apart from many Black-headed Gull, five Great-crested Grebe showing early courtship behaviour and a juvenile Herring Gull. Nevertheless, we enjoyed a good day out before Coronavirus led to enforced self-isolation (for me)!

Estelle Hughes

Bird Notes

January, February, March 2020

Pink-footed Goose One was present at Middle Pool, Trench on 2 Jan and then four at the same location on 15 Jan.

Mute Swan Numerous reports from sites across the County. The largest regular gathering was reported at Venus Pool where a maximum count of 75 were seen on 4 Jan.

Bewick's Swan One was present at Venus Pool commuting to nearby fields to feed between 18 Jan to 1 Feb.

Whooper Swan Flooded fields near Melverley & Edgerley attracted mobile feeding groups, with a maximum count of thirty on 27 Jan. A single was seen at Venus Pool from 1 to 5 Jan and then the same or another bird on 15 Mar.

Egyptian Goose Two were seen regularly at Venus Pool between 1 to 20 Jan. Three were feeding near the dam at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 31 Jan and a pair were seen at Chetwynd Pool between 8 to 27 Mar.

Shoveler (*below*) Present at various locations throughout the quarter with the highest counts coming from Venus Pool where numbers steadily increased until 20 Jan when 70 were present.



Gadwall Most records came from Venus Pool with numbers peaking in January with a maximum count of 25 on the 20th. Other records of five or more came from Priorslee Lake, Ellerton Mill and Sambrook Mill.

Wigeon Good numbers at the usual sites. Highest counts were: Wall Farm (150+) on 5 Mar, Shavington (113) on 11 Jan, The Mere, Ellesmere (70) on 8 Feb and Venus Pool (55) on 19 Jan.

Pintail Most reports came from Whixall floods where the maximum count was 23 on 31 Jan. Up to fifteen were present at Melverley floods during Jan and other reports came from Shavington Park, Venus Pool and Monkmoor Pool

Common Teal The highest counts came from: Wall Farm (200+) on 5 Mar, Whixall floods (180) on 8 Feb and Pentre (100) on 27 Jan.

Green-winged Teal One was present at Wall Farm between 5 to 11 March.

Red-crested Pochard (*Below*) A male and female were seen at Middle Pool, Trench on 1 Jan. The same or another pair were present but elusive on the fishing pool adjacent to Venus Pool on 29 Jan.



Pochard Reported from five locations, notably 15 at Venus Pool on 13 Feb and 11 at Monkmoor Pool on 5 Feb.

Scaup An adult male and female were present between 1 to 6 Feb. Either or both birds were occasionally absent.

Goldeneye Up to 28 were present at The Mere, Ellesmere, throughout the period where several pairs were seen displaying and copulating on 10 Feb. A maximum of 14 were present on 2 Feb at Colemere, plus singles at Shavington, Crosemere and The Buttery Reservoir.

Goosander Numerous records from along the Severn and still waters. The highest count was 36 at both Coalbrookdale on 7 Jan and Greyfriars Bridge, Shrewsbury on 24 Jan.

Red Grouse Records of just one or two on the Long Mynd and Stiperstones throughout the quarter.

Grey Partridge Four records of two birds, presumed pairs at Isombridge, Roden, Broad Oak and Tong.

Great White Egret Reported throughout the quarter, two were seen at Crosemere between 1 to 12 Jan, Molverley Green area 12 Jan to 2 Feb and Chelmarsh Reservoir on 15 Feb. Long staying singles were seen at Dudmaston Hall throughout Jan and Lydbury North between 7 Feb to 20 Mar. Other individual sightings came from Walcot on 7 Feb and Whitemere on 10 Feb.

Little Egret One was seen at Whixall floods between 1 Jan to 25 Mar. Three were present near Molverley on 6 Jan, and one or two at Aston Locks between 15 Jan to 27. Singles were also reported at Sambrook Pool, Newport Canal Calverhall and Norton in Hales.

Osprey One was reported over Plaish, flying towards Venus Pool on 28 Mar (via Bird News Services).

Marsh Harrier One was seen intermittently over Whixall Moss/floods between 2 Jan to 23 Mar. On 27 Mar, a second bird was also present. One was also seen at Venus Pool on 29 Mar.

