



WMRG

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

WMRG

The West Midlands Ringing Group 2019
Annual report would not be possible without
the support of the following partners



J & J Roberts Farm
Pattingham

R.Tomlinson
Burleydam

The Bradshaws Estate
Wolverhampton

R. Lay
Wolverley

Lower Drayton Farm
Penkridge

Sarah Hollinshead
Rugeley

Graham Clay
Stone

Mr D. Bourne
Little Haywood



www.westmidlandsringinggroup.co.uk



West Midlands Ringing Group

Foreward



Paul Hopwood

Paul Hopwood,

Secretary of the West Midlands
Ringing Group

Welcome to the second annual report for the West Midlands Ringing Group. We received some really fantastic feedback following our inaugural 2018 report, and I'm glad we can now present our next edition.

2019 saw the publication of the State of Nature report. There were some depressing statistics: a 13% decline in average species' abundance, 41% species have decreased in abundance and 15% of species are now threatened. Whilst the reasons for the declines are complex, the report did highlight farmland management and its association with a 54% decline in farmland bird species.

Farmland covers approximately 75% of the UK and therefore is key.

But it's not all doom and gloom, and hopefully within this report you will see the great work that is being carried out by the farmers that we work with across the region.

Sadly in 2019, it is very easy to criticise farmers. This is often seen across both national and social media, views are polarised, and there is seldom desire to work together.

However it is vital that we illuminate and educate opinions and bring people together to look at how the situation can be improved.

Farmers are custodians of the countryside, and many are passionate about the diverse nature of wildlife on their farms. Clearly there is still work to be done, but with dialogue and trust we can all make improvements.

So as we move forward, we should be working together and away from that infamous phrase 'Get off my land' to a position where nature friendly farmers are encouraging wildlife volunteers to 'Get on my land!'

Away from farming we have been busy with a Nightjar project for Cannock Chase Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) and working with new partners.

We have also received further funding so that we can continue our work in the region.

I really hope you enjoy this report, and would welcome any feedback so we can improve future editions.

Paul Hopwood

Contents Page

	PAGE(S)
Partners	2
Foreward	3
Contents Page	4
Bird Ringing in the UK	5
Focus on Farming	6 - 11
If you don't measure it, you can't manage it	7
Tillage Strategies	8
TWB Farms; We farm Differently	9
Our observations on Supplementary Winter Feeding	10 - 11
Skylark	11
Year of the Nightjar	12 - 15
Nightjar in Staffordshire	13
Project on behalf of Cannock Chase AONB	14
Nightjars on a Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Reserve	15
Severn Trent	16 - 19
Our Work with Severn Trent	17
A Mixed Year at Severn Trent Sites	18 - 19
Thermal Imaging Surveys	20 - 23
Thermal Imaging Technology	21
Surveys	22 - 23
Our Fantastic Volunteers	24 - 25
Volunteers	25
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	26
Public Engagement in 2019	27
Wildlife Crime	28 - 29
Supporting Wildlife Crime Investigations in the region.	29
Marsh Lane NR	30 - 37
Marsh Lane NR 2019	31 - 33
Marsh Lane Lapwing Monitoring Project	34 - 35
Marsh Lane Black-headed Gull Project	36 - 37
Working With Raptors	38 - 39
Peregrine Falcon Project 2019	39
Downed Raptors	39
Staffordshire Pied Flycatchers	40
Other news in 2019	41
Ringling Reports	42 - 47
Ringling Recoveries	43
Returning Nightjar	44
Ringling Totals	45
Subsequent Encounters	46
2018/2019 Comparison	47
2019 A Review	48
Contact Us	49
Details of partner groups and associations.	50 - 51

Bird Ringing in the UK

The British and Irish Ringing Scheme is organised by the BTO. Over 900,000 birds are ringed in Britain and Ireland each year by over 2,600 trained ringers, most of whom are volunteers.

Bird ringing generates information on the survival, productivity and movements of birds, helping us to understand why populations are changing.

Ringing data make a major contribution to the study of population changes and to our understanding of species declines. Bird populations are determined by the number of fledglings raised and the survival of both juveniles and adults.

Whilst ringers collect data on survival, volunteers for the Nest Record Scheme collect information on productivity.

The results can be analysed in combination with population trend data, such as that collected through the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey, to determine at which stage of a bird's life cycle there might be a problem. This enables scientists and conservationists to target appropriate mitigation measures.



For further information on bird ringing in the UK, or for details on the other BTO projects please visit the BTO website

WWW.BTO.ORG

Did you know?



Common Cuckoo

Bird ringers in the UK are volunteers, conducting ringing activities in their own time and at their own cost.

Ringers are licenced annually and are required to renew their membership with the scheme yearly.

Ringing is not cheap. Licences and specialist equipment are expensive. Ringers are also responsible for the purchase of all the rings that they use.

Additional projects which include colour marking schemes also attract further costs.

So to ring a single mute swan with a metal ring and colour ring is likely to cost the ringer over £5.00!

If you would like to make a donation to support our work please contact us at

wmrg.contact@gmail.com



Focus on Farming

If You Don't Measure It You Can't Manage It!

South Staffordshire farmer; Andy Roberts of J and J Roberts Farm in Patterningham provides a farmers perspective on farming and farmland nature.

There is a saying in business, 'If you don't measure it you can't manage it'. This is especially true in the business of farming where it is important to have a good understanding of crop performance across our fields to ensure we optimise inputs and make a profit at the end of the day.

It is also paramount to the conservation work we carry out, whether it be casual counts by myself of hares and grey partridge coveys from the tractor cab to more official records by bodies such as Butterfly Conservation and BTO.

Constant monitoring of wildlife on the farm enables us to assess the performance of stewardship measures to identify which ones are working and where improvements may be made.



Andy Roberts with a Corn bunting ringed on his farm



One such measure we have adopted in recent years is the supplementary feeding of farmland birds. As cereal production has become more efficient over the years and grain storage moved historically from temporary 'stooks' in the field to increasingly more secure storage in barns in the interest of food safety, fewer and fewer grains and weed seeds have been left in the fields for birds to feed on over winter.

Supplementary feeding aims to address this by scattering a mix of wheat and small seeds such as rapeseed, millet and linseed on areas of the farm during the winter months on a weekly basis to keep the birds nourished during the 'hungry gap' leading into spring.

The boost to seed eating farmland birds such as Yellowhammer, Linnet and Reed Bunting has been impressive and we've also been able to establish a wintering population of corn buntings which will hopefully lead to more frequent breeding records in the future.

The work of the West Midlands Ringing Group has added to the ongoing monitoring of birds on the farm, providing valuable data on the overall health and movements of bird populations in the farmed landscape.

It is inspiring to see these birds in the hand and the data gathered further informs our decision making in regards to farmland bird conservation.

More recently the group has been carrying out night time surveys and ringing with the help of thermal imaging equipment. This has opened up a whole new world to me we knew little about.

Night time sessions have revealed grey partridge coveys I had missed from the tractor cab, Woodcock numbers well into double figures on favoured fields and a night time roosting flock of golden plover we had no knowledge of before.

I look forward to discovering more about the wildlife on our farm in the future, both by day and by night.



Tillage Strategies.

In a article first published for Shropshire Wildlife Trust, WMRG member Martin George provides his view on Till Strategies and explains why Food production and wildlife doesn't have to be mutually exclusive.

We're all familiar with the image of gulls following the plough to feed on soil invertebrates, a scene that, despite technological change beyond the imagination of our ancestors, has been played out between crop rotations since the 18th century. Recently agriculture has seen the growth of new technologies such as GPS guidance, and integrated pest management, which aims not to eradicate pests but to suppress their populations below the "economic injury level". For some crops and soil types, even the plough could be replaced.

From a naturalist's perspective one of the most exciting developments is the rise of techniques that reduce the amount of tillage required to grow the next crop. Minimum tillage or "min till" and the related "strip till" require far less soil disturbance than the conventional plough and harrow method. Even more exciting is "no till", in which the next crop is drilled directly into the remains of the previous crop.

All of these techniques offer benefits for the farmer, the consumer and the environment, primarily by reducing the inputs necessary to produce the crop. We are pioneering new ways of working with interested farmers to learn more about farmland birds, and by visiting a variety of holdings it's possible to gather data on which techniques offer the best results for birds and other wildlife.

Anecdotally the min till, strip till and no till fields invariably seem to hold more birds, and the group is now working to quantify the differences.

What I've found very encouraging when I'm out isn't just the numbers of birds that we see, but the enthusiasm and interest of the hosting farmers and their willingness to include wildlife in the way they manage their land. The group's work led to me meeting Richard Tomlinson, who runs a no till farm in Shropshire.

His farm is a delight: "proper" farm hedges providing lots of food and shelter for wildlife, bordered by equally valuable unsprayed or fertilised margins. It's also a no nonsense, modern commercial farm. On my first visit I was genuinely surprised by the numbers of birds present, but when Richard explained how no till works the situation became clearer.

In simple terms no till means directly drilling into the remains of the previous crop with minimal disturbance. This leaves organic matter on the soil surface which provides food for invertebrates and seed eating birds, with the invertebrates also acting as a food source for a range of other wildlife.

Richard showed me a standard earthworm count technique used to assess the biomass of a field and the numbers were impressive.

Because no till doesn't invert the soil there were also good numbers of surface living earthworms that are usually absent from arable fields.

These are thought to be an important food source for birds, including Lapwing and Golden Plover.

As earthworm numbers grow in the absence of intense cultivation so the soil structure changes, holding more organic matter (and carbon), and producing a soil that is rich in nutrients and simultaneously better at holding onto water – reducing run-off into water courses and increasing drought tolerance – whilst also being more resistant to waterlogging.

The combination of good structure, nutrient levels and water management means that crops can be grown with fewer inputs of chemicals and fuel.

Two other key aspects of the no till technique are always having living roots in the ground, so no bare soil to wash or blow away between crops, and using a diverse crop rotation to boost soil fertility and control disease. These techniques also seem to be beneficial for wildlife, providing both food and shelter.

On my visits to Richard's farm I have seen birds in numbers that are genuinely surprising for a modern farm. Walking through a cropped field in winter I have never seen such high concentrations of Snipe or Skylark, and the winter bird feeding area produced hedges that were glowing with Yellowhammers, alongside very good numbers of Reed Buntings. In the summer there are Skylarks, of course, but also lots of warblers and finches, all using a landscape that is both visually appealing and also very productive.

TWB Farms 'We Farm differently....'

Farmer Clive Bailye provides a summary of his farming practices in Staffordshire and the zero till farming system he passionately believes in.

We believe that the soil is the most important asset that any landowner has and its health should be always put first.

A farming system should be at the very least sustainable but ideally regenerative if it is to protect your valuable land asset, the environment and enable profitable production to be possible in the long term.

After 18 years' experience of minimum tillage systems using high horsepower, heavy tractors looking to bags and bottles for solutions to nutritional, weed and pest problems it became clear that such farming systems were neither sustainable or as profitable as they should be.

The weight and power involved is damaging and often creates as many problems as it fixes, the costs are high and the yields static with increasingly greater dependence upon expensive bought in inputs required.

It became clear to us over a decade ago that there are much smarter ways to farm than this 'sledge hammer' approach to soil and combinable crop farming.

Not only is this way of producing food more profitable but it also has massive benefit to the environment, through reduction of inputs and increasing habitat through diversity.

Insect life and wild bird numbers flourish, soil erosion and leaching of valuable nutrients reduces and carbon emissions tumble.



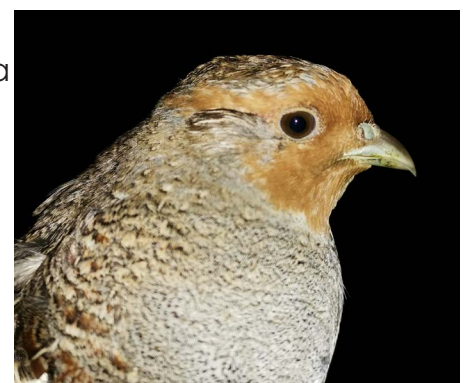
Our "Conservation Agriculture" approach is based around Zero-tillage, however we also understand that sometimes there is a need to cultivate to grow the best crop or deal with a weed or soil structure issue and are fully equipped to do so, the key to consistent success with such techniques is to remain flexible.



