



The Buzzard

Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
Quarterly Magazine



No 265

Winter 2021

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Table of Contents

Society Officers and Officials	2
Table of Contents	3
Chair's Report 2019-21	3
Young SOS Member Receives Prestigious BTO Award	6
Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire & Species Recovery Action Plans	8
Competition for a Crevice	10
Getting Involved	12
<i>Save our Curlews</i> Campaign and Appeal	13
Field Trip Reports	16
Coach Trip to WWT Slimbridge	18
Bird Notes	19
Indoor Meetings	27
Field Trips	28

Chair's Report 2019-21

The last Annual General Meeting of the Society, the 64th, was held nearly two years and five months ago on 3 April 2019. Since then, after a few months of normality, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic arrived to have a devastating impact on our activities, as it has on all organisations throughout the UK and worldwide. Though our activities have been curtailed, it must be emphasised that by no means has SOS been inactive during this period in ways that did not involve gatherings of members in enclosed and crowded conditions. Work of a routine but necessary nature has continued, and thanks are due to all those responsible for keeping the Salopian ornithological machinery ticking over during this period of disruption.

Sadly, the period since the last AGM was marked by the passing of two members who were very actively involved in contributing to the Society's goals. **Pete Deans**, SOS President since 2017 and our chairman for 37 years prior to that, died unexpectedly in late July of a coronary condition. **Bill Edwards** passed during the previous year. Bill was an enthusiastic birder and bird recorder, mostly in north-west Shropshire and was a recipient of the SOS President's Award. Both Pete and Bill were active in survey work, in

conservation, in nature more broadly and in enthusing the general public in wildlife matters. They will both be sorely missed.

Society membership was 847 in early September this year, very slightly higher than in my last report in 2019. Under the circumstances, this is good news and I want to thank **Annie Andrews** for dealing with membership matters. Regrettably, the Society continues to struggle with memberships among young people, having only three junior memberships. This is a source of considerable concern.

We have already heard from **Brian Andrews** about the favourable state of **SOS finances**. I would like to express my appreciation to **Jean Rickard** for her work as Treasurer and to **Brian Andrews** for his shepherding of the Society's investments.

Our **indoor meetings programmes**, in both Bayston Hill and Church Stretton, were severely curtailed by lockdown precautions. In the former location, five of the planned talks were cancelled in 2020 but four successful events were held online between January and April 2021. My thanks go to everyone who contributes to the success of these meetings, whatever the medium, including **Steve Dawes, Tim Devanney, Jock** and **Mim Elliot-Smith, Sue Brealey**, the speakers and to those who set up and clear the hall for the meetings. Likewise, the Church Stretton branch meeting programme has been inactive since the start of lockdown but will commence again next month.

The **field trip programme**, organised by the Development and Publicity Subcommittee, was cancelled after the March 2020 trip to Moore Nature Reserve, as it was impossible run them in compliance with lockdown rules. For the excursions we were able to offer prior to that, however, thanks are due to **Sue Brealey** and the individual trip leaders.

Progress on bringing the publication schedule up to date for **The Shropshire Bird Report (SBR)** has continued through the efforts of its editor, **Gerry Thomas**. The 2019 volume has been published and that for 2020 is imminent. Our thanks are due to Gerry, the account authors, and the editorial team, as well as **Helen Griffiths**, who takes on the important work of proof-reading the Report. *SBR* is a publication of which the Society can be very proud.

Covid restrictions caused the cancellation of the Summer 2020 issue of our now-colourful quarterly publication **The Buzzard**, but an extended combined issue with Autumn made up the loss. I would like to thank Editor **Tim Devanney** for his dedication to the task of ensuring the timely appearance of the magazine. Members are reminded of the option to receive *The Buzzard* online by visiting the SOS website and completing a simple form to switch to the digital version. Thanks are due also to the team which gets together to

prepare the magazine packages for posting to members, to **Annie Andrews** for a sustaining lunch during these sessions and to **Jim Almond** for compilation of the *Bird Notes* feature in each issue.

Venus Pool remains one of the most attractive reserves in the West Midlands, drawing in a wide variety of birds, butterflies, and other taxa throughout the year, as well as nature enthusiasts from across the region and from further afield. Regrettably, compliance with government guidelines necessitated the closure of the reserve in March 2020. The grounds were reopened in the following summer and the hides about a year later, albeit under Covid-related restrictions which remain in force. During lockdown, routine management continued, but a backlog of tasks remains that will need to be addressed in the near future.

A recent development has been the appointment of Volunteer Wardens for the reserve who will serve as links between visitors and the Society, offer advice, ensure compliance with reserve rules and be alert for safety and maintenance issues. Thanks are due to all those involved in the management of Venus Pool, particularly **Graham Walker**, **Helen Griffiths** and **Jim Almond**. I would also like to thank **Chris Whittles** for planning the planting regime for the arable field, and for organising ploughing and sowing work.