Hen Harrier Singles were seen at Noneley Floods on 4 Jan, Whixall Moss on 5 Jan and 15 Mar and Northwood on 4 Feb.

White-tailed Eagle. A tagged Isle of White release bird flew through the County on the evening of 23rd March. It was tracked heading NE between

Ludlow and Tong between 12:34 and 15:03pm (Data via Tom Lowe and Roy Dennis). One that got away, there were no reports!

Water Rail (*Below*) At least four were present at Venus Pool during January and one or two continued to be reported until 23 Mar.



Little Ringed Plover One was present at Whixall Floods on 15 Mar and then two on 25 Mar.

Golden Plover Some large flocks were present during the period, in particular on floods near Tern Hill where there were an estimated 1,000 between 7 to 18 Feb. 500 were at Smythemoor, Longford on 2 Mar and 200 on the Long Mynd between 2 Jan to 10 Feb

Curlew The only double figure count came from Whixall Floods (10) on 3 Mar. Reports of two or more came from Isombridge Lane, Bentlawnt, Buildwas, Beacon Lane, Baggly Moor, Whixall Moss, Titterstone Clee, Farlow, Gorstybank and Cockshutt.

Dunlin Just one record, at Tern Hill floods amongst the Lapwings.

Woodcock Reports came from twenty locations. Multiples were reported at Meaton Lane (6) on 2 Feb, Burleydam (4) on 23 Jan. Two were also present at Oak Hill on 14 Jan and Bridges on 18 Feb.

Jack Snipe Singles were seen at Moretonwood on 8 Jan, Colemere on 12 Jan and Wall Farm on 6 Mar. Three were reported at Holly Banks NR on 12 Jan.

Common Snipe 120+ were accidentally flushed from a cover crop near Burleydam on 8 Feb. There were an estimated 80 at Wall Farm on 17 Jan and 70 at Venus Pool on 20 Feb.

Green Sandpiper One was feeding on the margin of flood water at Walcot on 1 to 2 Jan. Another was at Olivers Pond, south of Chirk on 17 Jan.

Common Redshank One was seen at Whixall Floods on 6 Mar.

Kittiwake One was present at The Mere, Ellesmere on 16 and 19 Feb.

Black-headed Gull Reported throughout the county with the most impressive counts from The Mere, Ellesmere, peaking at 5,000 + between 2 Jan to 16 Feb. 3,000 were at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 29 Jan.

Mediterranean Gull Reports of singles came from Priorslee Lake on 3 Jan and Colemere on 5 Feb. Up to three were present in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere between 8 to 16 Feb.

Common Gull Most reports came from the north of the county. The highest count was 400 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 8 Feb

Great Black-backed Gull Up to six were present at Priorslee Lake between 3 to 28 Jan and five were present at Redhill Farm, Shifnal 13 Feb. Singles were also seen at Smythemoor 2 Jan and the Mere, Ellesmere on 17 Jan.

Herring Gull 500 were in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10 and 17 Jan.

Caspian Gull 2w and 4w birds were seen at Priorslee Lake on 2to3 Jan then a gap in reporting until 28 Jan when the 2w was back again. A 2w was seen at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10 Jan. An unaged bird was reported via the Bird News Services at Wood Lane 1 Feb and another one at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13 Feb.

Yellow-legged Gull Up to six were seen most days at Priorslee Lake during January and four in the Roost at The Mere, Ellesmere until 13 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Reported throughout the period. The highest counts came from roosts at The Mere, Ellesmere (2100) on 8 Feb and Chelmarsh Reservoir (1500) on 29 Jan.

Barn Owl Reported from 36 different locations which represents more than double the locations reported to Birdtrack in both 2018 and 2019. Owls were recorded hunting during both day and night and if the number of reports represents an increase in owl numbers rather than simply more observers putting their records in, welcome news indeed!

Tawny Owl Reported from 22 locations throughout the country. Many were heard calling, but some were seen, including one roosting at Venus Pool in early January.

Little Owl As in 2019, just two records received, both singles from Isombridge and Upper Fenemere.

Short-eared Owl One was present on the Long Mynd on 3 Jan, another seen at Oak Hill on 14 Jan and then two at Venus Pool on 6 Mar.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Singles were seen at Wyre Forest on 2 Feb, Stevenshill on 26 Feb and Clunton Coppice on 17 / 26 Mar.

