



The Buzzard
Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
Quarterly Magazine



No 267

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Chair’s Report: 2021-22

This is an unusual AGM in that it has only been about six months since the last one, in September 2021, which was the postponed version of that scheduled for Spring 2021 but which was delayed due to COVID-19 precautions. Because of the pressure on time at this meeting, I shall endeavour to keep this report as short as possible, largely by neglecting to mention by name our management committee members and volunteers who are responsible for the achievements and activities of the Society. I hope they will forgive me for this.

The Society has been far from inactive since our last AGM and has recovered to a large degree from the adverse impacts of the pandemic that so disrupted the two previous years, with a few exceptions. Membership now stands at 892, up by just over 5% since September. Of these, 99% are individual or joint members but, regrettably, junior members number only three. Effective next year, the fee for junior members will be eliminated so any of you who have aspiring young birders among your extended families or acquaintances are

encouraged to draw this to their attention. We have plans for instituting activities for young people, but it is hard to get this off the ground without a cohort of youngsters to work with.

Organised member activities have picked up again, with six SOS fieldtrips over the period and six indoor meetings, two of the latter being conducted remotely via Zoom. Unfortunately, attendance at face-to-face indoor meetings here in Bayston Hill has been poor although it is unclear whether this represents continuing concern regarding Covid infection or whether members have just lost the habit of going out to meetings during the lockdown. We would encourage all of you to come to meetings to interact with those who share your interest in birds. The schedule of events is detailed in the *Programme 2022* leaflet you have received and is also available on our website shropshirebirds.com.

There have been five additional indoor meetings arranged by the Church Stretton branch, all “live”, and attendance has, in general, been better than here.

Progress on maintaining the up-to-date status of the *Shropshire Bird Report* continues and species accounts for the 2021 edition are under preparation currently. I hope you enjoyed the special 1955 edition that you received recently and were as fascinated as I was by the changes in the fortunes of species listed over nearly 70 years.

The now full-colour *Buzzard* has appeared consistently over the period with no more cancellations due to virus vagaries. I would remind members that those who wish to receive their copy electronically can do so by filling in a simple form on the SOS website. You will receive it earlier than the snail-mail recipients and will be reducing mailing costs and volunteer hours for the Society, as well as minimising our consumption of resources.

Work has continued to maintain Venus Pool as one of the prime birding sites in the West Midlands and it continues to yield a steady stream of “the usual suspects” and more exotic avifauna, such as the Green-winged Teal in residence currently.

Further work of the Conservation Subcommittee includes continuation of the “Save Our Curlews” project, as well as efforts to conserve species identified on the Shropshire Red and Amber Lists of Birds of Conservation Concern.

A further development in this general area is progress on the task of rehabilitating Ward’s Coppice, a small and rather neglected reserve in Church Stretton, which was gifted to the Society some years ago. We are currently in negotiations with the National Trust Cardingmill Valley to establish a joint

maintenance arrangement which will contribute to their Stepping-Stones project within the South Shropshire AONB.

In conclusion, while I have not mentioned by name those for whom we should be thankful, let me just list some of the areas in which their contributions have been invaluable:

- The board of the SOS and its equivalent for the Church Stretton branch for just being there, making decisions and administering stuff!
- All those involved in the writing, compilation, packing, and distribution of the Society's publications
- Planners and organisers of the indoor meetings and those who set up the room and provide the refreshments
- Planners and organisers of the field trip programme and trip leaders
- The Conservation Subcommittee and all others who are involved in the management and maintenance of Venus Pool, including its wardens
- All birders who have contributed to bird recording activities in Shropshire, including both SOS-sponsored activities and those run by like-minded organisations with whom we share our members
- To all our members who contribute in meaningful ways to the running of the SOS and to the attainment of its objectives

John Arnfield,

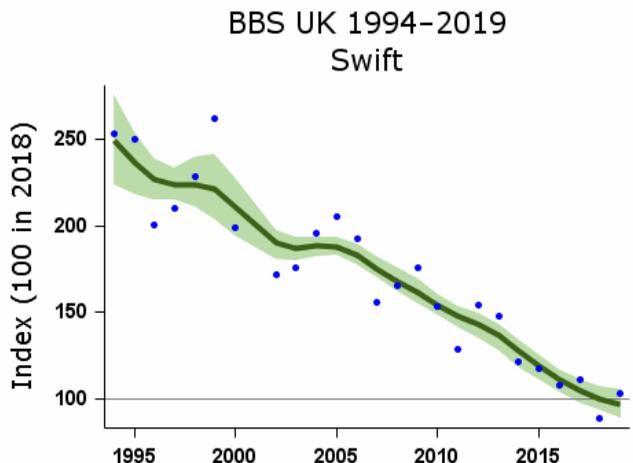
Chair, Shropshire Ornithological Society

(Delivered at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on 6 April 2022)

Your Swift Records are Needed!

At the start of this year it was announced that swifts, along with many other species, have become red listed in the latest Birds of Conservation Concern report. This is the highest level of concern and indicates that there has been more than a 50% decline in the breeding population.

The graph (right) from the BTO Breeding Bird Survey illustrates just



how badly swifts are doing.