While much of the work of the **Conservation Sub-committee** was impeded by lockdown regulations, it continued work of conservation-related ornithology in the County. Most notable among its achievements since the last AGM was supervision of the work of the 'Save our Curlews' project and the development of the Red and Amber Lists for breeding species of conservation concern in Shropshire, including the writing of action plans for some of the key species in the latter. Thanks are due to **Graham Walker** and his Sub-committee for their efforts in this very important work, as well as **Ian Grant** and **John Martin**, County Recorders during the period of this report.

The SOS-sponsored **Save our Curlews** campaign and appeal were launched in February 2020, but project work was postponed because of Covid-19. However, in 2021, work was carried out in three areas, Upper Clun, Clee Hill and the Strettons. The Community Wildlife Groups in these areas located nesting pairs, and project work found 16 nests. 12 were fenced, 44 chicks were radio-tagged and tracked, and 3 young fledged. I have been asked by **Leo Smith** to thank everyone who contributed to the appeal, which will continue over the next year and beyond. A full report on the project work is available on the SOS website.

Members continued to contribute to other aspects of **bird recording** during the pandemic by combining fieldwork with permitted exercise activities in lockdown. This included national, county-wide, and local surveys, as well as

contributing personal records to BirdTrack, the preferred method of submitting sightings. Bird-ringing also continued during the period at many locations. Thank you to all of you who contributed in any way to extending our knowledge of Shropshire's avifauna during the last couple of years.

The end of 2019 saw the long-awaited publication of the Society's *magnum opus*, **The Birds of Shropshire** by Liverpool University Press. This 532-page, full-colour treatment of all 301 bird species that have been recorded in the County has been well-received in reviews in the ornithological literature and has sold nearly 700 copies. If you haven't got yours, it is still available from the publisher. Thanks are due to **Leo Smith**, the editor, the editorial team, and all those who contributed to this mammoth effort.

Use of the Society's **website** declined during lockdown to around 80-150 hits per day, down from around 200-450 prior to the pandemic. That number now seems to be climbing again.

I will draw this report to a close by expressing my thanks and appreciation for the work of the members of the Board of Directors, the Sub-committees, and the Church Stretton branch committee during what has been a very demanding period, and to all those people I have not mentioned by name who contributed in any way to the smooth operation of the Society. Thank you all!

John Arnfield (Chair, SOS)¹

Young SOS Member Receives Prestigious BTO Award

Congratulations Siân!

The Society is pleased and proud to recognise the achievements of one of its young members. Ms Siân Mercer, who is 17 years old and a resident of north Shropshire, is the recipient of this year's prestigious British Trust for Ornithology *Marsh Award for Young Ornithologist*.



¹ Transcript of the Chair's report from the AGM on 15 September 2021.

In the words of the BTO Press Office “Siân has been recognised for her passion for the natural world and, in particular, birds, and the way in which she shares this passion with others. During 2020 she organised events and activities that included bird walks and talks. She also takes part in bird monitoring schemes, such as the Breeding Bird Survey, Wetland Bird Survey, Grasshopper Warbler surveys and is a member of the British Trust for Ornithology’s Youth Representative Scheme.”

Arjun Dutta, nominating her for the award, remarked that Siân’s love for nature and birds always came first, rather than her own status, with this modesty often causing her work to go unrecognised. Her contribution to ornithology is huge, making her a very deserving winner of the BTO Marsh Award for Young Ornithologist.”



Faye Vogely, BTO Youth Engagement Manager, said, "Siân has been a fantastic asset to the BTO's Youth Representative scheme, and we are so pleased to see that her enthusiasm, knowledge, and skills have been recognised through this award. We're excited to keep working with Siân as she, and the wider youth volunteer team, continue to create new pathways for other young people to develop their interests in nature."

Siân, responded, "I feel honoured to receive this award and immensely grateful to both the BTO and the Marsh Christian Trust. Being able to share my love for birds as a BTO Youth Representative is a real privilege, and I hope to continue to inspire others to connect to the natural world going forward".

The award was presented by Professor Juliet Vickery, CEO of the BTO, and Charles Micklewright, Marsh Christian Trust Trustee, at the Society of Wildlife Artists (SWLA) Natural Eye exhibition in the Mall Galleries, London. Siân is the seventh recipient of Marsh Award for Young Ornithologist in the UK.

You can follow Sian's ornithological activities on Twitter ([@sianmercer](https://twitter.com/sianmercer)).

Well-done Siân, well-deserved. Keep up the good work.