Merlin Two were present on Whixall Moss on 3 Jan and singles were reported there throughout the quarter. Other reports came from: Kerry Ridgeway on 20 Jan, Noneley floods between 28 Jan to 2 Feb, Cantlop Grove 16 Feb & 8 Mar, Bicton Hill on 22 Feb, Venus Pool on 16 Mar and Long Mynd 22 Mar.

Ring-necked Parakeet One was seen in Belle Vue, Shrewsbury on 20 Jan.

Great Grey Shrike. One was reported via the Bird News Services at Venus Pool on 16 Jan. Does anyone have any information on this bird? Contact Ian Grant.

Waxwing (below) Three were found in a residential area of Market Drayton on 5 Mar where they remained until early afternoon the following day.



Willow Tit Records of 1 or 2 birds came from seven locations, mostly in the south of the county.

Sand Martin The first report came from Venus Pool, where 5 were seen on 21 Mar and then 12 on 23 Mar.

Swallow The only sighting received was of three seen over the canal at Newport on 30 Mar.

Cetti's Warbler One was heard most days and sometimes seen at Whixall Floods from 1 Jan until 7 Mar. Another long stayer was present at Venus Pool near the Fen hide between 3 Jan and 31 Mar. A single was heard calling / singing in the phragmites at Chelmarsh Scrape on 11 Mar.

Willow Warbler The first returning bird reported was at Shifnal Sewage Works on 28 Mar.

Yellow-browed Warbler One was found at Shifnal Sewage Works on 1 Jan. It continued to be seen throughout January and the last record (via the news services) was on 2 Feb.

Ring Ouzel One was reported at Titterstone Clee on 21 Mar plus another near All Stretton on 22 Mar.

Fieldfare Plentiful throughout the period, there were many three figure counts. The largest groups were at Harper Adams UC (580) on 20 Jan, Annscroft (350) on 2 Jan and Sidbury (150+) on 23 Feb.

Redwing Numerous reports from around the County. There were several notable three figure counts during January, including 550 at Molverley on 6 Jan, 450 at Annscroft on 2 Jan and 400 at Edgmond on 1 Jan.

Black Redstart One was present in the quarry at Titterstone Clee summit between 9 Jan to 22 Mar. A second very popular bird was present, showing well at Bromfield whilst feeding on and around buildings adjacent to the Clive Arms Public House. First reported on 19 Feb, it was last seen on 6 Mar.

Wheatear The first report was on 16 Mar at Ternhill where two were seen. A single at Whixall Moss was the only other reported sighting.

Tree Sparrow A maximum count of 43 came from Stybank in the Clun Forest where birds were regularly seen. Up to 5 were also seen near Molverley Floods and Pentre.

Brambling Reported throughout the quarter with counts of up to 20 at Pole Cott, Long Mynd from 1 Jan onwards. Other than this location, numbers were down on the previous year. A single was regularly seen in the feeder area at Venus Pool during Feb/Mar.

Hawfinch Sightings of up to 15 came near Horderley from 7 Feb onwards and then up to 4 were seen at Whitcliffe Common between 22 Feb and 16 Mar.

Common Crossbill Numbers reported were generally down relative to the same period in 2019, The highest count (15) was from Bury Ditches on 15 and 18 Jan. Kerry Ridgeway, Cefn Coch, Black Hill, Bury Ditches, Mary Knoll and Black Hill also produced mobile groups of birds.

Corn Bunting Some large flocks were in evidence with 70 at Shrawardine on 4 Jan, 42 at Wall Farm on 3 Jan and 30 at Walcot on 5 Jan.

Reed Bunting Large flocks were noted early in the year with c100 at Chelmarsh Scrape on 5 Jan and 60 at Venus Pool on 1 Jan.

Snow Bunting (below) One was found on Titterstone Clee on 22 Feb and thereafter was seen almost daily either near the car park, ruined buildings or quarry entrance until 8 Mar. A popular bird, despite being generally elusive, on occasions it would show well.



BIRD NOTES Apr, May and Jun 2020

Pink-footed Goose Two were present at Chetwynd Pool on 12 Apr.

Whooper Swan A late record came from Bridgnorth on 12 Apr.

Egyptian Goose One or two were seen intermittently at several locations throughout the quarter. Sightings came from Edgmond, Onslow, The Mere, Ellesmere, Stone Bridge, Newport, Chetwynd Pool, Cantlop Grove, Stevenshill and Polemere.