We have been very much a UK innovator in these techniques and are an ASDA 'Soil Master' demonstration farm, hosting open days to groups of farmers interested in following our lead.

In 2016 TWB Farms won the first "Soil Farmers of the year" award and have been a part of the judging panel in subsequent years. There are few farmers with a more proven track record and experience of this new and innovative farming system in the UK.

Clive is a founding committee member of BASE UK and regularly talk to industry groups internationally on the subject. He has travelled extensively to further his own knowledge and understanding.



Our Observations on Supplementary Winter Feeding

Paul Hopwood shares the group's experiences of findings of ringing activities around Supplementary Winter Feed sites in Staffordshire

For several years we have been conducting ringing activity at J & J Roberts farms in Pattingham South Staffordshire.

Andy Roberts is passionate about wildlife on his farm and it is really important for both him and us to record the impact of feeding during the hungry gap.

For the encouragement of farmland bird species, the farm is one of the best managed farms in the area.

Andy's continued work encourage birds and wildlife is paying rewards.

Placement of nest boxes, planting and management of cover crops and supplementary winter bird feeding (part of the Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Schemes) is clearly improving and our ringing data shows a 200% increase in birds caught and ringed.



Male Reed Bunting



Marbled White Butterfly

Whilst this report concentrates on Birdlife, it would be remiss not to mention the phenomenal impact his margins are having for invertebrates and in particular butterfly species.

One one day in July, I took a member of the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation to the farm to show him the sheer numbers present.

We counted at least 400 Marbled White Butterfly together with good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell, Essex, Small and Large Skipper, Common Blue and Painted Ladies.

There are very few locations in the Midlands that sustains a population of Marbled White Butterflies as is found at Andy's farm.

Butterfly Conservation plan a group walk at the farm in 2020.

So back to birds!

The winter of 2019 was mild, there were no sustained periods of frost and little snow. Whilst good numbers of birds appeared, there was still food to be found in the area so they were not as concentrated as we have found in previous years.

We did note large flocks of Linnet and Yellowhammer and encouragingly the number of Corn Bunting on the farm had increased, with 20 birds being noted in a single flock.

Brambling numbers were good and as spring approached Fieldfare flocks numbered into the high hundreds.

A Ring Ouzel and Greenland Wheatear were recorded in spring together with Yellow Wagtail and a large passage flock of Golden Plover!



So whilst the weather didn't get too cold, the wind was always a problem which meant we had to vary the methods we employed to catch birds.

Traditional mist nets were still used when conditions allowed, but other ground based nets were more effective.

We also trialled new feeding tables, positioned close to hedges and away from rodents. These were particularly effective for finch species.

It is vitally important when providing winter feed to rotate the feeding areas to prevent the risk of disease and an increase in predators. This works and whilst the birds take a few days to locate new areas, its an important consideration for their health and welfare.

Birds ringed at J & J Roberts Supplementary Feed Site 2019

Species	New	Recaptured	2018
Blackbird	3		
Blue Tit	7	1	
Brambling	29	2	
Chaffinch	22	2	
Chiffchaff	1		
Dunnock	15	1	18
Goldfinch	6		
Great Tit	11		3
Greenfinch	1		
House Sparrow	5		2
Linnet	222	35	52
Long-tailed Tit	6		2
Reed Bunting	35	11	32
Robin	5		4
Woodpigeon	2		
Yellowhammer	49	1	41
Corn Bunting			2
	419	53	156

Skylark

WMRG are continuing to target Skylark in the region using Thermal technology

One of the key findings with thermal technology was the number of wintering Skylark in the region. Large flocks were found across several farms, and in particular those adopting a zero/min tillage strategy and those leaving over wintered stubbles which are important roosting areas.

Skylark are a red listed species in the UK. The group's data may provide important information that will help understand this iconic bird.



Roosting behaviour and patterns are becoming of more interest and we hope to explore this further, with thermal technology being used to assess numbers.

We are now starting to recapture previously ringed birds which is a key part of our work.

Skylark Stats

214

Skylark have been caught by WMRG this year

18

Skylarks Subsequently caught birds have been re-caught

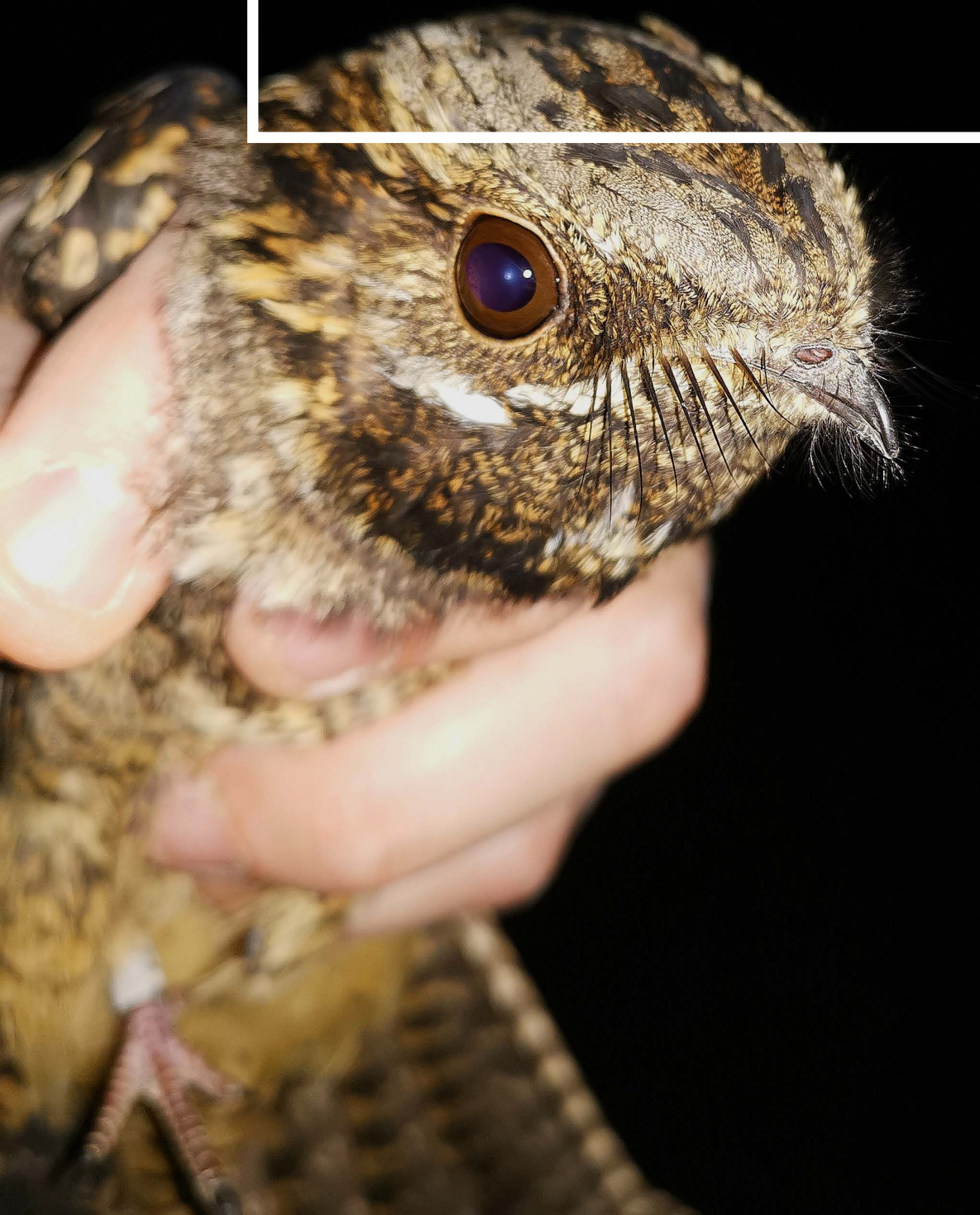
317

The 10 yr average number of free-flying Skylark ringed in the UK

67%

of the 10 yr average catch8 caught by WMRG in 2019

Year of the Nightjar



Nightjar in Staffordshire

Nightjar belong to the **Caprimulgidae**, the largest and most widespread family within the avian order **Caprimulgiformes**.

They are found on all continents except Antarctica. They occupy almost every habitat ranging from forests to deserts, with some species even ranging into urban and suburban environments.

In the UK, only one species of Nightjar is known to breed; the European Nightjar *Caprimulgus Europaeus*.

Whilst there are records of other species of Nightjars being found in the UK, these are vagrants and there are no records of populations or breeding success.

The European Nightjar is migratory, spending winter in West, South and South East Africa.

The Nightjar is a medium sized bird, 24-28cm in length. It has variegated plumage designed to mimic dead leaves, twigs, leaf litter and sticks. In male birds, white spots can be seen towards the wing tips.

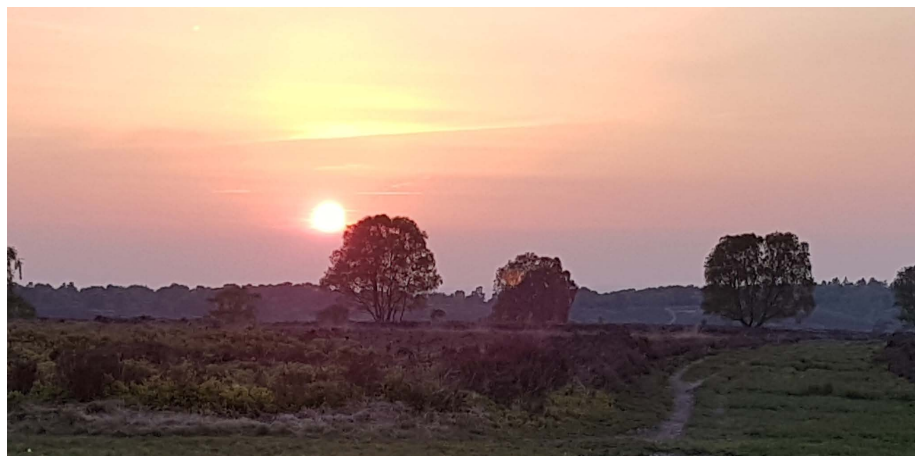
In the UK they favour dry, open country with scattered trees, heathland, moorland, open woodland and young plantations,

making Cannock Chase AONB favourable habitat.

Nightjars are a nocturnal, insectivorous bird that hunt on the wing.

They roost and breed on the ground. Breeding takes place between May and August with females laying 1 or 2 eggs. The female can have two broods of young.

The female will brood her young for at least the first 13 days. However, if she lays a second clutch the male will brood the first nest.

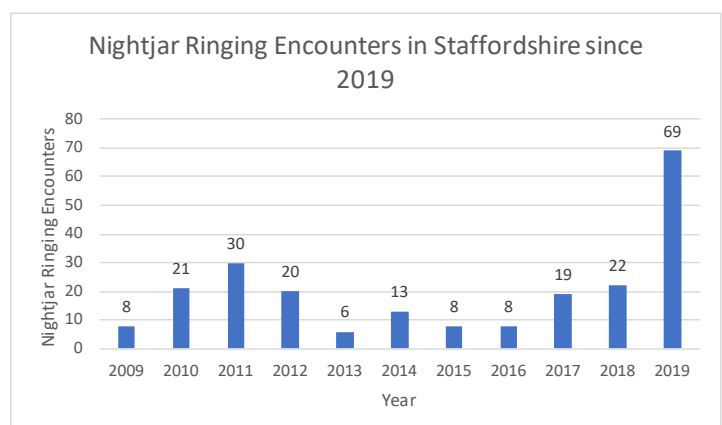


Dusk on Cannock Chase; Nightjar time

2019 proved to be a record year for Nightjar encounters in Staffordshire!

Nightjars have been targeted by ringers since 2009, with the majority of work being conducted on Cannock Chase.

The average encounter total over this 10 year period is approximately 20 birds encountered per annum. In 2019 the group recorded 69 birds representing a significant increase in birds recorded. Further detail appears in the next pages.



Project on behalf of Cannock Chase AONB



This year we were successful in securing funding to conduct a project to assess breeding success of European Nightjar within Cannock Chase AONB.

The project looks at potential factors impacting on breeding success such as disturbance, so that appropriate conservation management and strategies can be targeted at this life cycle stage.