Recognising that this decline needed action SOS decided in August 2020 to designate swifts as **red listed** in the county. Carol Wood has recently taken on the role of swift champion and I am working with her to collect and collate records of swifts across the county. But we need YOUR help.

For several years I have sent swift nest site records to Shropshire Council as they are needed for their planning system. If there is no record of where swifts are nesting what justification do they have to ask for mitigation measures in planning applications to renovate buildings or for swift bricks to be included in new build? They do not take their information from BTO nor do they take it from the RSPB supported SwiftMapper system – they need me to send them the information. They are now asking for more information as swifts, house martins and other species are being taken into consideration as the county plans for the future. Many other local authorities across the country are taking action for declining building dependent species and it's good to see Shropshire is too.

If you want to be part of helping to reverse the decline in the number of swifts in the county then please do help with this push to get more records. Although there are several swift records for Shropshire entered to Birdtrack each year these often appear to be for solitary birds or high flying parties – neither of which are evidence of nesting. We need exact details of the buildings that nests are on or where low flying screaming parties are going very close to – so if you are using Birdtrack you need to add this information using the Optional fields. A comment to give the exact address including postcode as well as exactly what you saw is needed e.g. “nest on front under eaves” or “screaming party investigating west facing gable”.

Carol has been out and about talking to many of the Community Wildlife Groups and Wildlife Trust branches and as many of their members are not Birdtrack users we are also collecting information by email or spreadsheet where we need, like most recording systems, to simply know the 4Ws.

Who – the name of person who saw the nest or low flying screaming party

When – the date in format dd/mm/yyyy

Where – the full postal address where the nest is (or where the screaming party was investigating) including postcode. You can use <https://www.royalmail.com/find-a-postcode> to find the postcode. <https://gridreferencefinder.com> can then be used to determine 10 digit grid reference of the address.

(Enter the postcode and then move the pointer to the correct property and right click to get the GR to appear)

What – was seen e.g. “swift entered eaves by left hand front drainpipe” or “2 nests in gaps on west facing gable” or “pair in box on rear of property” or “droppings under nest site”

So even if you are using Birdtrack it would help both Carol and me if you could also send the above information directly to us.

You may also be using SwiftMapper but there is just no way to simply retrieve records from this system – it is a long and slow manual job for me. So, again, *please* send me the records directly. A spreadsheet at the end of the season with the above fields is best but otherwise an email of your sighting with full information of the 4 Ws will make sure that your record gets to the council. In case you are wondering, there are no data protection issues recording an address - there is no personal information attached to it. We cannot identify anyone from the information.

Over the years I have tried hard to persuade you to send me your swift nest site records but there has unfortunately been little response

PLEASE do make 2022 the year that we get a far bigger picture of where swifts are nesting across the county.

Swifts are in the towns and villages where we live – you do not need to go anywhere special to find them – just look at what’s about when you’re out walking, shopping. Look up and listen – that’s all that’s needed. If we don’t know where they are then simply neither SOS nor the local council can progress with planned projects to protect these birds and they will continue to decline.

Contact details

Peta Sams - shropshireswifts@gmail.com

Carol Wood – carolwood772@outlook.com

Join us on Facebook -

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

Save our Curlews Campaign 2022

SOS is again working with the Upper Clun, Clee Hill and Strettons area Community Wildlife Groups, to find Curlew nests in each of the three areas, put an electric fence round them to prevent predation and trampling, then, when the chicks hatch, fit them with a radio tag and track them, to see how they use the landscape, and what happens to them.

The first nest was found near Wheathill on 29 April, and, at the time of writing (14 May), two nests have been found and fenced in each of the three areas.

Hopefully more will be found. There seem to be fewer Curlews around this year than last year, though the dry weather has delayed the grass growing, so egg-laying is probably later than usual.

Thanks a lot to the SOS members who have contributed to the Appeal, which has made this ground-breaking work possible. Your donations are much appreciated. If you haven't contributed yet, but would like to do so, the Appeal leaflet and donations form can be found on the SOS website

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

If you have seen or heard a Curlew anywhere in Shropshire, please let me know (leo@leosmith.org.uk)

Leo Smith

Honey-buzzard – Surveyors Needed, Please

We organised a Honey-buzzard survey in Shropshire last year, as part of a national effort by the Rare Breeding Bird Panel. Potentially suitable woods were identified and, in total, 17 individuals surveyed 20 of them, but only about half of the potentially suitable woods were checked.

We therefore plan to survey the remainder in 2022. Most people who helped in 2021 have agreed to participate again, but we need more volunteers, please.

Honey-buzzards have bred in most counties between Devon and the Scottish Highland region, so they might breed anywhere with areas of large woodland.

Surveyors will be encouraged to find watch-points that give clear views over large areas of woodland. Some larger woods will require several watch-points

to ensure full coverage. A typical watch should be of three-four hours' duration in good weather during the period 1 July to 31 August. Two or preferably three visits at least a week apart over this period are necessary. It therefore requires patience!!! Honey-Buzzard is a Schedule 1 species, and prone to disturbance and egg-collecting, so attempts to find nests are discouraged, and secrecy is essential.