Pintail A pair were seen almost daily on a flooded field near Cockshutt 3 & 10 Apr.

Common Scoter A flock was reported over Maesbury Marsh at night on 11 Apr.

Red Grouse Up to five were seen at Stiperstones during the quarter plus singles at their usual sites on The Long Mynd.

Grey Partridge Reports of up to four during April and early May came from Trefonen, Shawbury and Isombridge.

Common Quail The first returning bird was heard in fields near Cantlop Grove on 7 May and continued to call throughout May and June. One or two were also reported calling at Wyke, Noneley, Market Drayton, Bishops Castle, Adderley, Prees, Boreatton, Woolston, Whixall Moss and Maesbury Marsh during May / June. A good year for Quail!

Great White Egret One was seen at Priorslee Lake on 23 Jun and a second record came from Meaton Lane on 27 Jun.

Little Egret Four were seen at Venus Pool on 20 Jun and singles were present on other days in Jun. Two were present at Wall Farm on 25 May. Singles were also noted at: Aston Lock, Onibury, Atcham, Market Drayton and Buildwas.

Osprey One was being mobbed by Gulls as it drifted over Shrewsbury on 1 Apr and then the same or another bird was seen over Berrington and Cantlop Grove the following day. Other reports came from Bridgnorth (two over) on 4 Apr, Edgerley on 1 May plus Cantlop Grove on 3 May.

Honey-Buzzard One was seen over Market Drayton, heading west on 25 May. Another was reported over Dothill, Telford on 23 Jun, drifting towards the Wrekin.

Marsh Harrier A single report of one over Acton Burnell on 10 May.

Montagu's Harrier An adult male was seen briefly on passage over The Long Mynd on 14 May.

Golden Plover Sixty were present at Cleeton St. Mary on 4 Apr and fifty were reported over Cantlop Grove on the same day.

Grey Plover One was present on a small pool near Northwood on 24 – 25 May.

Little Ringed Plover The first returning birds were a group of six seen at Whixall Floods on 7 Apr. Most records then came from Venus Pool where up to five were present during the quarter. Two were also seen on shingle banks by the River Severn.

Dotterel Two were present at the gliding station, Long Mynd, viewed from the access gate on 13 May.

Whimbrel None were seen but three sound recordings confirmed passage through the County at night near Condoover, between 23 Apr and 6 May.

Bar-tailed Godwit One was reported at Polemere on 26 Apr.

Black-tailed Godwit A single record from Hales Pools East, where ten were present on 17 May.

Dunlin One was seen from the causeway at Venus Pool on 11 Apr.

Jack Snipe One was reported at Meaton Lane on 11 Apr.

Common Snipe The final sightings at Venus Pool was 1 on 11 Apr and at Wall Farm, 4 on 27 Apr. Two late reports of singles came from Duckley Nap on 28 May and Hales Pools on 7 Jun.

Common Sandpiper Most records came from Venus Pool where one or two were seen from 12 Apr. Singles were also seen at Warbrook Reservoir, Polemere, Whitcliffe, Wall Farm, River Severn and Chelmarsh Reservoir.

Green Sandpiper Two were present at Venus Pool on 8 Apr. A single was seen in flight from a Shrewsbury garden and another at Morville Heath on 25 Jun.

Common Redshank Reported from a small pond near Chirbury and Venus Pool where two were present on 18 Jun.

Wood Sandpiper Two were found on a flooded field near Northwood on 9 May.

Greenshank One was reported on a flood near Cockshutt on 22 Apr.

Lesser Black-backed Gull In addition to the largest counts in fields, many records in urban settings were received. These are now a familiar sight in some residential areas. Perhaps an expansion of breeding sites on suitable rooftops in Shrewsbury and Ludlow?

Black Tern Four were present at The Mere; Ellesmere on 18 Apr.

Cuckoo The earliest sighting was at All Stretton on 11 Apr, followed by more at various locations over the following few days. There were numerous reports throughout the county from over eighty locations - an even better year for Cuckoos than 2019!

Barn Owl Records of single birds came from seven locations: Aston on Clun, Cross head Lane, Cantlop, Dryton, Garmston, Eaton Constantine, Culmington, Hanwood, Tibberton and Calverhall.