John Arnfield Chair, Shropshire Ornithological Society

Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire & Species Recovery Action Plans

The Shropshire Red and Amber Lists

SOS has adopted Red and Amber Lists of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire. The lists can be found on the website <http://www.shropshirebirds.com/index/species-recovery/>

A "Species Champion" will be appointed for each priority species, who will draft the Species Recovery Action Plan, and lead and co-ordinate its implementation. Overall, the work will be the responsibility of the SOS Conservation Sub-committee, and be carried out by a dedicated "Species Recovery Working Party".

Species Recovery Working Party

Members appointed so far are Leo Smith (Co-ordinator), Graham Walker (Chair of Conservation Sub-committee), those members of Conservation Sub-committee who wish to be (Jon Groom, Gerry Thomas), and up to four Species Champions (Andrew Cristinacce and Bob Harris, to date).

Progress so far

Species on the Red List where we think it is possible to make a difference with a local Action Plan have been prioritised, and species champions have been appointed for all except seven of them. We are still looking for Champions for Corn Bunting, Great Crested Grebe, Pochard, Shoveler, Teal, Swift and Yellow Wagtail.

Action Plans have already been produced for some species, and the remainder should be drafted shortly. Some project work has been carried out for some plans in 2021, and that is being collated.

We intend to review and update the existing plans, and finalise the remainder, for 25 species for which we think local action can help.

Bird Surveys of SWT Reserves

We have agreed with SWT that we will arrange bird surveys of their reserves with listed species, and make proposals to be incorporated into the Reserve Management Plan. A brief for surveyors has been produced (similar to BTO CBC methodology), and survey work on seven reserves was carried out in 2021. There are another five reserves, perhaps more, which need survey work in 2022.

Next Steps

We hope to complete the preparation of Action Plans by Christmas, and include survey plans for next year in the next issue of *The Buzzard*. We'll need a lot of help next year, please.

More Information

Action Plans completed to date, further information about the project, and email addresses for all the Species Champions, can be found on the website (address above).

If you are willing to be a Species Champion for Corn Bunting, Great Crested Grebe, Pochard, Shoveler, Teal, Swift or Yellow Wagtail, please contact Leo Smith (leo@leosmith.org.uk).

If you want to help with survey work in 2022, for a specific species or at a particular SWT reserve, please contact Jonathan Groom (bto.shropshire@gmail.com).

Competition for a Crevice

Some 30 years ago, Swifts started using three nest boxes inserted in the gable end of our house at Kempton, in south Shropshire. Some years later they also started nesting in a small crevice above the window of the bedroom where my wife and I sleep (see photo). My record keeping is poor, so I can't state for how many years they did so, but I think they ceased to nest there about a decade and a half ago. I assumed that with the decline in Swift numbers they would never return to the crevice, although I'm pleased to say that they have continued to occupy the boxes each year.

After a few years, House Sparrows took over the crevice, and their noisy presence too early on summer mornings led me to think of blocking the hole. But, like much in the way of house maintenance, I never got round to it and fortunately the House Sparrows moved on. Then this year, much to my surprise, I saw House Martins showing an interest in the crevice, and in June they took up residence. Such use of nest-holes by Martins as an alternative to building a nest is most unusual but has been recorded on occasion. I found it a bit galling however: if these Martins were reluctant to build a nest of their own, why did they turn their backs on the 14 artificial nests I had erected on the house, 9 of which were un-occupied?



Then, on 18 July I found the corpses of two naked chicks beneath the nest. How come? On several subsequent occasions I caught sight of what I thought was a Swift going up to the crevice, and on 31 July I saw one entering it. Did the Swifts turf out the House Martins? Were they asserting their right of occupation with a view to nesting in 2022? I'll keep you posted.

Tom Wall



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birds for over 30 years*



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Getting Involved

SOS members, and other keen birders, are invited to help with several projects and surveys in the 2022 field season. Everyone welcome!!! If you want to help with any of them, look on the appropriate website, or contact Leo Smith leo@leosmith.org.uk 01694 720296.

Community Wildlife Group Curlew Surveys

The foundation of the Save our Curlews campaign (see page 13) is the location of territories by Community Wildlife Group (CWG) surveyors. The survey involves three visits of about three hours each, around 1 April, 1 May and mid-June. See www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

**All the groups need more helpers,
and SOS members will be especially welcome.**

Other *Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*

See separate article on page 8.

Red Grouse Survey

Counts will take place on the Long Mynd every Thursday evening between 31 March and 12 May, from 90 minutes before sunset until 15 minutes after it. Please volunteer even if Thursdays are difficult, as counts are often cancelled because of bad weather, and re-arranged for a Monday or Tuesday.

This year's survey is especially important, as we need to know if the substantial die-back of the heather has affected the population.

Most territories are within sight and hearing distance of the road along the top, between the Gliding Station and the Shooting Box car park. The display flight is noisy, conspicuous and unmistakable, and can be observed over long distances, so this is a suitable project for anyone interested in birds or conservation. No special knowledge or skills are needed. A project briefing meeting will be held for new participants on Thursday, 24 March, at 7.30pm at the National Trust tea room in Carding Mill Valley, and there will be a practical on-the-job training session, explaining how to go about the survey, and record what you see, on the first date, 31 March.