The aim was to locate up to 10 nests on areas of Cannock Chase that had been defined as disturbed or undisturbed.

- Monitor nesting success through to hatching and levels of disturbance through using appropriate technology,
- Assess fledging success through appropriate monitoring of breeding pairs through to fledging

Initial Findings 2019

60

Individual
Nightjar
recorded

45

New birds
Ringed

10

Nest sites
located

15

Individual
recaptured
birds

75%

Fledging success
across survey

- More individual Nightjar were captured in 2019 than in any other year.
- All Nightjar that were recaptured Nightjar had previously been ringed or recorded on Cannock Chase.
- It is highly unlikely that all nests and territories in the survey area were located.
- The presence of a 'churring' male does not provide an accurate reflection of individual territories.
- Areas of clear fell appear to have been favoured by Nightjar for breeding.
- In one area of clear fell 13 different birds were encountered.
- 75% Fledging success is higher than has been seen in similar studies where only 40% were successful (Murison 2002).
- Predators were only recorded at one nest site
- Human disturbance impacted on one nesting area.



Juvenile Nightjar - Photo courtesy of Ben Locke.

Nightjars on a Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Reserve

Jonathan Groom the Monitoring Officer for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust provides an insight in the partnership work between the Wildlife Trust and West Midlands Ringing Group.

The Trust was lucky enough this year to team up with the West Midland Ringing group, who were able to help us locate nesting Nightjar on one of our reserves this year.

The Ringing group has a thermal imaging camera with which we were able to observe the birds during the evening and locate their territory and nest site.

With the help of a remote camera, we were able to monitor the nesting pair and obtain some lovely footage with a minimum of disturbance.



The footage showed the bird sitting quite still and is very well camouflaged during the day. The only movement is the rapid fluttering at the throat. This is called 'gular fluttering' and is a cooling strategy employed by all members of this bird family. It is a way of dissipating heat via evaporation.

We were very excited to see footage of the young hatching!

We checked in on the chicks 3 days after hatching.



They were already developing well and getting lots of down. This is essential to keep them warm on the ground, especially at night when the adults will be off gathering food.

Each night we could observe on the camera, the adults bringing in food to the young.

What wonderful behaviour to watch each chick tugging the beak of the adult until it regurgitates a lovely gullet full of mashed up moth! Each chick gets fed in turn though it always seems to be the chick on the right that gets fed first.



10 days after hatching and we visited to ring the chicks. It is especially important to ring migratory birds like this as the information obtained can be incredibly valuable.

After further 3 weeks the young had fledged. Excitingly, we had a message the next month that one of the chicks had been re-caught by the Group at a site some 10km away.

This was incredibly lucky and exciting to know that one of 'our' chicks was already on the move! We hope that it will make it through his subsequent migration to warmer climes and return again next year.

It's fantastic that the Trust is able to contribute to the work of WMRG!

Myths & Legends

It was thought these enigmatic creatures fed on milk from goats and cows, which led to an old name of 'Goatsucker'.

SEVERN TRENT



Our Work with Severn Trent

In this article Zara Turtle Catchment Partnership Co-ordinator for Severn Trent describes what the company are planning for the future which will be of benefit to Wildlife across their estate. We also talk about our partnership work with Severn Trent.

With the assistance of Zara Turtle; Catchment Partnership Co-ordinator) West Midlands Ringing Group have been able to access several other sites within the Severn Trent Estate.

We have also supported other ringing groups who operate at on Severn Trent sites.

Zara Turtle, Ian Gray and the respective site managers have been extremely helpful in continuing to provide access to the group and also identifying further potential locations.

Severn Trent sites offer varied habitat for a wide range of species and as such these are often good locations to conduct ringing surveys.

For our group the main species that we target are Hirundines, Reed Buntings and Warbler species.

The Phragmites reed beds at some of the facilities provide breeding habitat for Warbler species and Reed Buntings, with the latter also roosting in the reeds in Autumn and winter.



An aerial view of the Phragmites reed bed at Shifnal Severn Trent site

Zara says;

Severn Trent is a major land owner whose activities can have a substantial impact on the habitats in our region; we therefore have a significant role to play in protecting and creating a more sustainable environment.

From 2020-2025 we will be enhancing the biodiversity of our region by changing how we manage our estates.

We will be working in partnership with expert organisations (including Wildlife Trusts, BTO Ringing Groups and Moors for the Future) and engaging communities to create new habitats, enhance existing habitats, and tackle invasive non native species.

We have committed to improving 1090ha of land (or km or river) for biodiversity over the next 5yrs.

In 2019 we were provided access to several new locations, including sites in Staffordshire and North Shropshire.

Initial visits have been encouraging and group members have noted and ringed House Martin, Sand Martin, Swallow, Swift, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Wagtails.

As we move into 2020 we will see an increase in roosting Reed Buntings at Shifnal.

We ringed over 100 Reed buntings in early 2019. As we move into 2020 we will continue target these birds.

This species provides us with some excellent recoveries.



Tawny Owl from the Shifnal Severn Site.

A Mixed Year at Severn Trent Sites

Severn Trent sites are a key priority for the group and ringing activity takes place at their sites throughout the year. Sadly 2019 will be remembered as a poor year for Hirundines in the UK and this was reflected in our catches.

Whilst 2019 was a poor year for hirundines across Severn Trent sites, there were some positives in the form of new sites and nest box occupancy rates.

Hirundines; Swallows, Swifts and Martins use sewage work filter beds for feeding. The invertebrates found at the sites provide a ready food source throughout their time in the UK and importantly in late summer and autumn when newly fledged chicks are on the wing.

Sadly 2019 was a poor year for these migrants, there may be many reasons for the low numbers, but it is felt that extreme weather conditions in central Europe at a key migration time had a devastating impact on migration.

The poor numbers were noted by bird observatories on the South Coast of England and the bird numbers just didn't arrive as expected in the Midlands.

At Penkrige, where in previous years feeding flocks numbered into the region of 2- 300 birds, numbers were significantly down. With flocks of 50 birds being about as good as it got!

We hope that 2019 was a blip and that the numbers will return in 2020.

Elsewhere, in the Spring we installed a number of nest boxes at Shifnal ST works.

Our thanks are extended to Ian Gray; Water Treatment & Quality Advisor (Biology) and staff from Monkmoor for providing us with several nest boxes.

90% of the boxes were occupied in the first year, with successful broods of blue tits, great tits, robins and Wrens being recorded. The boxes were explored by prospective breeding birds within minutes of them being installed!



Hopefully, the open fronted boxes that we have installed will be used by the Grey and Pied Wagtails that use the site, together with Spotted Flycatchers that have been noted at Shifnal.



Our Pied and Grey Wagtail colour ringing projects continue across our Severn Trent sites. In 2019 we ringed 27 further Pied Wagtails and 32 Grey Wagtail. We have also encountered colour ringed birds from the scheme at the sites that they were originally ringed at.

On the 29th December we found a Yellow Browed Warbler at Shifnal, this is believed to be only the forth record for the county. The Yellow Browed Warbler breeds in Siberia and a few are recorded in the UK each year, this is a really great record for the county and for Severn Trent!

A survey of the sites for Owls will commence in 2020 following a pilot in 2019 which saw us record Tawny, Barn, Little and Long Eared Owl in and around sewage treatment works.

Following a review of sites in the west of Shropshire we have withdrawn from West Felton as it lacks reeds or filter beds, and have started to ring at Prees Higher Heath instead.

The reeds there have recently been replanted so it may be some time before it reaches its full potential for Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings, but the filter beds show promise for wagtails and hirundines (House Martins, Sand Martins and Swallows).



Sedge Warbler, a summer migrant.
Ringed at Shifnal STW

Fifteen or so years ago this site held good numbers of Tree Sparrows, a red-listed species that has declined by 95% since the 1970s, so it will be interesting to see if any of these birds remain in the area.

Ruyton XI Towns had a rather disappointing year with very poor bird numbers, but a new mist net ride in an area of scrub may increase the number of warblers caught in spring and autumn.

Ade Silvester of STW has been very supportive of the Group's activities at these sites and we are very grateful for his help and encouragement.



Yellow Wagtail from Penkridge STW

At Minworth The major highlight was the discovery of the breeding Barn Owls on the first visit to the site.

A subsequent check of the owl box revealed 3 healthy chicks.

Two of the chicks were of a size suitable for ringing while the ringing of the third chick was delayed by 3 weeks due to it being too small.

The box contained a substantial cache of small mammals, suggesting that the habitat provided suitable areas of rough grassland over which to hunt.

The large owl box is in need of some repair with a large area of the felt roof torn and the rest of the box would benefit from a suitable coating of preservative.



Stephen Griffin
(Team Manager,
Minworth STW) and
John Hunt with Barn
Owls chicks from
Minworth

Throughout the year the filter beds are home to large numbers of Pied Wagtails taking advantage of a warmer environment and access to freshwater and insects, albeit in reduced numbers during the colder months.

Other all year round residents includes gulls, pigeons and corvids.

Summer and later into autumn saw large gatherings of hirundines (Swallows and Martins) feeding up prior to their migration.

Meadow Pipits were also prominent on their autumn migration.

Of the breeding birds on the site, Linnets, Goldfinch and Tits were much in evidence.

52 species were recorded the highlights being Barn Owl, Sparrowhawk, Wheatear and Woodcock. A full report has been produced by John Hunt in respect of Minworth, which we hope really assists with their bio-diversity plan.



Thermal Imaging Surveys

Thermal imaging surveys are integral to our group's work. 4 years on we continue to develop and innovate our use of this technology.

Thermal Imaging Technology

Martin George looks at how technological advances have provided opportunities for bird surveys.

Over the last 100 years advances in technology have transformed our ability to study and be inspired by the natural world.

In the years after the Great War the favoured piece of equipment for an ornithologist would have been a gun, at the time the only practical way to close the distance between observer and subject. The corpse could then be identified at leisure and, if necessary, preserved to prove that an unusual sighting was worthy of being added to the official record, leading to the old chestnut *"What's hit is history, what's missed is mystery"*.

After the Second World War an increase in leisure time and the availability of affordable government surplus optics encouraged the rise of modern birdwatching and huge advances in the identification of birds at distance, including increasingly more sophisticated and easy to use field guides and, to meet the growing market, binoculars and telescopes that seemed to be lighter, clearer and more affordable every year.

Digital technology introduced cameras that were optically superior to all but the very best film cameras and could record hundreds of images in one outing,

eventually leading to the sophisticated cameras that we routinely carry with us in our mobile phones, and the remote sensing trail cams that have led to new discoveries in the natural world.

For the last four years we have been using thermal imaging technology, which continues to revolutionise our ability to study wildlife, and importantly for us birdlife after dark.

Thermal imaging cameras capture the heat energy of the environment, making it easy to spot areas of contrast such as the heat source of an otherwise invisible animal.

For years bird ringers have gone out with spotlights to temporarily dazzle and catch birds such as Woodcock in order to learn more about their populations and movements, but lamping relies on the light reflected from the bird's eye, so a bird that hunkers down remains invisible.

With a thermal imaging camera birds can be seen at greater range, and it is the entire body that is seen rather than the eye shine, making the technique much more efficient.

West Midlands Ringing Group pioneered the use of thermal technology for bird ringing and we continue to have great success in this area, which is now seeing us extend our use of this technology!

For the last four years members of the group have concentrated on Lapwing, Woodcock and Skylark, with additional species including Jack Snipe, Common Snipe, Fieldfare, Redwing and Grey Partridge also being regularly caught.

In 2019 the group caught the first 'dazzled' Golden Plover in Staffordshire, having caught the first Gloucestershire bird two years previously.

We are continually improving and developing our techniques and have offered support and guidance to other ringing groups in the UK, Europe and America.

In December 2019 we were invited by the British Trust for Ornithology to present their work at the annual ringers conference, recognition for our work in the field,

In addition to ringing, we are now looking at wider applications of thermal technology and have been trialling thermal drones!

Martin George

Article originally written for Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Thermal Surveys 2019

In this article we provide an update of our work with Thermal Imaging technology and look beyond Dazzling, our main application to date.

We are widely renowned for being one of the UK's leading ringing groups in respect of the use of thermal technology, something that was recognised by the British Trust for Ornithology in December 2019 by inviting us to showcase our work at their national conference in December.

