

AVON BTO REGION



News

The newsletter for BTO members and volunteers in The Avon Region

November 2021

Welcome to the BTO Avon Newsletter. This newsletter is aimed at providing local communication between the BTO and its members and volunteers in our county covering a variety of topics including gaps in surveys, what's happening nationally as well as locally.

With Covid-19 restrictions being slowly lifted throughout the year I hope many of you have managed to get out enjoy the benefits of birdwatching and taking part in our local surveys when you have felt comfortable to do so, out in the field, and those of you who have contributed by monitoring your local garden birds, all your work and commitment is appreciated by the BTO. Appreciation of nature is surely an inherent part of being a BTO supporter, and we are aware of the benefits of watching birds, so let's hope in the near future we can say goodbye to Covid-19, but in the meantime say safe and please carry on the important work with surveys when and where you can.

Membership

BTO Membership in Avon currently stands at 337 members with the total number of members and non-members making up the BTO Avon community standing at 930. Hopefully 2022 will see an increase in membership and volunteers as we try to raise the profile of the BTO in the county. Good communication from BTO nationally but most importantly BTO Avon locally is essential to increase membership as we begin to try to encourage a few more people to join. Those people that are already members will know that as part of their subscription they receive BTO News four times a year covering a variety of BTO topics and an Annual Review.

There is also a 15% reduction in the cost of a BTO Training Course to improve your identification, fieldcraft and survey skills and enrich your birdwatching. Sounds like several good reasons to join. more information can be found here - www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/join-bto

Garden BirdWatch

The BTO's year-round survey of garden birds has always been very successful and 2021 has seen a surge in membership, we have 369 garden birdwatches taking part in Avon, helped by the offer a free membership (less Bird Table magazine) which I'm pleased to say is still ongoing, so why not mention it to a friend. If you're one of those new 2021 members, then welcome! Regardless of how many years you've been involved in Garden Birdwatch, we do thank you for all your data, and we do hope you've had great pleasure in watching your garden birds. I've certainly found it a great help during this year's restrictions.



Gardens are important for biodiversity and will become increasingly important as our landscape becomes more urbanised. The more we can understand about how wildlife uses garden resources, the more we can improve our cities, towns, villages and individual gardens for nature.

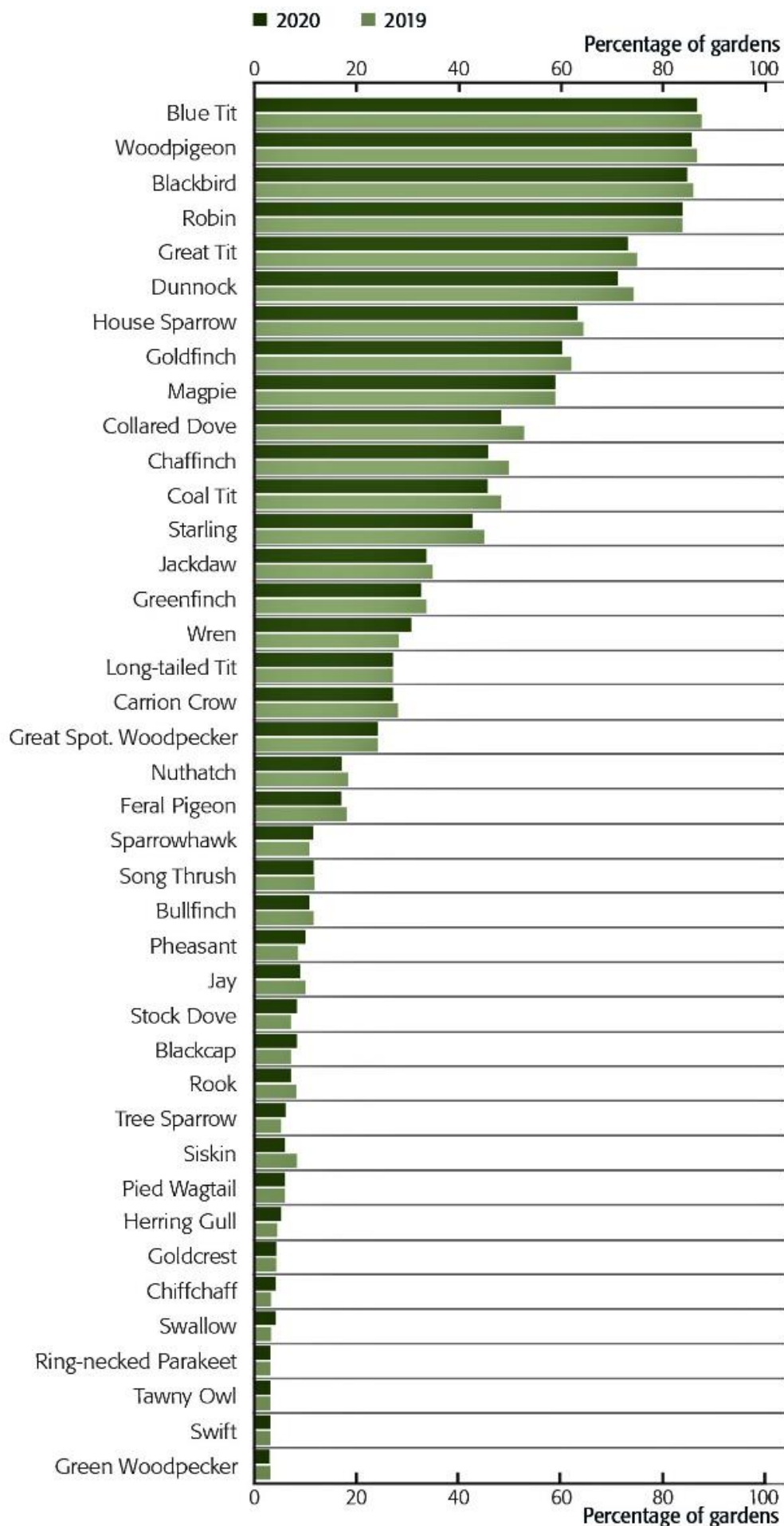
2020 Annual Results

The accompanying chart shows the reporting rates for 2019 (pale green) and 2020 (dark green).