If you've done it before, you will be contacted directly.

Further information (and participants' form) from shropscwgs.org.uk/strettons-area-wildlife-group/long-mynd-red-grouse-project/ or Lorna Taylor (email: lorna.taylor@btinternet.com phone 01694 723301)

Red Kite

The Raptor Group is still trying to find all Kite nests, primarily to look for wing-tags on breeding birds. In 2021, 43 nests were monitored, and eight more pairs were found: 27 of these nests produced at least 45 fledged young. A report is on the SOS website. Each tag is unique, and the colours and letters or numbers tell us the bird's age, and its natal site. Reports are wanted, please, of a pair together in spring, or displaying, or one seen several times in the same place, or one going into a wood, any time between March and June. Reports of wing-tagged birds are wanted too, please. All reports will be treated in absolute confidence. Kites are very shy, and they are legally protected. It is an offence to disturb them, but this monitoring is carried out under licence.

Save our Curlews Campaign and Appeal

The previous issue of *The Buzzard* reported on the preliminary results of *Save our Curlews* project work in the Upper Clun, Clee Hill and Strettons Community Wildlife Group areas, to find nests, protect them with electric fences, and radio-tag and track chicks to find out what happens to them. Failure of chicks to fledge is a major cause of the decline, and we need a better understanding of the reasons so we can develop effective conservation measures.



The fences were effective (none of the clutches in them were wholly predated), 23 eggs in eight nests hatched, and all except two of the chicks were radio-tagged.

In the Upper Clun, a brood of three (one tagged and two not) all fledged, but none of the chicks in the other tagged broods did, and there is no evidence that any of the other pairs in the three areas produced fledged young. Therefore 24 - 25 nests in the project areas with known outcome produced only three fledged young. More detail on the project results can be found on the website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

The fate of the tagged chicks has now been analysed. 20 out of the 21 did not fledge, and, on average, these 20 chicks lived for only 5.5 days. Almost all, if

not all, of the 20 tagged chicks that died were predated (none were lost to agricultural activities). There is increasing evidence, reproduced on the SOS website, that the food supply provided by the annual release of large numbers of Pheasants for recreational shooting (726,000 in Shropshire in 2018 alone, only one-third of which are shot) supports unnaturally high levels of predators and scavengers, particularly foxes, which in turn limits the breeding success of Curlews.

Seven other Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs) have been monitoring most of the remaining county Curlew population, and a total of 90 - 104 pairs (including the 24 - 25 in the three project areas) were found in 2021. Apart from the pair that produced three fledged young in the Upper Clun project area, there is no evidence that any of these other pairs produced any fledged young. Last year it is believed that only one of the 100 or so pairs monitored produced any fledged young.

Casual records have been collected of five other pairs. The eggs of four were definitely predated, but one or two chicks produced by the fifth, on farmland near Preston Brockhurst, may have fledged.

The results of this pioneering work are sent to the South of England Curlew Forum, the UK and Ireland Curlew Action Group and the newly-launched Curlew Recovery Partnership, so the work is an integral part of the case to Government for effective Curlew conservation measures.

It is therefore vital that we continue with the project work if we are to have any chance of halting the decline.

We want to see if project work finds the same disastrous results in all parts of the county, so in 2022 we intend to undertake project work in the same three CWG areas, and expand the work into the north-west, around Oswestry and perhaps in the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence.

Further information can be found about the work of the Campaign and Appeal, current plans and reasons for the decline, on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

We have raised most of the money we need to carry out the project in all these areas in 2022, from SOS itself, donations to the Appeal and some grants, but we still need to raise a few thousand pounds more to do all that we would like to.

Members, volunteers in Community Wildlife Groups, and the general public are therefore encouraged to donate to the SOS Appeal, if they feel able to.

A leaflet is enclosed with this *Buzzard* mailing with more information and details of how you can donate.

The 10 Community Wildlife Groups will all continue with their bird surveys to monitor the Curlew population, and several other target species. These surveys locate the Curlew breeding territories for the nest-finders in the project areas, so they are vitally important. A map showing the areas covered by each group, overlain on the Curlew breeding distribution map from the 2008-13 Bird Atlas, can be found on the SOS website.

For more information about each CWG, and the results of their individual bird surveys, see www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk. All SOS members can make a valuable contribution to this work, and are requested to do so.