Since 2016 we have concentrated on two particular uses of thermal technology; to enhance dazzling at night time and to locate nesting lapwing.

WMRG are very lucky to have several thermal image cameras now, and this is improving our catch rates.

We do not want to rest on our laurels and are now looking at other applications for ringing and surveying.

In 2019 we looked at further applications for thermal technology including drone surveys.

In conjunction with West Midlands Police and Gorilla Drones we conducted two surveys looking for Nightjar nests.

The thermal image cameras were calibrated to indicate locations of nests within temperature parameters, which were set to isolate heat sources which were higher than the ambient temperature.

The initial results were positive and we located a Nightjar nest (which successfully fledged) and a Pheasant with young.

We are currently looking at the development of a drone that has improved thermal capabilities.

This is an exciting prospect and will open up wider surveying applications which are not restricted to avifauna.



Long Eared Owl caught utilising thermal technology.

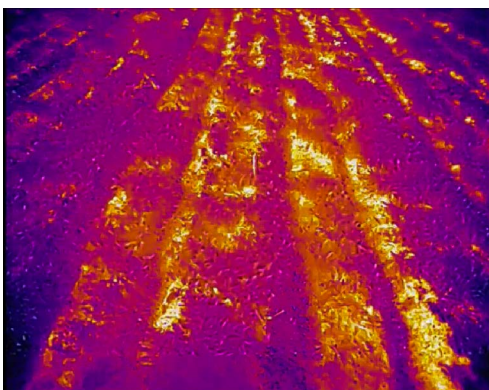
The group have also been looking at nocturnal behaviour of birds and other wildlife.

This has revealed some fascinating results which we are looking to explore further with academic support.

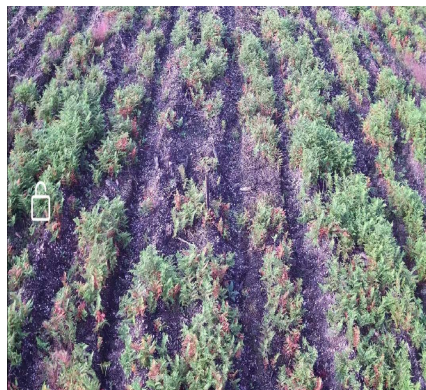
In Staffordshire we have been using the equipment to locate Long Eared Owls which resulted in two of the species being ringed.

West Midlands Bird Club have previously conducted a survey of this species and in 2020/2021 we hope to work with the club to assess populations within the Cannock Chase AONB.

We are also looking to locate Long Eared Owl roosts in North Staffordshire which will hopefully inform habitat management strategies in the near future.



Thermal Drone footage of Nightjar Nesting habitat



Standard drone footage of the same Nightjar nesting habitat

Sadly, thermal technology also allowed us to witness human disturbance in an area known to have a Nightjar breeding territory. We have addressed this issue with the relevant bodies, and will look at further recommendations to prevent further instances in the future.

Whilst on the topic of Nightjar, our use of thermal technology has shown that the presence of a 'churring' male may not represent a single breeding territory.

'Churring' males are an indicator of territories, however our observations have shown that there may be more than one pair in a relatively small area. This may have resulted in under recording in some surveys.



Nightjar recorded using thermal technology

The use of thermal technology has resulted in significantly improved catches for the group in respect of Nightjar, as we can now watch the birds and nets from distance, reducing disturbance, but at the same time increasing productivity.



Thermal view of a Starling murmuration

In December we started to explore the use of thermal technology at Starling murmurations. The footage we have recorded is spectacular and may provide more accurate counts of these birds in the future with the assistance of computer technology and potentially artificial intelligence!

As the light faded prior to the birds roosting, we noted a raptor attack the flock, whilst this is a common occurrence during murmurations it was impressive to record this behaviour thermally.



Small Skylark Flock in winter cereal crop

One other area that we are keen to develop is the roost patterns of birds at night, in particular the Skylark.

Over the last few years we

have noticed patterns within roosting flocks of these birds.

We have seen flocks in patterns that would appear to present a degree of protection to the wider flock from predation.

It would appear that these patterns allow for the flock to disperse if they are approached from any angle, with the extremities being similar to look our points. As one bird is disturbed, all birds tend to lift, allowing their escape.

This behaviour has not been recorded previously and only with the development of thermal technology have we been able to view this.

Whilst our observations are in its infancy, we are now recording these flocks to establish if this is typical behaviour.



Nightjar and a bat (Noctule?)

And finally we recorded some fascinating behaviour between bats and Nightjar.....more of this to come in 2020!

Our Fantastic Volunteers



We are supported by a number of fantastic volunteers who support our work across a range of activities, from nest box building to work parties and clean ups.

Volunteers

'Not all heroes wear capes', is a saying used to describe everyday people who go about their daily business completing often unseen tasks, which make a difference to people and our planet.

We are lucky enough to know some of these people and do all we can to ensure they are recognised for the work they do.

One of our volunteers is 90 year old Dennis who has made various nest boxes for our group for around seven years, we were lucky enough to meet him at Wm Wheat & Son Garden Centre, where we conduct public ringing demonstrations.

Dennis supported the Centre with fixing anything that was broken, which suited his engineers mind.

Dennis continues to support our group and during 2019 has made a number of nest boxes for Little, Tawny & Barn Owls. He is currently making Pied Flycatcher and Redstart boxes for our project in North Staffordshire.

We can't thank Dennis enough for the work he does for our group and the local wildlife.



Nest Box Hero
Dennis Leonard

We also offer our sincere thanks to Ray Hurd and Kevin Whiston.

Ray crafted 30 flycatcher and Redstart boxes, open fronted nest boxes for Wagtails and Dipper boxes for the Churnet Valley.

Kevin made a number of Tree Sparrow boxes which have been installed near to Stone where the birds have regularly been sighted.



Nest boxes made by Ray Hurd

HS2 Volunteers



With HS2 being proposed to run alongside Marsh Lane NR in the near future, we were made aware of the potential for support from HS2 ground-works as well as the opportunity of funding to support what we do on the reserve.

During 2019 HS2 attended the site three times and supported us with work that we would never have got done without them. We expanded the gravel area on car park pool for Common Terns, reduced the height of willow scrub by the back gate area, which allowed the berry bushes to grow and has seen an increase in birds ringed.

Finally they supported us with some much needed reed bed management, strimming an area of reed bed, raking the old and dead reeds out and dead hedge laying them

having a positive affect on the reed bed with fresh growth being encouraged. We hope to continue the work parties in to 2020.

Following the work parties we were encouraged to apply for their funding, which we were successful with the aim to continue monitoring birds at the reserve.

We have purchased further thermal imagers and tools, which will improve our survey work and effectiveness of work parties.

Ben Dolan

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

In 2019 we started to work with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust across sites in Staffordshire. We are really excited to be working with the Trust and hope that the projects we are undertaking will go from Strength to Strength.

2019 saw us start to work with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust across the county.

We have been given access to several sites including, Gentleshaw Common, Blackbrook and Cotton Dell.

We are keen to look at specific projects for these sites, and 2019 was an opportunity for us to visit the locations and identify species worthy of further work.

We have received great support from Jonathan Groom, Monitoring Officer for the Trust.

We have accompanied Jonathan to the reserves and discussed potential options



Dipper from a SWT reserve



Blackbrook North Staffs

Moving forward we are now looking at the following projects.

Nightjar

We were successful in locating and monitoring breeding Nightjar in 2019 (see page) and will continue with this in 2020.

Furthermore we will be looking for Nightjar at other SWT sites that have the habitat to sustain these birds.

Pied Flycatcher

The trust installed numerous nest boxes in North Staffordshire and we will be assisting in monitoring these nests and ringing the chicks.

Dipper

We located a number of Dipper nests in the Churnet Valley this year, and have additional boxes to install.

We managed to ring several Dipper chicks.

Two of the nests we were monitoring were unsuccessful; through flooding and predation.

We hope to undertake a colour ringing project on this species to understand the dispersal of these birds in the county.



Curlew nest

Curlew

We assisted Jonathan locate a Curlew nest in North Staffs. In 2020 we hope to help monitor these birds in the county.

Long Eared Owls

We are conducting some evening surveys in North Staffordshire in an attempt to locate a potential Long Eared Owl roost. Watch out for news in 2020!

Public Engagement in 2019

2019 was a busy year for us working in partnership with other ringers, presentations and engaging with a number of public groups!

As a newly formed group we are keen to engage with the public and partners as often as we can. In 2019 we were presented with two fantastic opportunities to share our work with fellow ringers and the public at conferences.

Members of WMRG were instrumental in the development of the use of thermal imaging equipment for ringing.

As a group we are keen for other ringers to experience the use of thermal imaging and as such we have welcomed several ringers and ringing groups joining us. The sharing of this knowledge will allow more people to get involved and with more birds ringed we should improve our knowledge of previously hard to catch species.

We have received feedback internationally now and are considered the UK lead in this area of ringing.

In December 2019 we were invited to talk at the British Trust for Ornithology Ringers Conference in Derbyshire. Ben Dolan from the group presented to the conference and the feedback we have received has been fantastic. As we share our experiences more and more possibilities are being identified

for surveying wildlife across the world.



Ben Dolan at the BTO conference

We were also asked to present the initial findings from our Nightjar Project to the 2019 Cannock Chase AONB Annual Conference.

Again we received great feedback from the audience who were keen to learn more about the work we had conducted on behalf of the AONB team.

The conference was a great opportunity to network with other groups who work on Cannock Chase.

As a result of this we are currently engaging with several groups to identify how we can work in partnerships that will present mutually beneficial opportunities. This includes working with people with mental health issues and those who suffer from social isolation.

We have conducted ringing demonstrations for the Friends of Cannock Chase Group assisted by ringers from Shropshire and Worcestershire. The demonstration allowed members of the group to see some winter visitors to the chase in the hand, including Redwing, Redpoll and Goldcrest.

Again the demo was a great success and we have already been booked for 2020!



Paul Hopwood with the Friends of Cannock Chase

We have also taken some of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Volunteers out with us conducting Nightjar surveys and ringing Nightjar chicks.

HS2 volunteers took part in work parties at Marsh Lane NR and we had the support of two further community groups assisting with habitat improvement at our sites, its been a busy year!!!

Wildlife Crime



Supporting Wildlife Crime Investigations in the Region.

Details of two investigations that the group and its members have supported in the region.

An illegal owl trader was rumbled after West Midlands Police swooped to discover Barn owls being unlawfully kept and sold on.

Officers discovered six of the protected species across three garden aviaries in Walsall after executing a search warrant alongside the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Lee Wellings was found to have bred birds for more than four years and been issued with at least 50 A10 certificate by submitting incorrect statements. These permits are a legal requirement in order to own, breed and sell protected birds.

Barn owls are fully protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

It is an offence to intentionally possess one without a leg ring which is a symbol of authorisation from the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Officers were able to identify two buyers who had purchased an owl each for £50 and £65 in good faith after seeing them advertised for sale by Wellings.

The 45-year-old of Rushall, pleaded guilty to three counts to illegally having wild birds, two charges of unlawfully selling a protected species and offences of making false statements to obtain 57 permits.

He was given a 12 month community, 80 hours unpaid work and £185 costs.

The birds have been removed from the address and are now in the process of being found permanent new homes.

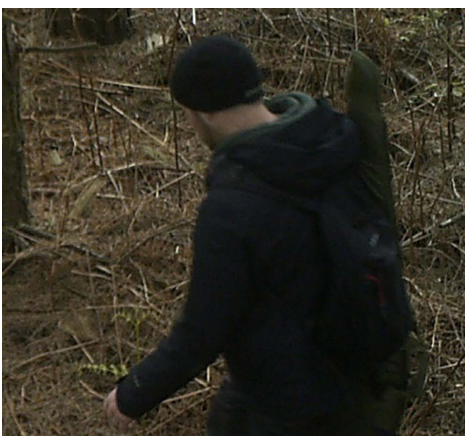
PC Richard Collins, from Walsall Police and a designated wildlife crime officer for the force, said:

"We are committed to investigating reports of wildlife crime alongside our partners in order to protect vulnerable species, and encourage communities to report offences via 101."