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

Little Owl Singles were reported from Cantlop Grove, Coxall Bridge, Wall Farm, Shrewsbury and Condover.

Nightjar Two were seen on Whixall Moss on 1 Jun and singles reported on 20 May at Black Hill and Stiperstones on 23 / 24 May.

Common Swift The first returning birds were seen on 20 Apr at Venus Pool, Shrewsbury and Newport. Venus Pool produced counts of 60 birds on 23 May and 30 Jun.

Hoopoe One was present in a Wem Garden from 17 – 29 Apr. A second bird was seen in the Coton Hill area of Shrewsbury on 29 Apr / 1 May. Another report came from near Prees on 18 Jun

Wryneck One was found in a private garden at Berrington on 21 Apr.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Three records which came from Aston on Clun on 31 May, Wyre Forest on 4 / 9 Jun, and Venus Pool on 21 Jun.

Merlin A pair were reported on The Long Mynd on 27 May plus a single at Stiperstones on 21 Apr.

Hobby The first arrivals were reported from Newport, Long Mynd and Ruyton XI Towns on 27 Apr. Hobbies were then regularly reported throughout the county throughout May and June.

Willow Tit Reported from seven sites: Mary Knoll, Caer Caradoc, The Lawley, Pontesbury Hill, Aston Botterell, Cheswardine, and Pentre.

Sand Martin Some good counts were noted at Venus Pool during April with a maximum of 450 on a drizzly 4 Apr. 150+ were seen at The Mere Ellesmere on 29 Jun.

Swallow Well over 500 records with big counts of 90 at Crose Mere on 28 Apr and eighty at Venus Pool on 11 May.

House Martin First report for the year was spotted at Cantlop Grove on 4 Apr. The highest counts came from Shifnal Sewage Works (150) on 30 Apr and Ellesmere (75+) on 29 Jun.

Cetti's Warbler Seen or heard at four locations: Venus Pool, Norbroom Marsh, Forton and Chelmarsh scrape. Two probable breeding females with brood patch were caught and ringed at Chelmarsh Scrape in addition to two singing males. The Venus Pool bird was seen / heard throughout the quarter, hopefully a breeding partner will materialise one day?

Wood Warbler The first record was from a site in South Shropshire on 20 Apr and then Buttonoak shortly after. Counts of four birds came from Wart Hill, Clunton Coppice and Bucknell Wood.

Sedge Warbler The first reported was a singing male at Venus Pool on 11 Apr. Counts of seven or more came from Maesbury Marsh, Hales Pool West and Keepers Bridge, Montgomery Canal.

Reed Warbler The earliest record came from Shifnal Sewage Works on 7 Apr. Numerous records thereafter with up to ten at Fenemere and eight at Venus Pool during June.

Grasshopper Warbler One was present, singing at Cantlop Grove on 12 Apr and others were reported from Moretonwood on 20- Apr, Stiperstones on 21 Apr, Reabrook Valley on 24 Apr and Forton on 26 Apr.

Garden Warbler The first report came from Whixall Floods on 7 Apr. There were numerous sightings throughout the County thereafter.

Lesser Whitethroat Numerous reports from over 20 locations. The earliest sighting came from Trefonen on 16 Apr.

Common Whitethroat The first reports were on 6 / 7 Apr at Isombridge and Shifnal Sewage Works respectively. Numerous records followed.

Firecrest One was reported at Shifnal (no further details) on 1 Apr.

Ring Ouzel The first sighting, a good count of five, came from The Long Mynd on 5 Apr. Other reports then followed from Broad Oak, The Wrekin and Longdon-on-Tern. The last report was at Cleeton St Mary on 26 Apr.

Fieldfare The latest record was fourteen at Lyth Hill on 22 Apr.

Redwing The final sighting, a single, came from Venus Pool on 7 Apr.

Spotted Flycatcher The earliest report was of two at Woodseaves, on 5 May. There were four or more at Meaton Lane on 14 June plus many reports of pairs at the usual hotspots.

Pied Flycatcher The first record was on 5 Apr at Craig Sychtyn (two days earlier than one at the same location in 2019). Reports from numerous locations followed with the highest count being fifteen at 'Hall of the Forest', Newcastle-on-Clyun on 27 May.