Agreement will be reached with volunteers about which woodland to survey, and where from, to maximise effective coverage.

Leo Smith

Breeding Red Kites

The Raptor Group is still trying to find all Kite nests, primarily to look for wing-tags on breeding birds. Each wing-tag is unique, and the colours and letters or numbers tell us the bird's age, and its natal site.

In 2021, 44 nests and 6 additional pairs were found; 32 were successful, producing 50 fledged young, the highest yet. Since the first successful breeding in 2006, over 430 young are known to have flown from Shropshire nests, and 207 of these young have been wing-tagged.

Reports are wanted, please, of a pair together in spring or early summer, or displaying, or one seen several times in the same place, or one going into a wood, any time between March and July. Reports of wing-tagged birds are wanted at any time 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.

Further information can be found on the SOS website

www.shropshirebirds.com

Please contact Leo Smith leo@leosmith.org.uk 01694 720296.

Leo Smith

Analysis of Kestrel Regurgitated Pellets

Within the UK Kestrel is amber-listed within the Birds of Conservation Concern and red-listed in Shropshire.

Study across Shropshire

In areas where Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) are known to nest there is a difference in productivity within Shropshire e.g. birds nesting around Market Drayton are not as successful at raising young as pairs around Titterstone.

Reasons for this may be anything from inexperienced birds, pairs nesting in sub-optimal habitat, land use and management, weather, and the [direct] availability and abundance of prey species.

The investigation of dietary intake in raptors can be easily studied by the analysis of regurgitated pellets. Dissection of these pellets, followed by the identification and count of convenient skeletal components within, can yield several assessments on the contribution of various prey species to diet.

It is proposed to collect as many pellets as possible from sites of Kestrel breeding across Shropshire, but especially in areas around Market Drayton and Titterstone. Any collected pellets will then be examined in detail and findings compared against known productivity from those pairs generating the pellets; this to determine any influence that diet may have in explaining productivity differences within Shropshire.

Collection of pellets.

The study will examine any pellets collected from wherever in Shropshire.

- *Please avoid (close) visiting of nest sites until the end of May (to reduce disturbance), and when chicks are large - close to fledging or recently fledged. If unsure don't undertake a close visit and leave all pellet collection until the end of July.*
- *If collected pellets are dry they can be placed in plastic bags, if 'wet' they should be air-dried or stored in paper (old envelope) to enable them to dry. (The presence of any moisture may cause pellets to rot and smell!)*
- *Pellets should be annotated with the site and date of collection.*
- *If multiple visits are made to the same nest site any collected pellets should be treated as separate sample(s) i.e. do not mix pellets from the same site collected at different times.*
- *Put collected pellets in a cool dry place for storage.*
- *Email: shropshirekestrels@gmail.com to inform them that you hold pellets for this study. Collection and/or delivery will then be arranged.*
- *Reports of findings will be published in due course.*
- *All contributions to the study will be acknowledged.*

Further information about the project can be found at:

<http://www.shropshirebirds.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Shropshire-Kestrel-Project.pdf>

Bob Harris, Rachel Bromley and Gerry Thomas

Shropshire Barn Owl Group Annual Report 2021

Barn Owl Report 2021 proved to be a milestone year. We expected it to be a productive breeding season after last year's downturn and it was in fact the

most productive breeding season in our twenty years of conservation work, with 233 young Barn Owls produced in nestboxes and natural sites, surpassing the previous record of 225 in 2017. In addition, a second milestone was achieved, with over 2000 chicks now produced in our nestboxes since 2002.

When we started out in 2002 the Barn Owl population in Shropshire had been in decline for over half a century and we estimated it to be around 140 breeding pairs. Now, it is in the region of 220 pairs. Our aim is to ensure that the population remains stable and to continue to establish new breeding pairs each year.

The report is available on our website shropshirebarnowlgroup.org.uk and Facebook site.

Glenn Bishton

The rookeries of Tetrad SJ42D and Their Implications for Shropshire

The place

This is the known history of the six rookeries documented in SJ42D, a Shropshire tetrad (2km x 2km square) situated 8km due south of Ellesmere with the village of Bagley in its NW corner and with the central grid reference SJ410270. The tetrad is not presented here as representative of what is happening to rookeries throughout the county – I am working on that, the 948 sites ever reported in all the 870 tetrads. However, this account does raise some of the issues faced in trying to unravel the county story and tease out the underlying trends.

This text presents parts of the rationale for the forthcoming analyses of the results from the review of all the rookeries in the county and I will refer to it when the final analyses are published.