Each CWG is holding a Bird Group meeting next February or March to plan the survey. The 10 Community Wildlife Group areas, in order of formation, together with the date of their planned meeting and venue are :-

1. Upper Onny (Monday 14 March, Crown Inn Wentnor (check nearer the date – venue to be confirmed)
2. Upper Clun (no meeting – contact Leo Smith)
3. Clee Hill (Monday 21 March, Recreation Rooms, 22A, Clee Hill High Street)
4. Rea Valley (Tuesday 22 March, Minsterley Village Hall)
5. Camlad Valley (Tuesday 15 March, The Horse and Jockey, Chirbury Road, Churchstoke)
6. Strettons Area (Joint meeting with Church Stretton SOS branch: Wednesday 16 March, Methodist Church Hall, Watling St. South, Church Stretton)
7. Three Parishes (Weston Rhyn, St. Martin's and Gobowen - Thursday 17 March. Venue TBA)
8. Tanat to Perry (Oswestry South – Wednesday 23 March, Morda Social Club, Pleasant View SY10 9NS)
9. Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence (Tuesday 22 February, Alberbury Village Hall)
10. Abdon (Wednesday 23 February, Abdon Village Hall)

To volunteer to help with one of the CWG surveys next year, come to the meeting, contact the relevant group via the website, or email Leo Smith (address below).

If, like us, you think that Shropshire will be a much poorer place without Curlews, please support the appeal

For further information, please contact Leo Smith, SOS Curlew Campaign Co-ordinator, email leo@leosmith.org.uk, or ring 01694 720296.

Field Trip Reports

Sunday, 19 September 2021 RSPB Conwy

After 17 months with no field trips due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 8 members arrived at RSPB Conwy hoping for a good day's birding after such a long period. The weather initially was cloudy, with a slight wind and a temperature of 14°C, drizzling part of the way, then the sun came out leaving blue skies with white clouds.

After using the facilities, and finding the route marked out as one-way due to Covid precautions, the group followed the path along the boardwalk amongst the reedbed. Herring Gulls and Black-headed Gulls were overhead, as the group moved towards a viewpoint. From this were seen Teal and Shoveler in lagoons with lower than normal water levels (in preparation for ground maintenance).

The lack of water meant that there were not many birds in this section, so the group moved onto the Tal-y-Fan hide as Blackbird, Goldfinch and Starling flew over. The hide revealed an array of duck and waders: Curlew in flight above, a group of at least 12 Little Egret roosting, and interesting behaviour from Black-tailed Godwit, Little Grebe, and Grey Heron - one wader feeding so voraciously in the deeper water that its legs were not visible. After due consideration it was concluded to be a Spotted Redshank, probably a juvenile going into winter plumage and difficult to identify.

We walked further to the Carneddau hide, where the wearing of masks was strongly advised. A scan of the same islands from a different angle revealed additional species. A group of 4 Cormorants were drying their wings perched on rocks, closer in Greenshank, Snipe and Dunlin and 2 grey-looking waders roosting that after some deduction were determined to be well-disguised Greenshank. At the other end of the island a Bar-tailed Godwit and Knot were amongst plenty of Gulls.

The group divided from here on, the majority to finish the circuit along the estuary where the tide was at its best. The majority of birds seen were more of those already seen, but in greater numbers. Distant views of Great White Egret and Reed Bunting meant they could be added to the list.

The smaller group returned to the feeder stations and found the usual suspects, then Magpie and Buzzard while resting near the Visitors' Centre.

We re-grouped at the picnic area and reflected on this the first field trip since the lockdown. All had enjoyed themselves, noting approximately 43 species along the way.

Sue Brealey

Sunday, 17th October 2021 RSPB Marshside

Driving up to Southport in mizzly rain, we hoped for better weather as the day progressed. Not to be, however, as it rained on and off until mid-afternoon. It was galling to be told, on arriving home, that the sun had shone since mid-morning.

Nevertheless, eight of us, including two new members, Mike and Jenny, mustered on the foreshore overlooking the saltmarsh (tide out as usual) to view skeins of Pinkfooted Geese, several Little Egret, Carrion Crow, Magpie and an overflying Oystercatcher along with the murmurations(?) of Skylark.

From the car park, which is now a Pay & Display, free to RSPB members, we crossed the road to the Sandgrunder hide. Sadly, a Portaloo is still in operation. Here we had a good array of duck: Shoveler, Teal, Mallard, Tufted, Gadwall and Wigeon.

Waders included Grey Heron, Redshank, Lapwing and a huge flock of Black-tailed Godwit looking splendid in flight. Five Little Grebe were a delight to see and we had Coot, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Grey Wagtail. Linnet, Great Tit and Meadow Pipit flew over as we headed back to the cars to drive up to Hesketh Outmarsh.

The rain came down on our arrival, but a flyover of nineteen Whooper Swans cheered us up, along with a Great White Egret, Marsh Harrier, Kestrel and Snipe.

A Robin and Wren serenaded us as we took lunch at the cars before we returned to the car park and headed down to Nell's Hide and added Pintail, Collared Dove, Wood Pigeon and Pied Wagtail to the list.