Black Redstart There were two reports of singles, at Bucknell on 13 Apr and Long Mynd on 23 Jun.

Common Redstart The first record came from Isombridge on 6 Apr. The highest counts came from walks at Brown Clee (12) on 6 May and Bridges (10) on 16 May. There were numerous countywide reports.

Whinchat The first report was of a single on 19 April at Wall Farm. Most records then came from the South Shropshire Hills with up to three seen on The Long Mynd.

Wheatear The first report came near Cockshutt on 7 Apr. Modest counts came from the usual hotspots with six present at Caer Din Ring, near Newcastle upon Clun on 15 Apr. Occasional 'Greenland' birds were seen.

Tree Sparrow Most reports came from Oakley Mynd or Pentre with both sites achieving a maxima of seven during the period.

Yellow Wagtail The first reported bird was seen at Cantlop on 8 Apr. The highest count of eight, came from a stubble field near Cockshutt on 18 Apr.

Tree Pipit Records came from over thirty sites, with the first at Meaton Lane, Cleobury Mortimer on 4 Apr. The highest count of 10+ came from the same site on 2 May.

Brambling After singles seen at Venus Pool and Shifnal Sewage Works, the latest report was of four near Whitchurch on 23 Apr.

Hawfinch Two reports: one from Eaton Constantine on 20 Apr and then another from Aston on Clun on 6 Jun.

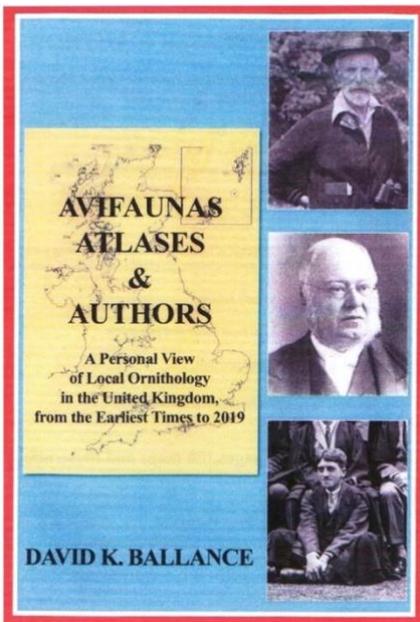
Common Crossbill Reported from a wide variety of locations with most sightings in May / June. The highest counts were 28+ at Lordshill on 7 Jun and fifteen at Cefn Coch on 4 Jun.

Corn Bunting Reported from over thirty locations throughout the quarter. The highest count of 12 came from Child's Ercall on 29 May.

Compiled and photos by Jim Almond

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.



AVIFAUNAS, ATLASES & AUTHORS

*A Personal View of Local Ornithology in the United Kingdom,
From the Earliest Times to 2019*

by

DAVID K. BALLANCE

*Author of **Birds in Counties**, published in 2000.*

It contains:

- An account of the development of local ornithology, conforming with current Recording Areas, and including biographical details of authors.
- A critical discussion of county atlases.
- An updated bibliography of local books and pamphlets.
- Listings of national and local journals.
- An Appendix on school natural history societies.

A4 ringbound; 350 pages, 180 maps and illustrations.

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or contact Neil Gartshore at Moor Edge, 2 Bere Road,

Wareham, Dorset BH20 4DD 01929 552560

The author may be contacted on 01643 706820

Upcoming Field Trips

**Sunday,
11 October**

Wirral: RSPB Burton Mere and Parkside Car
Organiser: Sue Brealey

Full Day – Meet at RSPB Burton Mere at
9.30am

Postcode for Satnav:
CH64 5SF

Directions: - Travel towards The Wirral and onto the A540 towards Ness & Parkgate. Turn left onto Puddington Lane and follow signs to the RSPB reserve. Grid Ref: SJ319739

**Sunday,
22 November**

RSPB Conwy
Organiser: Sue Brealey

Car

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 10am

Postcode for Satnav: LL31
9XZ

Directions: From the A55, take junction 18 (signposted Conwy and Deganwy) and follow the brown RSPB signs. The reserve is on the south side of the roundabout. See: www.rspb.org.uk/conwy

**Sunday,
6 December**

WWT Slimbridge (With Local RSPB
Group)
Organiser: Sue Brealey

By Coach

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

Postcode for Satnav: GL2
7BT

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

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

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

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