This project

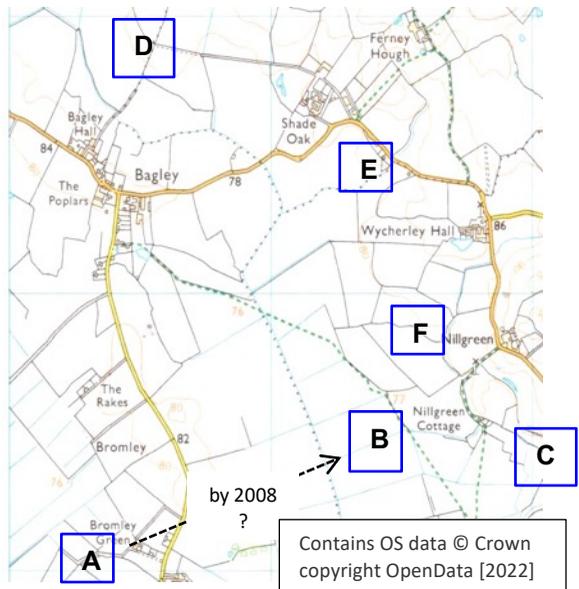
I am attempting to distil the whole Shropshire rookery story principally from three county-wide surveys; (a) that of the BTO/SOS in 1975 (into 76), (b) by me in 2008 and (c) me again in 2019/21, the latter spanning three seasons thanks to COVID-19. My surveys have only been possible thanks to the help of scores of volunteers around the county and I once more thank them all. There are a few other sources adding details for some patches of the county – they sometimes clarify and occasionally confuse matters.

In SJ42D: The first problem

In SJ42D the story starts in the 1975 survey when site A was submitted as the only site in the tetrad, and it raises the first issue. The 1975 work logged close to 460 county sites overall (Wright 1976) and since then five additional sites have been reported in SJ42 at various times; so to what extent can I rely upon the first survey having reported every site extant at that time? In 1975 were there then five, or even more sites, the others simply missed or otherwise not recorded? However we do know the site then held 34 nests, which is useful.

Map of six rookery sites in tetrad SJ42D. See Table

Data from an 'extra' survey two decades on are the results of the 1996 BTO/SOS random sample re-survey of just 28 county tetrads (Dawes 1996), SJ42D being one of them. This resurvey, undertaken in SJ42D by Mike Wallace, turned up four rookeries - the previous A still alive, along with B, C and D (see map). This highlights the same question – were the latter three there all the time, in 1975? If the earlier surveyor worked only from the road north to Bagley then B, C and D may simply have been missed.



The second problem – moving sites

The next time point is the survey of 2008, as in 1975 attempting to gather information from all possible sites, never sure of how many were missed. As the table shows, in 2008 four sites were active; there would have been a further one but at site C the birds had been shot out.

There is the complication that by 2008 site A was dead; so was it those birds who, sometime after 1996 and before 2008, 'shifted' position the 700m east to join the new site B? We will never know but it is possible. At this point I introduce one of the fundamental assumptions I make in all the rookery work;

by convention, that if a site is known to have died and another appeared *within* 1,000m (1km), then it is a position 'shift' of the same site. The apparent and presumed shifting of position occurs more than seventy times.

Table

The known histories of six rookeries in Shropshire tetrad SJ42D at four stages. It sets out the basis for an analogous analysis of the entire county record of all known sites.

ID	Site Name	Nests each year			
		1975/76	1996	2008	2019/21
A	<i>Bagley Hall</i>	34	12	X	X
B	<i>Pennyrush</i>	nr	4	16	X
C	<i>Old Canal, Bagley</i>	nr	58	0*	X
D	<i>Shade Oak W, Bagley</i>	nr	13	4	X
E	<i>Shade Oak E, Bagley</i>	nr	nr	3	X
F	<i>NilGreen</i>	nr	nr	22	X
Totals nests		34	87	45	0
Known & active sites		1	4	4	0

KEY

X = dead / extinct

nr = not recorded / overlooked; may have been present

** shot out by the farmer*

A (live in '96, X in 2008) may have 'shifted' ca.500m N of E to become **B** by 2008

Survey variously by Allan Dawes (2008), Peter Fletcher (2021), Geoff Holmes (2008) & Mike Wallace (1996).

Additional to the presumed shifting of sites is the fact that at a handful of sites there is close to proof that sites have changed location by 1km or so. These longer distance presumed changes of location are termed, by convention, 'moves' as opposed to 'shifts' and there are perhaps a score of them.

Potential problem: Grid References

I know certainly from my home rookery in Aston on Clun that the OS Grid Reference given in 1975 is 150m east of the position that local information confirms it has been constantly. Such small differences in grid references for what are probably the same locations are quite common among the records. I suspect one reason is that in 1975 many recorders were still using the old 1:50,000 (one inch to the mile) scale OS maps, from which inaccuracies of six figure grid references can easily occur. Modern and more detailed 1:25,000 OS *Explorer* maps have been available since the 1980s. So another convention I have adopted is that apparent shifts of 200m or less are regarded as the positions of the same site and that no shift is involved. The shift is only presumed when coupled with the certain knowledge that the Donor site is dead.

Also with shifts

In the case of sites which have apparently shifted then the new site is defined as the 'Recipient' and the source site as the 'Donor'. That was one of the reasons for the intensive and targeted survey of 2021, to revisit and health check sites which might be dead, or still alive, to confirm apparent deaths and confirm apparent shifts. For example by 2020 around 50 of the original 1975 sites had not had a health check since that date and they were leaving a very untidy element of the entire study; how were they faring after almost half a century?

References

Wright, C. (1976) Rookeries in Shropshire, 1975/76. *Shropshire Bird Report*. 20:5-8.