"I would to thank West Midlands Ringing Group and Andy McWilliams from the national wildlife crime unit for all their help and support".

Do you Know this man?

Police want to speak to this man after two Ravens were shot on Cannock Chase.



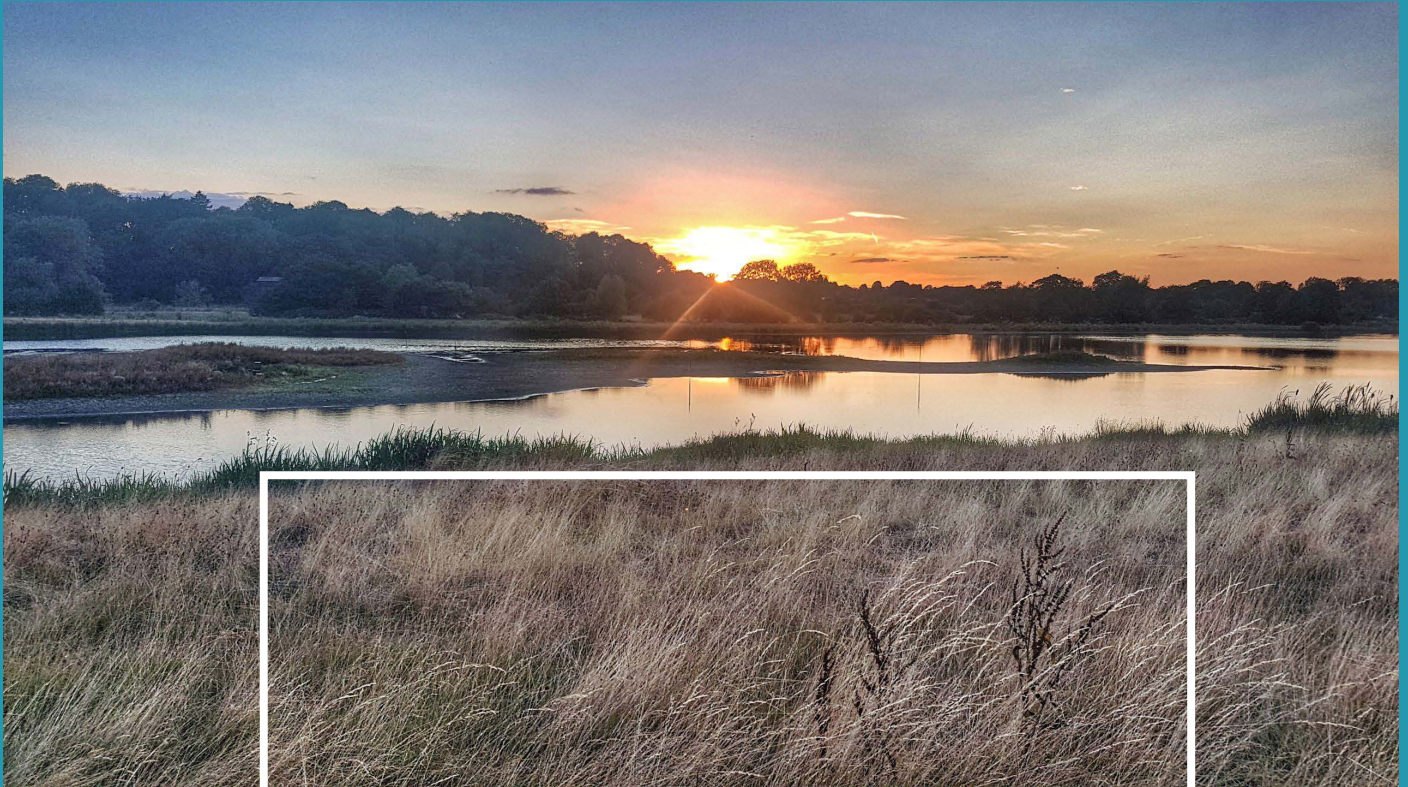
The bodies of two adult birds were still warm when they were found by visitors at the beauty spot earlier this year.

Further examination revealed the ravens had been shot, Staffordshire Police said.

It is illegal to kill ravens as they are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The protected birds were found at around 11.30am on May 6.

Anyone with information is urged to call Staffordshire Police on 101, quoting incident 298 of May 6, or to contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.



Marsh Lane Nature Reserve

MARSH LANE NATURE RESERVE



Marsh Lane Nature Reserve is situated at Berkswell (between Solihull and Coventry) and covers 75 acres adjacent to and in the River Blythe Flood Plain, an SSSI.

The site was quarried for sand and gravel from 1995 to 1999 and was reinstated jointly by RMC and the owners, Packington Estates, opening as a reserve in 2001.

It comprises three main pools (one a Reedbed), woodland, grassland, smaller ponds and some agricultural land.

Two of the main pools have been shaped and include a number of islands which, since formation, have attracted a wide range of breeding and passage waders.

Eight hides have been constructed which, between them, give excellent views of all the pools and islands.

The majority of the hides are linked by hard paths and there is a car park within the site's locked gates.

Disabled visitors should find the site suitable for them although the paths are unbound. The paths are made of planings and are reasonably compact but wheelchair visitors may need some aid.

Within the hides, seats can be unhinged or moved to allow wheelchair access to the blinds.

The reserve attracts a wide variety of resident species and regular migratory visitors, both breeding and on passage, as well as occasional migrants.

The site list currently stands at 206 and includes a number of regional rarities.

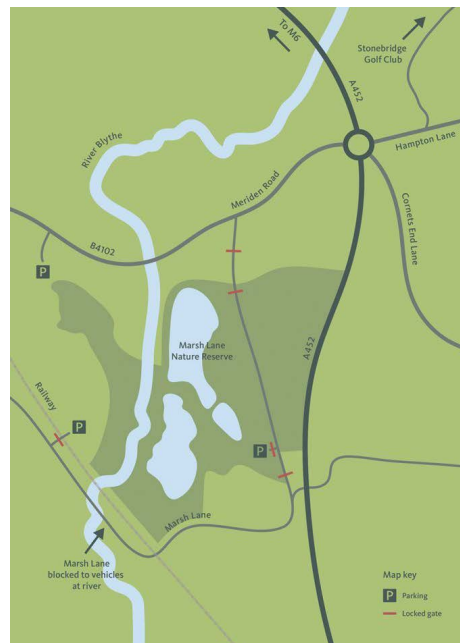
Details of latest sightings can be found on the website.

Birds of particular note include Bonaparte's Gull, Hoopoe, Spotted Sandpiper, Grey Phalarope, Black Kite, Rough-legged Buzzard, Spoonbill, Stone Curlew, Lesser Yellowlegs, Red-backed Shrike, Dusky Warbler and Bee-eater.



Little Egrets occur regularly, and Osprey is recorded in most years.

Hobby is a regular in the late summer and early autumn, Marsh Harriers are seen most years. Most passage waders have occurred including Avocet, Knot, Turnstone, Spotted Redshank and Temminck's Stint.



In winter, up to 400 Wigeon and 750 Lapwing are regularly present.

Packington Estate Enterprises Ltd runs and administers the site, with access (365 day/24 hour – key required) being by annual membership.

The adult rate is currently £43 with junior/senior/joint concessions available.

In addition to site access, members receive a quarterly newsletter and a copy of the annual report.

Full details together with a downloadable application form are available on the website:

www.packingtonestate.co.uk/about/Marsh-lane-nature-reserve/



Marsh Lane Nature Reserve

Ben Dolan provides an update the groups activities at Marsh Lane in 2019, a year which has had its ups and down in terms of weather, preventing us from conducting a number of ringing sessions on site.

Following our 2018 sessions it was clear that a work party was needed across our ringing areas to reduce the height of the growth.

I was aware of some work parties at Ladywalk NR, which HS2 were assisting with.

We made contact with HS2 Ground works and were able to arrange several work parties the details of which can be found in the volunteers section of this report.

The beginning of the year often sees us ringing at the feeding station, which is a good opportunity for trainees to get experience with a wider range of species as from May onwards the ringing is dominated by Warblers,

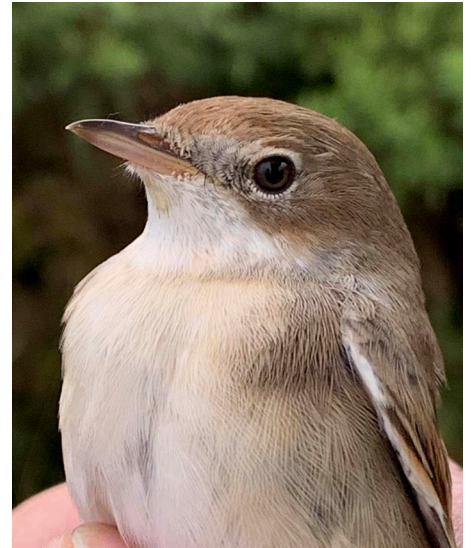
We managed to ring 11 species during this period, which obviously saw good tit numbers but included good numbers of Reed Bunting and several Yellowhammers.

The actual numbers of finches using the feeding station was a fantastic sight to see.

One highlight was catching a Goldfinch we had ringed on 11/01/2018 and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, which was originally ringed here on 03/11/2017.

March sees us move in to early warblers when we hear our first Chiffchaffs of the new Spring, we often re-trap Chiffchaffs returning to exactly the same territories and 2019 was no different with two Chiffchaffs trapped on 27/03/2019 that were originally both ringed on 03/05/2018.

April and May sessions tend to move in to the reed bed to monitor Reed and Sedge Warblers moving through, however as you will remember 2019 saw birds arriving quite late and only one Reed Warbler was caught during April, which had previously been ringed here 14/04/2017 as an adult.



Common Whitethroat

Reed and Sedge Warbler numbers continued to be low throughout 2019, however a highlight during May were a new male Cetti's Warbler was ringed by the car park and two relatively early Garden Warblers were ringed at the back gate area.

One Reed Bunting we did catch in the reed bed had been previously ringed in 2013 as an adult, which makes it at least 7 years of age but is still almost some way off the oldest recorded through ringing.



Black-headed Gull 2AAV

Marsh Lane is the only site in the County of the West Midlands which has breeding Cetti's warbler



	2019	2018
Blackcap	269	137
Garden Warbler	14	7
Reed Warbler	20	12
Sedge Warbler	2	3
Whitethroat	8	1
Cetti's Warbler	3	0

Marsh Lane Warbler data

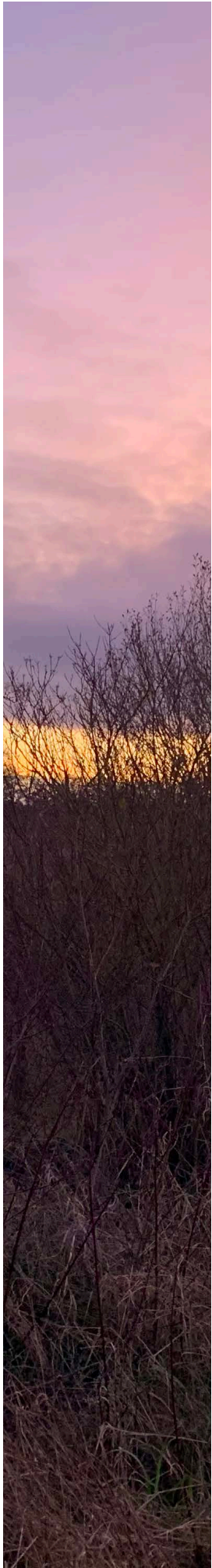
The islands on Railway Pool had been overhauled and looked amazing with the aim of increasing breeding waders, however early signs showed that Black-headed Gulls were not put off by this strategy and returned in good numbers, Common Terns also returned to Car Park Pool in positive numbers.

The details of our Black-headed Gull and Common Tern projects can be seen in the Marsh Lane Gull report overleaf.

The time came to then start Warbler ringing at the back gate area, we choose this area in particular as it is normally alive with bird activity, has good feeding areas and is an area that we reduce the height in suitable for our nets. Although the weather continued to prevent us from a number of sessions we were able to ring a number of birds, which was a significant improvement on 2018 with highlights being seen in the table on the right.

We were particularly excited by catching two freshly fledged Cetti's Warblers, which showed breeding on the site and I then confirmed with the County Recorder that Marsh Lane NR is the only West Midlands site with confirmed breeding Cetti's.