Back at the centre most of the birds seen in the morning had disappeared, replaced by a Migrant Hawker performing right before us and perching to give close-up details of its markings.

Before heading home we scanned the saltmarsh for possible Merlin or Hen Harrier; no luck. What we did see was a Buzzard drop from his perch on a post and return with unidentified prey.

Despite the weather, we recorded over 40 species and we enjoyed the day.

Estelle Hughes

Coach Trip to WWT Slimbridge

Sunday, 12 December 2021

I am happy to announce that this trip can go ahead and as with all coach trips, is open to anyone interested, not just Society members.

Travel

The trip will be leaving at 8.15am promptly from the bus stop by the Shirehall where parking is available,

The coach will return from Slimbridge after the feeding of the birds at between 4pm & 4.30pm, once all of the group are on board.

Costs

Coach costs

The cost of the coach is £15.00 per person, and will be collected during the journey, by cash if possible. Cheques can be accepted and should be made out to Shropshire Ornithological Society.

Reserve entry

Anyone who is not a WWT member will need to pay to enter the reserve.

If there are more than 12 in the group, the discounted costs apply. I will collect entrance fees on the coach, in cash. Given the awkward amounts, I will ask for cash rounded to 50p shown below, the extra pence collected will be donated to WWT.

	Full price admission	Discounted admission groups >12	Collected on Coach assuming have a group >12
Adults	£15.95	£12.33	£12.50
Concessions	£13.50	£10.43	£10.50
Child 4-16	£9.25	£7.14	£7.50.

It would be a great help if the exact amount can be ready. If the group is less than 12, the discount is not valid. Please visit www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge/ to find these prices.

COVID Safety

As the pandemic continues, this is subject to an ongoing risk assessment.

- Attendees are asked to be fully vaccinated, including a booster by that date.
- Anyone with Covid-19 symptoms should not attend and should cancel their booking.
- Longmynd Travel request the use of the sanitiser on the coach and masks are to be worn at individuals' discretion.
- Please spread out around the coach for the journey.

WWT have Covid-19 precautions including masks and social distancing in place especially in the hides. Please see their website for any updates.

Book your place

Please book as soon as possible, using any of the following methods

Tel: 01939 262450

Mob/Text: 07713 164463

email: fieldtrips@shropshirebirds.co.uk

Please provide your:

name, telephone number (mobile preferably), and whether a member of WWT.

Sue Brealey

Bird Notes

July, August and September 2021

Egyptian Goose Two were present at Park Farm Floods on 13 Jul, Chetwynd Pool on 22 Aug and Polemere on 28 Sep. A single was seen at Dodecote Pool on 24 Sep.

Shelduck Five were noted in flight at Wall Farm on 8 Jul. At Venus Pool, eight were present on 13 Jul, then two on 14 Sep.

Mandarin An excellent count of 40+ came from Meaton Lane on 29 Aug.

Garganey An elusive individual was present at Wood Lane between 27 – 30 Jul and a single was reported at The Mere, Ellesmere on 21 Sep.



Gadwall Ten adults plus 5 ducklings were present at Sambrook Mill Pond on 23 Aug.

Pintail An eclipse male was present at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 21 Sep.

Pochard Two were briefly present at Venus Pool on 22 Aug.

Red Grouse A covey of eight birds took flight out of the heather at the Long Mynd on 3 Sep. Seven were seen at the Stiperstones on 31 Aug.

Grey Partridge No reports were received!

Common Quail Reported calling at several locations during late July. Three were present at Soulton Hall near Wem on 4 / 5 Aug.

Black-necked Grebe One was seen at The Mere, Ellesmere on 25 Aug.

Great White Egret Singles were present at Venus Pool on 9 Aug and 23 Sep, Wall Farm on 25 Aug, The Mere, Ellesmere on 28 Aug and Crose Mere on 30 Aug.

Little Egret Nearly all records came from Venus Pool where up to ten were seen in the early morning roost between 10-12 Sep.



Marsh Harrier One was present at Meaton Lane on 8 Aug and another on the Long Mynd on 24 Aug.

Hen Harrier Three records of a ringtail came from the Long Mynd between 1 - 3 Sep.

Osprey Single birds were seen at Venus Pool on 26 Aug and 3 Sep.

Golden Plover 55 were present on the Long Mynd on 25 Sep and 18 at Chesterton 19 Sep.

Ringed Plover One was present at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 15 Aug and another was reported at Venus Pool on 3 Sep.

Little Ringed Plover Three were seen at Leighton on 1 Jul. All other records related to two long staying juveniles present at Venus Pool between 23 Jul and 24 Aug. Singles were then reported there until 4 Sep.

Whimbrel There were four records on call or nocmig over Venus Pool on 1 Jul, Cantlop Grove on 30 Jul / 30 Aug and Shrewsbury on 23 Aug.