Dawes, A.P. (1996) Rookeries in Shropshire 1996. *Shropshire Bird Report*. 36:4-5.

John Tucker

The Rookeries at Chetwynd

Charles Gawen lived at Chetwynd Park, close to the Shropshire/Staffordshire border, in the late 19th century. He was interested in birds, his *Journal of Field Ornithology, Volume 2, 1888-1891* was discovered in 2017 and published for the first time in 2018 with financial assistance from the SOS. Gawen listed four rookeries, three of them in and around the Chetwynd Park estate while the fourth was at Batchacre Hall in Staffordshire and it held about 110 nests in 1888 and 1889.

Within Shropshire Gawen named the Home rookery (SJ737216) and it held between 36 and 40 nests between 1888 and 1891. Elsewhere on the estate a rookery at Coppice Bank (SJ743207) held between 50 and 70 nests between 1888 and 1890. The third site, which he called The Park (SJ737213), situated perhaps 300m south of his Home site, comprised ca. 200 nests in 1888, 315 in 1889, 327 in 1890 and a whopping 356 in 1891 – Charles was evidently counting them carefully. The three Chetwynd sites are now extinct and, other than Forrest referring to the colony of around 100 nests on the riverside in Shrewsbury, Gawen's are the only known county nest-counts from the nineteenth century.

The Park site is particularly significant in the history of Shropshire's rookeries; it is the only site known to have exceeded a count of 200. The only sites ever to have come anywhere near 356 have been that at Kynnersley with 195 nests (counted by Martin Grant (MG)) in 2008 and that at Downton Hall (north of Ludlow) with 175+ in 1975 or 1976. Sadly Gawen's massive site at The Park was down to 93 nests at the time of the 1975/76 survey, 85 by 2008, 45 in 2012 and it was extinct by the 2021 survey (the last three records by MG).

The extent to which the story of Gawen's sites reflects the population trend in Shropshire as a whole will hopefully be revealed by data currently being assembled from all 1,000 or so known county sites, based on the three county surveys of 1975/76, 2008 and 2019-21.

My thanks to Martin Grant for defining the positions of the four sites and otherwise generous help with the rookeries project.

John Tucker

A River Warbler, *Locustella fluviatilis*, Wintering Record

I have a complete set of BWP, inherited from the late Colin Wright. I no longer have need of them, they need a good home and if you would like to take them please get in touch. To elaborate ...

"When I was in Africa" – I was in Zambia 1970-1976, I had a ringing study site within 100m of our house; a patch of low wild scrub much favoured by Palearctic migrants. During the wet season, the northern winter, besides the frequent captures of for example Thrush Nightingales, Whitethroats, Garden, Marsh, Sedge, Willow and Great Reed Warblers, in December 1975 I caught and ringed two River Warblers, the only two I handled

during three years working the site. Both River Warblers were in active wing moult and were assumed to be on their passage to unknown wintering quarters further south.

On 23 February following I re-trapped the first River Warbler, still moulting, and it was the first presumed over-wintering River Warbler to be recorded in Africa. I published the record in 1978 (Bull. Brit. Orn. Club 98(1):2-4) and it features in Birds of the Western Palearctic, 'BWP' (6:80) – my sole contribution to that massive nine-volume work.

Photographic Hide: Free to a good home. john.tucker@lanius.org.uk

John Tucker

Field Trip Reports

Sunday, 20 March 2022, RSPB Leighton Moss

On a glorious spring day and having to put up with road works & lane closures for what looked like no purpose (!), seven members met at the car park.

The group proceeded to the Causeway to find our first highlight of the day, a close and prolonged view of a Marsh Tit, followed by at least 2 Bittern booming. Other notable species seen were Peregrine Falcon, Cetti's Warbler, and the first of many sightings of Marsh Harrier, together with lots of common wetland and woodland species.

The Group then moved on to the coastal trail for lunch and the huge numbers of waders mainly Black-tailed Godwits, Redshank, Dunlin, Oystercatcher and Avocet.

Next to the central part of the reserve where we found Marsh Harriers performing, almost constantly, for everyone. Other highlights were Great White Egret, Pintail, and Garganey, a nice male that slept all the time. All told over 60 species were seen by the Group.

Ian Bagglely

(NB. Thank you to Ian for substituting me in leading this field trip due to health issues. **Sue Brealey**)

Sunday, 3 April 2022, Ynys-hir

Nine members of SOS met at 10am in at RSPB Ynys-hir on a beautiful sunny, if slightly nippy, April morning.

Our arrival at the reserve was heralded enthusiastically by a calling Nuthatch, and our list got off to a good start even before we left the car park with

Blackbird, Blackcap, and Chiffchaff singing in the trees, Coal Tit, Great Tit, Goldfinch, Nuthatch and Chaffinch on the feeders, and Moorhen, Teal and Kingfisher on the pool below the picnic area. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were drumming, and we added Dunnock, Pheasant, Bluetit, Siskin, Red Kite and Carrion Crow to the list.

Our RSPB Visitor Engagement Officer, Roger, gave us a brief talk about the current situation on the reserve: a nesting pair of Red Kite and also breeding Lapwing, and reports of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers.