Moving in to November we were starting to have nest boxes built and was keen to understand what Owls were in and around the site, we were able to confirm Tawny by sound and we also ringed a Juvenile Barn Owl, unfortunately there was no sign of Little Owl although we have put up boxes this year.



Marsh Lane Lapwing Monitoring Project

John Hunt provides an update on the Lapwing Monitoring Project at Marsh Lane Nature Reserve.

Lapwing survival, at Marsh Lane Local Nature Reserve, over the past years has been very low due to a combination of factors, principally, weather conditions and predation from foxes and badgers on the open farmland and large gulls on the islands.

This has been exacerbated in 2019 with the work carried out by HS2 on the previously allocated set-aside field, which displaced the early breeding pairs just as they were establishing their territories.

Between 2019 and 2021 WMRG are monitoring Lapwing numbers in and around Marsh Lane NR to assess the impact of HS2 on breeding and where birds may move to during the construction phase and subsequent operational phase.

At present some breeding takes place on the main reserve and some in fields to the east of the A452.

The Lapwings were monitored by site visits between March and July. After each visit a diary was maintained noting numbers of breeding birds seen, where they were nesting and how many chicks were present.

The WMRG will use this information to coordinate the colour-ringing of Lapwing chicks and follow up with some evening monitoring during the winter with the use of thermal imaging equipment

Lapwing chicks leave the nest, which is a simple shallow scrape, soon after hatching. This enables the family to move into vegetation that is more suitable for the chicks because it supports a greater abundance of invertebrate prey and gives cover from predators.

Chick mortality is thought to be an important factor in Lapwing decline – the species has seen a decline in its breeding population of 53% in the last 25 years.

Loss of breeding and feeding habitat, some of which has been linked to the change from spring to autumn sowing and the drainage of wet grassland sites.

The survey noted at Marsh Lane looked at various behaviours of the birds during the breeding season;

- Displaying males
- Active nests and chicks
- Flightless / recently fledged juveniles
- Possible breeding
- Probable breeding
- Confirmed breeding

The main survey season ran from the end of April through to May, although breeding records were collated up until the end of July.



In 2019 the Project Site was visited on nineteen occasions to identify the presence and status of breeding birds within the Project Site.

Surveys were undertaken paying due regard to the welfare of the birds.

All parts of the Project Site were visited on foot to within 50m where visibility extended or closer where visibility was needed for example in woodlands or behind hedgerows.

Surveys were carried out in good weather in order to maximise the potential for detection of birds and to avoid the possibility of bird activity being suppressed by inclement weather conditions.

The initial observations are as follow

Two sections of the survey area were taken under notice by HS2 in 2018 and subsequently the farmer and Packington Estate held no control.

Inspection pits were dug in the Red area with HS2 contractors on site, mainly during March.

During this time 10 pairs of potentially breeding Lapwing were displaced.

It is very likely that having been displaced they failed to find a suitable alternative habitat.

Subsequent numbers of breeding Lapwing were low and this is likely to have impacted survival rates with such a small population of adults being able to defend nests from predators.

In previous years the field has remained relatively wet, with small pools remaining during the breeding period. This had led to a successful breeding in 2017 when the Red area had a total of 96 chicks. The field remained relatively dry throughout the 2019 breeding period and this may have impacted the numbers of invertebrates.

On the reserve, the crop field was sown late and this meant any early nests were potentially destroyed, even though care was taken to mark nest sites before machinery moved onto the field.

Early in the season there was little cover on the pool islands and it is likely that this contributed to the heavy predation suffered at these locations.

Additionally a clay pigeon shoot has been relocated to a site a few hundred meters away from the breeding field and although they only operate on 12 days per annum, that may be another source of disturbance.

Subsequently no chicks were ringed in 2019.

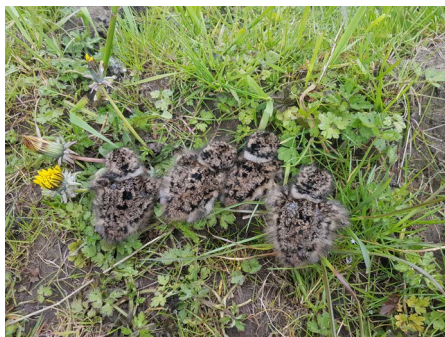
To put the 2019 results into context the following are records and observations for previous years

2016

With at least 31 pairs, breeding numbers across the site were double of those in previous years.

This improvement was due to the field east of the A452 being left in set-aside through an agreement with the farmer and financial support from the Packington Estate.

At least 22 of the pairs bred in this area, up from only 3-4 pairs in 2015. Up to 55 young were counted with 47 ringed and of these 32 were thought to have fledged.



Spot the 4 lapwing!

2017

For a second year, the field was left in set-aside. This again proved successful with an estimated 25-30 pairs nesting there.

The cold and dry spring was not conducive to the survival of the chicks and although 92 were ringed, only one was known to have survived.

Elsewhere, numbers were lower across the Reserve with a minimum of 7 pairs on the pool islands and 2 in the Crop Field. These were similarly unsuccessful.

In summary 2017 was a disastrous year at Marsh Lane for a species in serious decline across the UK as a breeding resident



Lapwing nest with eggs

2018

Disappointingly, Lapwing had a further disastrous breeding season in 2018.

Early signs were promising for the set-aside field with at least 17 pairs counted, but for no obvious reason the area was abandoned prior to nesting.

Elsewhere across the Reserve, there were ten pairs in total, much in line with previous years. While many of these pairs produced young, all were lost due to predation or other reasons and none fledged.

We can only hope for an improvement but at present the outlook for Lapwing is very worrying at Marsh Lane and nationwide

Marsh Lane Nature Reserve

Black-headed Gull Project

Ben Dolan discusses the continuation of the Black-headed Gull project at Marsh Lane Nature Reserve. The Project, now in its 4th year seeks to learn more about their post-breeding dispersal.

Since 2016 we have had some interesting sightings, which have showed a preference for Western/South Western dispersal, which is similar to other Black-headed Gull projects in the Midlands.



The reserve consists of three main pools. Two of the main pools include a number of islands which, since their formation, have attracted a wide range of breeding and passage waders.

During late 2018 the large islands at Marsh Lane were improved and covered with shingle, in the hope that this would improve nesting areas for wading birds such as Lapwing, Redshank and Little Ringed Plover

Large numbers of Black-headed Gulls breed every year at the reserve, with numbers apparently increasing.

Since 2016 we have continuously improved our approach to ringing a colony of Black-headed Gulls.

Careful planning & preparation takes place prior to the planned ringing session to ensure that we know where the gulls are nesting and where other species are situated, this enables us to change our approach if needs be.

Whilst it would be preferable to continue projects every year, as this allows us to increase the amount of data we obtain from fitting birds with colour rings. Sometimes this is not possible as have to consider environmental factors and bird welfare.

Unfortunately our 2019 sessions had to be cancelled for a number of reasons.

Firstly we were notified that 3 pairs of Little Ringed Plover were nesting. This species is protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act and a licence is required for any activity that may disturb them.

Because LRP have not successfully bred at Marsh Lane since 2010 we wanted to minimise any disturbance and the decision was made not to proceed. Sadly all 3 pairs failed in 2019.

Following the unsuccessful breeding attempts by the LRP we planned a further visit to ring the Gulls.

Sadly, to borrow a cricket analogy, 'Rain stopped play'. The wet weather was relentless.

Although we had several clear days our continued assessment based on the weather, water levels and position of the birds lead us to the conclusion that it was not safe to continue, with bird welfare of paramount importance.

Fortunately several small islands weren't as badly affected.

A visit was planned to colour ring the Common Tern on the islands. We attended on the day and ringed a number of Common Tern and 19 Black-headed Gull.

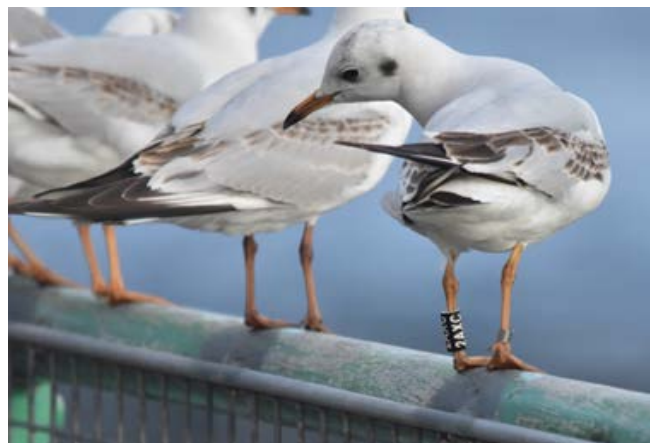
A number of Common Tern chicks were too small to have a Darvic fitted so a further visit was planned to ring the remaining chicks on the island.

Just when we thought our year could not have been any worse for Black-headed Gulls, we were not prepared for what we found on our return to Car Park Island a week later.

The utter devastation that greeted us was upsetting. We were faced with a number of dead Black-headed Gulls and Common Terns.

We checked the birds for injuries and found wounds to their neck consistent with a single small bite.

On reflection we believe this may be either an Otter or Mink.



Having shared this story with other ringers across the country they have had similar attacks like this by both species.

Black-headed Gull Facts and Statistics

543

Total birds ringed in project

298

Total sightings to date

108

Sightings in 2019

776

Distance in miles of furthest sighting 2019

185333

Miles in total recorded from sightings

11

Years, average life expectancy for BH Gull

32

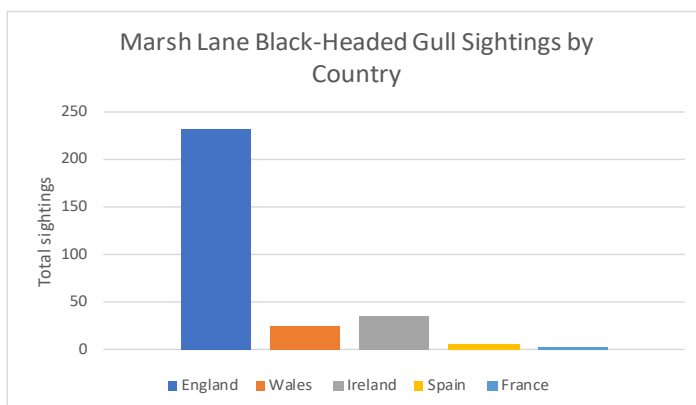
Years old, longevity record for BH Gull

In 2019 our furthest sighting was 776 miles away in Pontevedra, Spain by O. Santome, our 5th Spanish sighting of four different birds.

Gull 2BAA, was originally ringed as a chick on 18/06/2016, was seen in 2017 at Brandon Marsh 11 miles away. Five months later was seen in 641 miles away in Asturias, Spain. In 2019 it was seen actively breeding back at Marsh Lane and six months later was been reported 319 miles away in Brittany, France

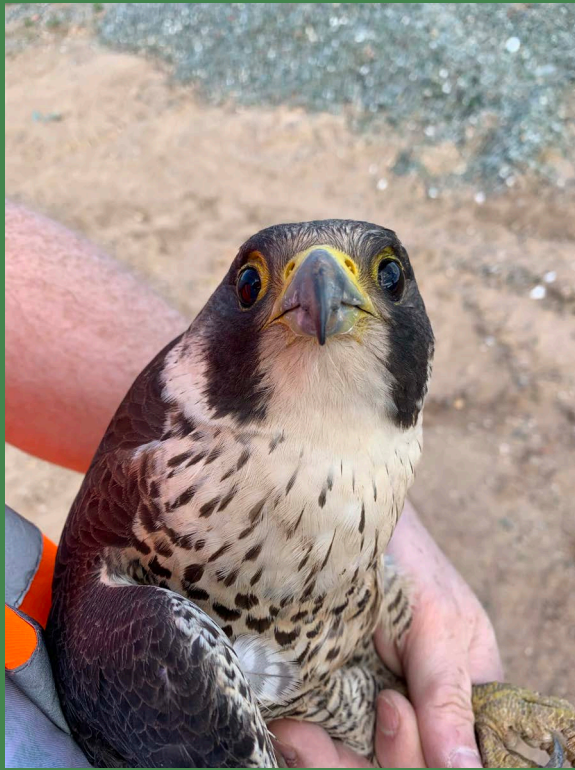
The pattern continues to show a preference for the West/South West which is seen across other similar projects past and present.