Black-tailed Godwit All reports came from Venus Pool, increasing in numbers from 5 Jul onwards during August when a maximum of nine were seen between 19 – 23 Aug. Single birds were also seen throughout September.

Ruff Two juveniles were briefly present in heavy rain at Venus Pool on 21 Aug. Whixall Floods produced two on 29 Aug and one on 4 Sep.

Sanderling An adult was present for much of the day at Venus Pool on 30 Jul.



Dunlin One was present at Venus Pool between 9 – 12 Aug. Two were recorded in flight at The Mere, Ellesmere on 30 Aug and a single was seen at Wood Lane on 3 Sep.

Common Sandpiper Most records of one or two came from Venus Pool where the first returning bird was seen on 8 Jul. The highlight however came from Priorslee Flash where 12+ were seen on 6 Jul. Five were seen at Priorslee Lake the same day.

Green Sandpiper Venus Pool and Wall Farm dominated the records where up to six were seen at both sites throughout the quarter.

Wood Sandpiper Two dropped in at Venus Pool during heavy rain on 21 Aug. A single was seen at Whixall Floods on 28 / 29 Aug. Single birds were also seen at Northwood between 29 Aug – 2 Sep and a pool near Cockshutt on 14 Sep. (Below)



Redshank Two were present at a pool near Cockshutt on 15 Jul. Singles were also seen at Venus Pool on 15 Jul / 10 Aug and at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 20 Aug.

Greenshank Three flew into Venus Pool on 14 Aug where a single was also seen on 18 Aug. Singles were also seen at Wall Farm on 13 Aug, Pepperhill Pool on 16 Aug, Cockshutt on 22 Aug and Whixall Floods on 29 Aug.

Woodcock Three flew over Black Hill on 2 Jul.

Common Snipe The earliest record came from Wall Farm, Kynnersley where three were present on 3 Aug (16 days earlier than in 2020). There were no large counts but a steady increase to a maximum of 33+ on 28 Sep at Venus Pool.

Sandwich Tern Two were present at Priorslee Lake on 30 Sep.

Common Tern An adult together with two juveniles were seen at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 2 Aug. A single was present at Venus Pool on 19 Sep.

Arctic Tern Just one record which came from Priorslee Lake on 18 Aug.

Little Gull One was present at The Mere, Ellesmere between 24 – 30 Aug and a second bird was also present there on 26 Aug. One, a juvenile, flew through Venus Pool on 14 Sep.

Mediterranean Gull One or two juveniles were noted in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir between 29 Jul – 30 Aug and an adult was present there on 30 Aug. A juvenile bird roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere on 12 Aug.

Common Gull The first report came from Chelmarsh Reservoir where one was in the roost on 29 Jul. Most subsequent records were of one or two at Venus Pool from 6 Aug onwards.

Great Black-backed Gull Single 1cy birds were reported at The Mere, Ellesmere on 16 Aug and at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 20 and 30 Aug.

Herring Gull Mostly single figure reports until late August and just 15+ at Chelmarsh Reservoir was the highest count.

Caspian Gull An adult was present at Venus Pool on 15 Aug. Chelmarsh Reservoir produced a juvenile and possible adult on 16 Aug. An adult was present in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 19 Aug and a 1cy bird was seen at Halesfield, Telford on 9 Sep.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Reported at various locations throughout the quarter. A roost of 2500+ at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 16 Aug was exceptional for the time of year. 3000 were present in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 6 Sep.

Yellow-legged Gull The biggest count was of twelve seen at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 16 Aug and there was a maximum of nine at The Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Sep. An adult was present at Venus Pool on 24 Sep. (Over)



Cuckoo A juvenile was present at Wall Farm, regularly seen on overhead wires between 26 Jul – 13 Aug. Singles were also seen at Pentre, Titterstone Clee and Meaton Lane.

Barn Owl Records of single birds came from thirteen locations.

Little Owl Single birds were reported from just four locations: Weston Lullingfields, Affcot, Wall Farm and Hencote.

Short-eared Owl One was present at Henley Common on 29 Jul.

Nightjar No records received!

Common Swift The highest count was 150+ at Chesterton on 2 Aug, 70 were seen at Ironbridge on 8 Aug and 50+ at Ellesmere on 10 Jul. The final sighting came from Maesbury Marsh on 8 Sep.

Merlin There were four records from the Long Mynd on 2, 6, 15 and 16 Sep.

Hobby Seen at numerous locations throughout the period, mostly single birds but some groups of three, four or six during September.

Willow Tit Just three reports, two of these from Bury Ditches plus a family group at Gorstybank 22 Aug.

Sand Martin The highest count of 41 came from the Severn near Atcham on 24 Jul. The latest report was on 15 Sep.