As we moved on into the reserve, we saw a large number of Oystercatchers a fair distance way on the estuary, with Mallard, Canada Geese and Shelduck also in view. Along the trees and hedges lining the path down to the railway bridge we spotted a Robin, and while focussing in on a very close Song Thrush, also became aware of a soaring Sparrowhawk - the bright sunlight making the wings and tail appear almost translucent against the clear blue sky. In the trees, an elusive Goldcrest and Treecreeper were heard and fleetingly seen.

Further on down the path we were treated to a closer view of a male Blackcap. From the Marian Mawr hide, facing into a cool breeze, we saw Little Egret, Coot, a few Redshank and a brief view of a couple of flying Snipe. A black-tailed Godwit was identified, along with Teal, Wigeon and Gadwall on the water. A Reed Bunting appeared briefly on the willows beside the water. Outside the hide, in the warmer sunshine and sheltered from the breeze, views down to the estuary added Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull and Curlew to the list. Two Pied Wagtails were seen on a large dead branch, a Meadow Pipit on the willows, and a Cormorant was spotted flying over the water. Walking on to the Saltings Hide, we spotted a fidgety Wren and a pair of Reed Buntings showed themselves beautifully on the bank. From the Saltings Hide, we were treated to further views of Teal, Redshank, Canada Geese, and Meadow Pipit. A pair of Stonechat showed themselves well on a fence, and six to eight Curlew were seen on the grass in the distance. A pair of Great Blackbacked Gulls were displaying, and a Raven flew over, adding itself to the list.

Walking from the Saltings Hide back to the Visitor Centre for lunch, the distinct song of a Willow Warbler was heard. The path cutting through slate rock was edged with Navelwort and wild Primroses. Lunch was taken at the picnic area outside the visitor centre, where a Cetti's Warbler was heard and a Buzzard flew overhead.

The afternoon route took us through the woodland, where we spotted Treecreeper, a female Stonechat and a Wheatear standing out well on the grassy area. Further on was a Heron, and a Cormorant with visible breeding patch, and a Cetti's Warbler once again called for attention.

From the Ynys Feurig Hide there were further views of Canada Geese, Heron, and a Great White Egret added itself to the list. From here we also had our first view of Lapwing – just the one.

After leaving this hide, following the boardwalk, we saw a Rook before ascending the woodland path lined with Wild Strawberries, Violets, Wood Anemone and Lesser Stitchwort to the Ynys Hir Hide. Despite a wonderful view of the estuary, no further species were seen from here, and we returned to the Visitor Centre. A total count of 52 species seen and/or heard.

Mim and Jock

Bird Report

January, February, March 2022

Brent Goose A first winter Dark-bellied bird was present at Wood Lane on 26 Feb.

Pink-footed Goose The year opened well when a flock of an estimated 600 were seen near Shavington Estate on 2 Jan. Other large counts came from Calverhall (320) on 2 Feb and Ossmere (250) on 27 Jan. Twenty-seven were in a field near Melverley on 4 Jan. Single figure counts came from eight other locations.

Whooper Swan The flooded fields in the Melverley area produced a group of 21, concentrated in one area on 9 Jan. 12 were seen near the Crosslanes on 23 Jan. The final records of up to three came from Holly Bank during March (below)



Egyptian Goose Records were dominated by Venus Pool where one or two were regularly seen throughout the quarter.

Shelduck There were two excellent counts. 28 at Molverley Floods on 4 Jan and 22 at Wood Lane on 9 Mar.

Ruddy Shelduck One was seen at Park Farm Floods on 6 Mar, then again on 14 Mar.

Shoveler Present at various locations throughout the quarter with the highest counts coming from Chetwynd Pool where a maximum of 170 were present on 9 Jan.

Gadwall Most records came from Venus Pool with numbers increasing during the first couple of weeks of January with a maximum count of 48 on 11th.

Wigeon Good numbers at the favoured sites. Highest counts were: Molverley Floods (400) on 2 Jan, Park Farm Floods (250) on 10 Feb, Shavington (210) on 30 Jan, and Venus Pool (150) on 27 Feb.

Pintail There were some high counts on the flood plain of the Severn with an estimated 400 at Molverley Floods on 2 Jan. Many remained in the area and 336 were seen on the Alberbury side of the floods on 20 Feb. Twelve were present at two smaller sites: Whixall Floods on 12 Feb and Venus Pool on 27 Feb.

Common Teal The highest counts at key sites were: Wall Farm (350+) on 25 Jan, Hales Pools (155) on 3 Feb and Venus Pool (91) on 15 Jan.

Green-winged Teal One was found at Venus Pool on 5 Feb and remained the following day. It then disappeared only to reappear again on 24 Mar and was still there at the end of the quarter. The same (or another bird) was seen at Wall Farm between 21– 25 Feb.

Pochard Eleven arrived at Venus Pool on 1 Feb where they remained until 12 Mar, after which numbers dwindled.

Scaup Just one record, a female near Howle on 26 Jan.

Goldeneye Counts of up to ten were reported throughout the quarter from the North Shropshire meres. Two were present at Priorslee Lake on 17 Jan.