Interestingly since April 2017 we have seen a number of Black-headed gulls return to Marsh lane for different periods of time.



With thanks to Marsh Lane Nature Reserve and all those that report in sightings and photograph the birds.

Please continue to report your colour ringed sightings as these birds long-lived and we are keen to receive all sightings.



Working with Raptors

Peregrine Falcon Project 2019

Ben Dolan and Jim Stewart provide an update on the Peregrine Falcon project they have been working on for several years. 2019 was an unusual year, but several birds successfully fledged.

2019 saw an unusual year with the Peregrine Falcons that we monitor, we have 3 sites in Staffordshire and 1 in West Midlands. We are only able to access three of these sites safely for ringing.

Two of our Staffordshire sites successfully hatched five eggs each, however over the next couple of weeks five of these died for unknown reasons but were fed to the remaining chicks who fledged. Our third Staffordshire site hatched and fledged two chicks.

Our West Midlands site had a poor year in 2018 with only two chicks fledging after successfully fledging four chicks every year since 2015.

2019 saw them return to their regular breeding success, fledging 4 healthy chicks, although one died following a window strike and another was found dead by unknown cause two months later, 31km away in Stone, Staffordshire.



A Peregrine Falcon from our project

In 2019 Manx Shearwater remains were found at one of our nests!!!

Downed Raptor Support



A rescued Tawny Owl Chick from Staffordshire

Every year we receive phone calls or messages from members of the community concerned for birds that appear injured and this year was no different, Our first call was about two tawny chicks, which had fell from the nest and one had died, we arrived and returned the bird to its nest, which then successfully fledged.

The second was another older tawny chick, which was found on the ground, which is not uncommon, however we arrived and placed it higher in a tree.

The third was a call from one of our ringing sites in Meriden who said there was a Peregrine Falcon on the floor, but was unable to fly. We attended the site with the RSPCA and quickly found the bird and caught it, the bird was thin and we could feel two small lumps in his wing.

The RSPCA took the bird away for assessment but was unable to save him after confirming he had been shot in the wing joint and would not fly again, unfortunately this bird was not ringed so we were unable to understand where the bird had come from.

Staffordshire Pied flycatchers

Ringling Group member Keith Clowes has been ringing Pied flycatchers in North Staffordshire for over 20 years. In this article he describes the work he has undertaken and his plans for the future.

I have been ringing Pied Flycatchers and Redstart in North Staffordshire for some time now, so much so that the nest boxes I have erected over the years have needed replacing on several occasions.

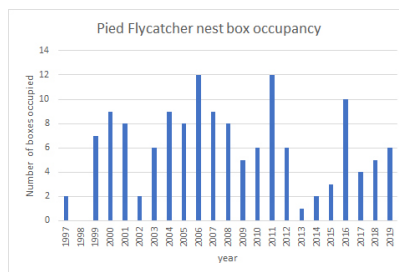
Pied Flycatchers are a small, fly-catching bird, slightly smaller than a sparrow. The male is mostly black on the upper-parts and white underneath, with a bold white patch on the folded wing. Females are browner.

They are a summer visitor and breeds across the UK favouring the West. Their winters are spent in West Africa.

The Pied flycatcher is a red list species and its numbers are in decline. The species is threatened by climate change causing earlier peaks in invertebrate populations which results in a mismatch with breeding and lack of food for nestlings (Both et al. 2006).



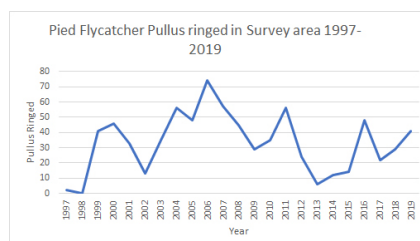
Male Pied flycatcher



To date I have ringed nearly 1000 Pied Flycatcher chicks in North Staffordshire.

The woodlands are also home to some other fantastic birds including Redstart, Wood Warbler, Dipper and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers!

I have included some of my findings in respect of Pied flycatchers in the attached charts.



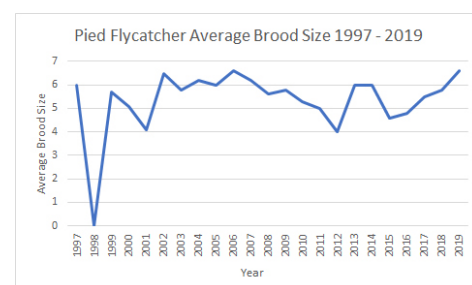
Left: Jess, Sarah and Keith installing new boxes

The woodlands of North Staffordshire provide some excellent breeding habitat for Flycatchers and it is in these locations where I have installed nest boxes to hopefully encourage more breeding pairs in the area.

We work with local landowners, including Forestry England who continue to support the nest box project.

In 2019 we installed a further 20 nest boxes and we plan to install many more in 2020 and 2021.

We hope that in the years to come, the nest box project will continue to provide breeding habitat for these birds in the area.



Wood Warbler caught and ringed in Staffordshire

Other News for 2019

Some other news stories from our ringing year in 2019, including some new species being recorded!



Rory Lay at Wolverley (near Wem) and Richard Tomlinson on the Shropshire/Cheshire border at Burleydam kindly hosted us for several thermal imaging sessions in 2019. We have ringed at their farms previously, but with Martin now in the group we hope to visit more regularly.

Rory and Richard are both really keen to get out with us and experience bird ringing first hand.

Rory has also started to try his hand out dazzling, and is getting very good with the net (see photo).

At the end of the year Roy Marsh of Cockshutt (near Ellesmere) became the most recent farmer to welcome us onto his land.

We plan to increase the number of farmers we work with in Shropshire in 2020

Aside from ringing we helped with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust's Big Farmland Bird Count at three Shropshire holdings and three in Staffordshire in February.

The results are available from the GWCT website.

In January 2020 we will be providing a demonstration to farmers in Staffordshire. This will involve showing them farmland birds in the hand, in order to help them identify species for the 2020 Big Farmland Bird Count.



New Group Members

2019 saw us welcome two new BTO C permit ringers to West Midlands Ringing Group.

Keith Clowes (pictured p.40) and Martin George have been friends of the ringers in the group for many years and it was great to welcome them into the team.

Martin will be operating in North Shropshire and Keith in North Staffordshire.

We look forward to working with them both in the years to come and sharing their experiences of ringing.

We have also been supported by other ringing groups who continue to provide their support.



Martin George



Ringling Data

Ringling Recoveries

In 2019 the group encountered 139 birds that had previously been ringed, by the group or elsewhere in the country or abroad. The following page provides highlights of these encounters.

The following chart provides details of birds that we have ringed and have been encountered elsewhere, and birds ringed elsewhere we have recovered. West Midlands Ringing Group sites are highlighted. Sadly both Woodcock were shot, however we are grateful that their details have been provided to us in order that we can understand their movements.

Species	Location ringed	Date ringed	Location Found	Date Found	Distance km
Brambling	Bodo, Norway	11/09/2018	Needwood, Staffordshire	19/01/2019	1831
Siskin	Stirling, Scotland	16/04/2017	Needwood, Staffordshire	19/01/2019	411
Reed Warbler	Marsh Lane NR	12/08/2017	Tichfield Haven NR	29/07/2019	183
Reed Warbler	Sutton ST	16/08/2017	Ladywalk NR, Hamms Hall	16/06/2019	7
Cetti's Warbler	Marsh Lane NR	04/11/2015	Stortons Gravel Pits, Northampton	14/04/2019	55
Siskin	Cannock Chase	24/06/2016	Drummond, Inverness	17/03/2019	539
Woodcock	LDF, Staffs	18/11/2017	Evesham, Worcestershire	10/01/2019	66
Woodcock	LDF, Staffs	27/01/2018	Kaluga, Russia	10/04/2019	2481
Redwing	Chillington, Staffs	14/12/2018	Cannock Chase	23/10/2019	18
Oystercatcher	Marsh Lane NR	13/06/2019	Neath, Port Talbot	13/09/2019	173
Swallow	Whiston Hall Farm, Shrops	11/06/2016	Shifnal ST	27/04/2019	8
Peregrine	Staffordshire	23/05/2018	Newtown, Wales	10/04/2019	87
Reed Bunting	Shifnal ST	16/12/2018	Chelmarsh NR	03/01/2019	21
Reed Bunting	Attingham, Shrops	18/09/2019	Shifnal ST	01/12/2019	20
Reed Bunting	Chelmarsh Reservoir	03/01/2019	Lower Barns Farm, Pittingham	02/03/2019	15
Reed Bunting	Shifnal ST	16/12/2018	Woodford, Poynton, Cheshire	03/03/2019	78
Reed Bunting	Shifnal ST	22/12/2019	Cressage, Shropshire	30/04/2019	15

Returning Nightjar

Earlier in our report you will have read about our Nightjar project. The following chart provides details of Nightjar that were caught in Staffordshire in 2019 that had previously been encountered in the county!

For ease, we have referred to the birds as (Ad) for free flying adult and Chick for birds that were ringed in the nest. Where a bird has been encountered in multiple years the additional dates are included in column 2. We think this data is really key to understanding these birds and the importance of their breeding sites!

Species name	Age	Sex	Date Caught	Location	Date Originally caught(1)	Date Originally caught (2)	Location	Age
Nightjar	Ad	M	12/05/2019	Cannock Chase	07/08/2013		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	26/05/2019	Cannock Chase	19/06/2017		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	27/05/2019	Cannock Chase	15/06/2018		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	29/05/2019	Cannock Chase	26/06/2018		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	29/05/2019	Cannock Chase	17/05/2011		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	29/05/2019	Cannock Chase	15/06/2018		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	01/06/2019	Cannock Chase	02/07/2018		Cannock Chase	Chick
Nightjar	Ad	M	03/06/2019	Cannock Chase	28/06/2012		Cannock Chase	Chick
Nightjar	Ad	F	07/06/2019	Cannock Chase	18/06/2016	25/06/2018	Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	08/06/2019	Cannock Chase	02/07/2014	28/06/2015	Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	F	20/06/2019	Cannock Chase	23/05/2017	13/06/2017	Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	21/06/2019	Cannock Chase	25/05/2010		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	13/07/2019	Cannock Chase	03/06/2018		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	16/07/2019	Cannock Chase	21/06/2018	30/06/2018	Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	16/07/2019	Cannock Chase	19/08/2018		Cannock Chase	Ad
Nightjar	Ad	M	11/08/2019	Cannock Chase	08/08/2018		Cannock Chase	Ad

Ringing Totals for 2019

Species	Number	Species	Number	Species	Number
Barn Owl	13	Grey Wagtail	32	Siskin	23
Blackbird	24	House Martin	60	Skylark	214
Blackcap	315	House Sparrow	7	Snipe (Common)	16
Black-headed Gull	19	Jack Snipe	21	Song Thrush	7
Blue Tit	135	Jay	1	Sparrowhawk	1
Brambling	85	Lapwing	4	Starling	16
Bullfinch	7	Lesser Whitethroat	3	Stock Dove	3
Buzzard	1	Linnet	268	Stronechat	7
Cetti's Warble	4	Little Owl	3	Swallow	73
Chaffinch	60	Long Eared Owl	2	Swift	2
Chiffchaff	46	Long-tailed Tit	33	Tawny Owl	8
Coal Tit	20	Marsh Tit	1	Teal	2
Collared Dove	2	Meadow Pipit	44	Tree Pipit	9
Common Tern	12	Nightjar	69	Treecreeper	1
Cuckoo	3	Nuthatch	16	Tufted Duck	1
Dipper	4	Oystercatcher	1	Wheatear	3
Dunnock	44	Peregrine Falcon	10	Whitethroat (common)	9
Fieldfare	16	Pied Flycatcher	43	Willow Warbler	9
Garden Warbler	17	Pied Wagtail	28	Wood Warbler	1
Goldcrest	41	Redpoll	4	Woodcock	72
Golden Plover	1	Redstart	20	Woodlark	4
Goldfinch	91	Redwing	167	Woodpigeon	6
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	Reed bunting	205	Wren	40
Great Tit	99	Reed Warbler	43	Yellow Wagtail	6
Green Sandpiper	1	Robin	64	Yellowhammer	60
Greenfinch	21	Sand Martin	16		
Grey Partridge	15	Sedge Warbler	10	Total	2861

Subsequent Recaptures (Including Controlled birds)

The following table contains data of birds that have been recaptured by West Midlands Ringing Group in 2019.