House Martin Widely reported and Shropshire witnessed pre migration mass gatherings during late summer. 220 were counted in Annscroft on 11 Aug, 280 were on wires near Howle on 23 Aug and 150 on bushes / oilseed rape stubble near Ruyton XI Towns on 30 Aug.

Grasshopper Warbler Singles were reported from four locations during July: Attingham Park, Chelmarsh Scrape, Stapeley Hill and near Newport.

Lesser Whitethroat Two were present at Venus Pool on 5 Sep. Singles were reported from five other locations throughout the period.

Common Whitethroat Noted at numerous sites with the maximum of at least eight at Whixall Moss on 31 Jul. The latest record was on 15 Sep, near Newport.

Reed Warbler Seen at numerous locations with a joint highest count of ten at Fenemere on 12 Jul and at Hales Pools on 22 Aug. The latest record was on 15 Sep at Hales Pools.

Firecrest One was present on Brown Clee on 27 Aug.

Spotted Flycatcher Numerous sightings throughout the county with the last report on 29 Sep. Several reports noted families or groups, with a maximum of eight at Wall Farm during August.



Whinchat Most records came from The Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Titterstone Clew during July. Records from additional sites came from Stapeley Hill and Wall Farm in August and then Venus Pool in September.

Redstart Widely reported throughout the county and many records referred to juveniles being present. A good year it seems! (Page 25)

Wheatear There were no large counts, in fact maxima of only two or three were reported from the traditional sites. Three juveniles were seen at Titterstone Clew on 25 Aug

Tree Sparrow Fifteen were present in Clunbury on 18 Jul. Other reports during the quarter came from Pentre, Oakley Mynd, Craven Arms, Lawley Bridlepath and Upton Cressett.

Tree Pipit Records came from Mary Knoll Valley, Whitcliffe Common, Wenlock Edge, Long Mynd, Meaton Lane and Venus Pool.

Common Crossbill Ten were seen at Cefn Coch on 28 Aug. Other records came from Meaton Lane, Bury Ditches, Bentlawnt and The Wrekin.

Corn Bunting The only double figure count came from Osbaston where ten were present on 4 Aug. Other records came from Tibberton, Roden, Childs Ercall and Chesterton.

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 5th 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.

Photography and compiled by Jim Almond

Indoor Meetings

Shropshire Ornithological Society

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

Please monitor the SOS website ([under "Breaking News"](#)) for confirmation of the arrangements under which each talk will be held, including the use of Zoom.

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

Wednesday, 1 December 2021: Mike Lane – “A Lane in Eastern Europe”.

A look at the diverse wildlife across a number of Eastern European countries.

Wednesday, 5 January 2022: Rick & Elis Simpson – “Wader Quest”.

This talk introduces the organisation through the beauty and diversity of the waders to be found around the world; some of which are quite surprising.

Wednesday, 2 February 2022: Dawn Balmer – “Unravelling the Mysteries of Migration”.

This talk covers the work done by the BTO on the tracking and migration of our birdlife.

Wednesday, 2 March 2022: Megan Morris-Jones – “Cuan Wildlife Rescue: the Work of the Centre Year Round”.

A talk about the work the centre does on rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing injured wildlife from all over the County.

Shropshire Ornithological Society (Church Stretton)

**The Methodist Church Hall, Watling St. South, Church Stretton
SY6 7BG**

Meetings commence at 7:30pm, doors generally open around 7:00pm.

Monday, 24 January 2022.

AGM, followed by “Fungi, the Questions you Never Dared to Ask” by John Hughes (Shropshire Wildlife Trust).

Monday, 28 February 2022.

“Discovering Scotland’s Western Isles” by Nick Martin.

Monday, 28 March 2022.

“Curlews, and Efforts to Save Them” by Leo Smith.

Field Trips

Sunday, 12 December **WWT Slimbridge** (With RSPB Local Group)
Organiser: Sue Brealey by Coach

Full Day – Meet at Shirehall Bus Stop leaves 8:15am sharp

Postcode for SatNav: GL2 7BT

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

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

January - No Field Trip

Sunday, 20 February **Colemere**
Organiser: Sue Brealey by Car

Half Day - Meet at the Car Park at 9am

Postcode for SatNav: SY12 0QW

Follow the signs for Colemere Country Park from A528

See <http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/site/colemere-countryside-heritage-site/>

Sunday – 20th March **RSPB Leighton Moss**
Organiser: Sue Brealey by Car

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 10.30am

Post Code for SatNav: LA5 0SW

Take M56 to M6 North. Turn off at Junction 35 (signposted for Carnforth) then follow A6 north (signposted Milnthorpe) and then follow the brown tourist signs to direct you to the reserve off the A6.

See: www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/leighton-moss/

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For updates, please check
Breaking News on our website
<http://www.shropshirebirds.com>

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

buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk

Copy deadline for the Spring 2022 issue is: 1 February 2022

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.