Red Grouse There were just three records from the Stiperstones of up to three birds and a single report of one from the Long Mynd.

Grey Partridge Up to four were present at Wall Farm plus pairs seen at Cosford and Hencott Estate.

Black-necked Grebe Three were present at The Mere, Ellesmere on 21 Mar.

Cattle Egret One was reported at Venus Pool on 20 Mar via the Bird News services.

Great White Egret One was seen regularly at Venus Pool from 1 Jan – 28 Feb. There were only three records of this bird during March. Other reports came from Aston Locks, Cole Mere and Ossmere (below).



Little Egret Widely reported throughout the quarter with a count of 11 at Holly Bank on 6 Mar.

Osprey One flew over Kempton on 31 Mar.

Marsh Harrier A juvenile was seen intermittently at Whixall Moss throughout the quarter.

Hen Harrier One was seen in the Whixall Moss area on four occasions between 30 Jan and 10 Mar. Other reports came from Polemere on 7 Mar and Eaton under Heywood on 31 Mar.

Golden Plover Some large flocks were present during the period, notably 400 at Lyth Hill on 4 Jan, 200+ at Osbaston on 28 Jan and 200+ at the Long Mynd on 7 Feb.

Ringed Plover Four were seen at Park Farm Floods on 21 Mar.

Little Ringed Plover Most records came from Whixall Floods where one was seen on 14 Mar. More soon followed there with four present on 22 Mar. Other reports came from Crose Mere, Buildwas and Polemere.

Ruff Two records, the first came from Whixall Floods (2) on 20 Mar and then Venus Pool (1) on 25 Mar (below).



Dunlin Singles were seen at Venus Pool on 5 Jan and 16 Feb, Wood Lane on 31 Jan and Whixall Floods on 22 Mar. Up to two were seen at Park Farm Floods during March.

Jack Snipe Four were present at Cole Mere on 1 Jan and then a single on 13 Mar. Singles were also seen at Long Mynd, Crosslanes, Morton, Wood Lane and Wall Farm.

Common Snipe Numbers were down relative to the corresponding quarter in 2021. The two highest counts were 34 at Polemere on 11 Jan and 32 at Whixall Floods on 22 Mar.

Common Sandpiper One was present at Crose Mere on 26 Mar.

Green Sandpiper Most sightings came from Wood Lane where one or two were present between 8 Jan – 9 Mar. Other records came from Berrington Barns, Cound, Crosslanes, Venus Pool, Tittenley Pool and Chelmarsh.

Common Redshank A single was present at Park Farm Floods on 23 Mar.

Kittiwake One was reported over the River Severn at Leighton on 25 Feb.

Black-headed Gull Reported throughout the county with the most impressive counts coming from The Mere, Ellesmere, peaking at an estimated 10,000 on 9 Mar and 3,500 were at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 1 Feb.

Mediterranean Gull There were five records of up to four birds from the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere between 6 Feb – 13 Mar. A single was also seen at Wood Lane on 1 Jan.

Great Black-backed Gull Up to seven were present at Halesfield on 7 Jan and two at The Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Feb. Other records came from Priorslee Lake, Wood Lane and a site near Shifnal (below).



Common Gull Most records came from the north of the county. The highest count was 270 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Feb.

Iceland Gull (Kumlien's – kumlieni) A first winter bird was present in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 31 Jan, 1 Feb and 12 Mar. It was a fairly subtle one, different only from nominate Iceland in features such as slightly darker outer primaries.

Herring Gull The roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir produced 350 on 18 Jan. 300 were present at The Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Feb.

Caspian Gull Several unaged birds were reported during January via the Bird News services at: Wood Lane, Priorslee lake, Trench Pool and Chelmarsh Reservoir. A 3cy bird was seen near Shifnal on 4 Mar.

Yellow-legged Gull Reported between 6 Jan - 13 Mar at various locations: Wood Lane, Halesfield, Holmer Lake, Priorslee Lake, Chelmarsh Reservoir, The Mere Ellesmere, Venus Pool and Cotwall.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Reported widely throughout the period. The highest counts came from roosts at The Mere, Ellesmere (2000) on 10 Mar and Chelmarsh Reservoir (1200) on 18 Jan.

Barn Owl Records were down relative to 2021 with 25 records received from 15 locations.

Little Owl Reported from three locations: Isombridge Lane, Cantlopgrove and Wall Farm.

Short-eared Owl The first records came from Stiperstones, where up to two were seen between 12 Jan - 25 Feb. Whixall Moss then produced up to two most evenings between 26 Feb - 14 Mar. A further report came from Harlescott on 10 Mar (below)



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker The first record, a single, came from Wood Lane on 22 Jan. Wyre Forest produced one or two birds between 22 Jan and 27 Feb. Attingham Park then provided some later records between 17 Mar – 30 Mar.

Merlin There were three records of singles at Whixall Moss: 1 Jan, 26 Feb and 14 Mar. Other reports came from Meaton Lane, Middleton Scriven and The Long Mynd.

Ring-necked Parakeet One was seen in Belle Vue, Shrewsbury on 6 Jan.