This data includes birds that have been recaptured at the same location or controlled birds. Controlled birds are birds that have been previously ringed or encountered by other ringers or ringing groups in the UK. For this data we have only included controlled birds that have been recaptured over 10km away from our sites.

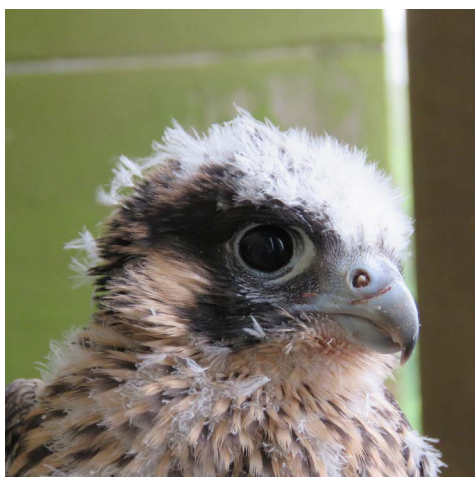


Species	Numbers Recaptured/ controlled
Blue Tit	7
Brambling	4
Chaffinch	2
Chiffchaff	2
Common Tern	1
Dunnock	5
Goldfinch	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1
Great Tit	1
Greenfinch	1
Grey Partridge	1
House Martin	1
Jack Snipe	1
Linnet	35
Long-tailed Tit	3
Nightjar	23
Peregrine	1
Pied Flycatcher	1
Redwing	1
Reed Bunting	27
Reed Warbler	7
Robin	1
Siskin	3
Skylark	18
Swallow	1
Willow Warbler	1
Woodcock	1
Yellowhammer	1
Total	152

Species name	2019	2018	move- ment	no.	Species name	2019	2018	move- ment	no.
Barn Owl	13	1	Up	12	Pied/White Wagtail	28	13	Up	15
Blackbird	24	18	Up	16					
Blackcap	315	143	Up	172	Redpoll	4	126	Down	122
Black-headed Gull	19	97	Down	78	Redwing	167	70	Up	97
					Reed Bunting	205	215	Down	10
Blue Tit	135	81	Up	81	Reed Warbler	43	16	Up	27
Brambling	81	1	Up	80	Robin	64	31	Up	33
Bullfinch	7	4	Up	3	Sand Martin	16	76	Down	60
Cetti's Warbler	4	1	Up	3	Sedge Warbler	10	9	Up	1
Chaffinch	60	9	Up	51	Siskin	23	83	Down	60
Chiffchaff	46	12	Up	48	Skylark	214	129	Up	85
Coal Tit	20	11	Up	9	Snipe	16	31	Down	15
Common Tern	12	18	Down	6	Song Thrush	7	9	Down	2
Cuckoo	3	2	Down	1	Sparrowhawk	1	1	Equal	0
Dunnock	44	22	Up	22	Starling	16	1	Up	15
Fieldfare	16	41	Down	25	Stock Dove	3	5	Down	2
Garden Warbler	17	9	Up	8	Swallow	73	33	Up	40
					Teal	2	2	Equal	0
Goldcrest	41	6	Up	35	Tree Pipit	9	2	Up	7
Golden Plover	1	4	Down	1	Wheatear	3	1	Up	2
Goldfinch	91	18	Up	73	Whitethroat	9	3	Up	6
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	3	Down	2	Willow Warbler	9	3	Up	6
					Woodcock	72	73	Down	1
Great Tit	99	50	Up	49	Wren	40	5	Up	35
Greenfinch	21	2	Up	19	Yellow Wagtail	6	20	Down	14
Grey Partridge	15	11	Up	4	Yellowhammer	60	50	Up	10
Grey Wagtail	32	16	Up	16	New Species in 2019		Not ringed in 2019		
House Martin	60	29	Up	31	Dipper		Carrion Crow		
House Sparrow	7	2	Up	5	Woodlark		Common Crossbill		
Jack Snipe	21	23	Down	2	Long Eared Owl		Common Sandpiper		
Lapwing	4	1	Up	3	Tufted Duck		Corn Bunting		
Lesser Whitethroat	3	1	Up	2	Swift		Goshawk		
					Buzzard		Grasshopper Warbler		
Linnet	268	60	Up	208	Collared Dove		Great Grey Shrike		
Little Owl	3	4	Down	1	Green Sandpiper		Hobby		
Long tailed Tit	33	16	Up	17	Jay		Kestrel		
Marsh tit	1	1	=		Pied Flycatcher		Mallard		
Meadow Pipit	44	166	Down	122	Redstart		Moorhen		
Nightjar	69	22	Up	47	Stonechat		Spotted Flycatcher		
Nuthatch	16	2	Up	14	Swift				
Oystercatcher	1	1	=		Tawny Owl				
Peregrine	10	11	Down	1	Treecreeper				
					Wood Warbler				
					Woodpigeon				

2019 a Year in Review

Some final thoughts on our ringing year in 2019



There will be several reasons for the differences, ringing effort, weather and bird numbers in the area but all in all 2019 has been a success in terms of ringing.

But being part of WMRG is not just about ringing and this year has seen us promoting our work with public demonstrations, presenting our work to the BTO and Cannock Chase AONB Annual Conference and securing significant funding.

We are a small group but we ensure that everyone of the team has the opportunity to take part in everything that we do. It is also vitally important for us as a team, that everyone's activities are represented equally and fairly.

This report reflects the activities of all of our members and each section and article has been a team approach.

2019 was a good year for the group, and our total ringing numbers have increased. But its not all about numbers, and this year has seen us concentrate on certain project based species.

The effort put into our Nightjar work definitely impacted on other areas of our work, but the rewards were worth it.

Some species have seen an increase and some have seen a decrease in numbers ringed.

We are extremely grateful to our landowners for allowing us access to their sites, and in particular to our farmers.

On a final note I need to pay tribute to everyone in the group, and those from outside of the group who have had an input into the content and creation of this report.

So from Hoppy, Ben, Jim, Keith and Martin many thanks for reading OUR report. We do hope you've enjoyed it!



2020 Starting the New Decade with a Bang!



January and February will not only be busy with ringing, but with a number of meetings we have arranged to discuss exciting projects for the next few years.

We hope to secure several new ringing sites and commence some very exciting projects in the greg.

Technology is likely to remain a key part of our work and 2020 hopefully will see our final year of the Nightjar Project on Cannock Chase completed.

We are also planning several demonstrations and a ringing event at Marsh Lane with the SCAN ringing Group.

Enjoy 2020! See you next year!

Contact us

For details of how to get in touch with us, or to find out what we are up to take a look below!

There are various ways that you can get in touch with us, and for our latest news we are on Twitter and Facebook

For information on our farmland survey work or if you are a landowner and want to arrange a visit from us then please get in touch via email.

For details of demonstrations or for data enquiries please email us.

wmrg.contact@gmail.com

Want to start ringing?

The ringing process involves much more than you might imagine, preparation and planning to catch and ring birds is essential.

Habitat management at ringing sites, maintenance of equipment and stocking winter feeding stations are all essential jobs.

We share chores with everyone getting involved. There is a lot to do and it will take up a lot of time.

As a group we are active all year. Most of our activity is often early in the morning, so sessions starting at, or before, 5am are commonplace.

Our ringing sites are rarely accessible by public transport so you would need to consider this.


During summer and winter we are often out on an evening or at night undertaking thermal surveys and nightjar sessions.

If you undertake bat surveys as part of your work or as a hobby then this may conflict with training.


If you are interested then please get in touch.




Little Owl




To find us on Facebook, search for
West Midlands Ringing Group




For Twitter please follow
@ringerswm



To view our YouTube channel, subscribe to:
West Midlands ringing group.



To contact us via email
wmrg.contact@gmail.com



www.westmidlandsringinggroup.co.uk



The Society was formed in 1955 and aims to encourage the study and protection of birds in Shropshire and elsewhere.

It organises a wide range of activities, including indoor meetings and field trips, undertakes survey work and produces an annual bird report and a quarterly bulletin.

SOS values the work of the WMRG for the contribution they make to our understanding of the County's birds.

In December 2019, The Society published The Birds of Shropshire,

This is the most comprehensive record of the County's avifauna ever published. It is based on the results of six years fieldwork by over 650 different observers who submitted over 333,400 records.

These records have been used to produce maps showing the current distribution of almost 200 different species.

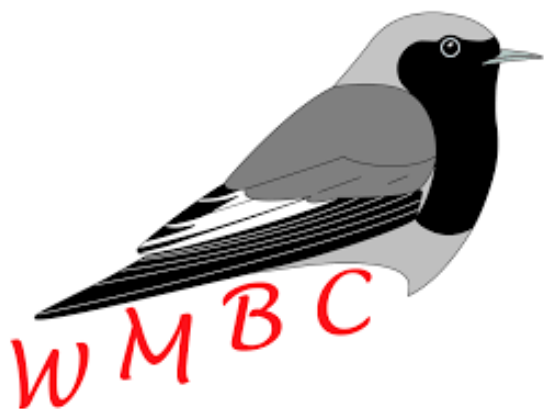
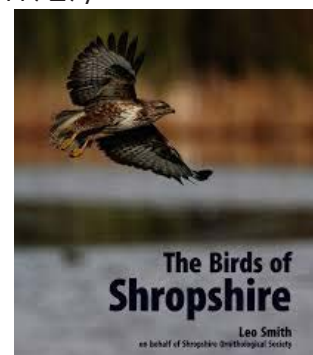
The Birds of Shropshire includes an account for each species, describing its distribution and relative abundance.

For many species it will show that massive changes have occurred in their population and distribution.

The Birds of Shropshire will shape conservation priorities in the County for the next 20 years

For more details visit the SOS website and for the Birds of Shropshire visit

<https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/books/id/41929/>



West Midland Bird Club is a regional organisation that is dedicated to the study and conservation of wild birds in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

We have bird reserves at Belvide and Blithfield reservoirs in Staffordshire, Harborne near the city of Birmingham in the West Midlands and Ladywalk in Warwickshire.

WMBC also have access agreement to bird-watch at Gailey Reservoirs in Staffordshire (permission of the Canal & Rivers Trust) and at the Moors Pool at the Upton Warren reserve in Worcestershire (with permission of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust).

The Club also operates a network of local branches throughout the region and operates field trips for its members.

The Club publishes a comprehensive and highly acclaimed Annual Report of the birds of the region, which is the only authentic source of information on the avifauna of our four counties.

For further information about The West Midland Bird Club or if you would like to become a member please visit the website at

www.westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk



Staffordshire Wildlife Trust



Protecting Staffordshire's Wildlife and places for over 50 years

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust is your local wildlife charity dedicated to looking after Staffordshire's wildlife and wild places. Our mission is to protect and enhance the wildlife and wild places of Staffordshire and to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world by putting wildlife at the heart of everything we do.

The UK has become one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. We actively work to protect all wildlife including birds, mammals, invertebrates, flowers, trees, fungi, fish, amphibians and reptiles. Our conservation projects help to create and restore habitats for wildlife, to ensure that the county's wild creatures have secure places where they can feed, shelter and breed.



For more information about our work visit: www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk

Or to become a member visit: www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/support-us/become-member



Registered charity number 259558 Limited company no 959609

Looking after **Staffordshire's wildlife**



The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is a UK charity that focuses on understanding birds and, in particular, how and why bird populations are changing. Our vision is of a world where people are inspired by birds and informed by science.

A world inspired by birds and informed by science.

There are lots of ways you can contribute. Many help by taking part in fieldwork surveys - but you can also support the BTO as a member, becoming a regional organiser, help at an event, or donate to an appeal.

BTO Surveys are a great way of learning more about the birds and other wildlife in your local area.

The BTO organises a range of surveys every year.

Some surveys can be

done by beginners from the comfort of their own homes whilst others require more skill and endurance!

All BTO surveys make an important contribution to our understanding of the UK's birds.

For more information about taking part in a BTO survey or supporting their work, please visit

www.bto.org