Pied Crow This unlikely bird was seen between 6 – 8 Jan at three locations in Telford.

Willow Tit Records of up to three birds came from eight locations.

Sand Martin Three flew though Venus Pool on 12 Mar. Numbers then increased with 23 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 16 Mar and 40 at Crose Mere on 21 Mar.

Swallow The first report was of two at Hopesay on 29 Mar, followed by a single over Market Drayton on 31 Mar.

Cetti's Warbler Up to two were reported at Venus Pool throughout the quarter and a long-standing single was seen or heard most days at Whixall Floods. Other reports came from Chelmarsh Scrape, Aston Locks, Hale's Pools West and Priorslee Lake (below).



Willow Warbler The first returning bird reported was at Ruyton-XI-Towns on 27 Mar.

Firecrest One was seen at Brown Clee on 18 Mar. Another report came from Stow Wood on 24 Mar.

Fieldfare Plentiful throughout the period, there were many three figure counts. The largest groups were 400 at Uppington on 8 Mar and 350 at Cantlopgrove on 21 Jan.

Redwing Numerous reports from around the County. There were several large counts topped by 1270 at Cantlopgrove on 21 Jan.

Black Redstart Up to two were present at Titterstone Clee between 22 – 25 Mar. Another was seen at Brown Clee Burf on 25 Mar.

Wheatear The first records came from Brown Clee, Titterstone Clee and Whitcott Keyset, all on 18 Mar.

Tree Sparrow Most records came from the south of the county throughout the period with up to 65 seen near Clunbury on 7 Mar. Fourteen were seen at Pentre on 5 Mar.

Water Pipit A single was found on Whixall Floods on 22 Jan. It was then seen only spasmodically until 23 Mar when it remained more settled, seen daily on the flood bund until the end of the month (below).



Brambling A very good year for them with reports from many locations throughout the quarter. 200+ were seen near Upton Magna on 7 Jan and the same number at Newport railway footpath on 11 Jan.

Hawfinch Up to three were seen at Whitcliffe between 16 Jan – 9 Mar. Singles were seen at Horderley Wood on 8 Feb and during Mar. Other singles were seen at Woolston, and Brown Clew.

Common Crossbill The highest count of thirty came from Bedstone Hill on 13 Mar. Other double figure counts were from Cefn Coch (25 on 15 Jan), Buttonoak (22 on 20 Feb) and Stow Wood (20 on 17 Mar).

Corn Bunting An exceptional count of 124 came from Howle on 9 Jan. Other records came from Tibberton, Dodecote, Wall Farm and Ercall Heath.

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. **Please ensure your Records are accompanied with a sensible and accurate place name. Records such as 'My Garden' or 'personal codes' may not be useable in these notes.**

All 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.

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, 5th October 2022, 7:15 p.m. Nick Martin – “Wild Wales”.

A journey into some of the wildest places in Wales and the wildlife that inhabits them.

Wednesday, 2nd November 2022, 7:15 p.m. Nigel Spencer – “Journey to the Arctic”.

A tour of one of the harshest and remote places on the planet, showcasing the wildlife and scenery of the top of the world

Wednesday, 7th December 2022, 7:15 p.m. Mark Sissons – “Wild Islands: the Nature of the Falklands”.

A journey through the Falkland Islands, detailing the range of wildlife that calls these islands home

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, 24th October, 2022. “Birds – Why They Flock” by Jeff Clarke

Monday, 28th November, 2022, “Lions, Livingstone, and the Great Rift Valley” by Ben Waddams

Field Trips

Sunday, 12th June - Woolston Eyes – By Car – Leader: Estelle Hughes

- Full Day – Meet at barrier for access at 9.30am.
- Postcode for SatNav: WA4 1NN
- Directions: Approaching from the south you should cross the ship canal swing bridge on the Knutsford Road (A50), take the right-hand lane through Latchford and cross Kingsway South into Thelwall Lane.
- See www.woolstoneyes.com/woolston-eyes/

July & August – No Field Trips

Sunday, 18th September – Brandon Marsh – By Car – Organiser: Sue Brealey

- Full Day – Meet at Reserve Car Park at 10am.
- Postcode for SatNav: CV3 3GW
- Directions: Take M6 to Junction 2. Take A46 south, and then turn left onto A45 towards Rugby. Turn left after about 200 yards, and then turn left after the Texaco Station into Brandon Lane. The Nature Centre is 1 mile along the lane. Follow the brown signs. Entry Fees £2.50 for Adults & £1.50 for Concessions.
- See <http://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/brandon-marsh>

Sunday, 9th October – RSPB Burton Mere – By Car – Organiser: Sue Brealey

- Full Day – Meet at the Car Park at 10am.
- Postcode for SatNav: CH64 5SF.
- Grid Ref: SJ 319 739
- Directions: Take A540 from Chester towards North Wirral. After the Two Miles crossroads (A540/A550), take the next left turning into Puddington Lane. The reserve is sign posted on the left, before coming to Burton village.
- See: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/dee-estuary-burton-mere-wetlands/>

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

Please send contributions for *The Buzzard* to buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk
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