Notable changes include the decline in Blue Tit and Great Tit sightings between 2019 and 2020, following a poor breeding season. Blackbird numbers were down, the result of a combination of dry conditions hampering breeding success and fewer birds arriving from overseas in the autumn. Siskins were also seen in fewer gardens in spring 2020, but higher numbers were reported by the end of the year.

On a positive note, more Wrens were reported in 2020 than the previous year, highlighting the continued recovery from 2018's 'Beast from the East', which hit this and other small birds hard. Sparrowhawk did well in 2020, its population continuing to recover and expand, following an end to widespread persecution.

BTO Garden BirdWatch reporting rates



2020



Gardens during **January** were reporting more Long-tailed Tits, likely due to the mild conditions improving survival rates.



Bramblings were reported from many fewer GBW gardens than is typical for **February**. A lack of harsh weather in Scandinavia probably contributed.

In **March**, Siskins were reported from only 7.5% of gardens, when we would normally expect to see a figure closer to 20%

April was unusually warm, demonstrated by the rather early emergence of Holly Blue butterflies. These butterflies were reported from a quarter of GBW gardens, rather than the usual 8%.

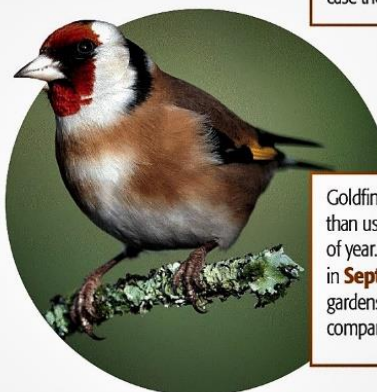


May saw Song Thrush numbers rise above the previous years. Given the long-term decline evident in this species, this is welcome news.



In **June**, we saw an increase in the number of gardens featuring House Martins, up on last year. This might suggest that more birds survived the winter and their long migratory journeys.

July Fewer Great Tits were reported in July gardens, likely due to a poor breeding season. 5% fewer gardens saw this usually common species than was the case the same month last year.

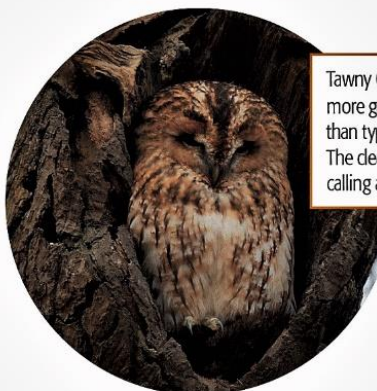


Goldfinch numbers were lower than usual throughout the last half of year. This was most pronounced in **September**, where 53% of gardens reported Goldfinch, compared to 2019's 57%.

August saw lower Common Frog numbers than recorded in recent years. The dry spring and summer likely might have reduced activity levels and perhaps even resulted in the loss of spawn as shallow breeding ponds dried out.



2020 was a good year for Sparrowhawk, particularly **October**. This might reflect a good breeding season, or perhaps more individuals were visiting gardens because of change in prey availability in the countryside.



Tawny Owls were recorded in more gardens during **November** than typical for the time of year. The clear weather likely increased calling activity.



Badgers were not recorded as often in previous **Decembers**. This is normally seen when conditions are cooler, and they spend more time underground.

The collection of such information is incredibly useful and, if carried out in a systematic manner, these weekly observations of birds (and other garden wildlife) can prove very valuable for researchers. BTO Garden Birdwatch enables you to collect this information in a standardised way alongside similar information from many thousands of other garden birdwatchers. In effect, you are a 'citizen scientist' working in partnership with BTO researchers to answer important questions about how, why, and when birds use gardens.

Disease and garden birds

Outbreaks of disease may occur in populations of wild birds wherever they occur, including those visiting gardens. Because garden birdwatchers take so much interest in the birds visiting their gardens, they may occasionally come across diseased birds and several different diseases have been reported from birds seen at garden feeding stations. These include those caused by Salmonella and E. coli but other, less familiar disease may also occur.

As most of us prepare for our winter visitors in the garden it is important to regularly clean our feeders and bird tables and change water in bird baths good hygiene practices at garden feeding stations, and look at the advice and factsheets at www.gardenwildlifehealth.org, the partnership project site that we are running with IoZ, RSPB and Frog life.

Explore the Garden BirdWatch results at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/results or contact GWB Ambassador, Jane Cumming at kittiwake@yahoo.co.uk

Surveys and monitoring

The Breeding Bird Survey was launched in 1994 and involves thousands of volunteer birdwatchers carrying out standardised annual bird counts on randomly-located 1-km sites. Comparing these annual counts enables us to monitor the population changes of over 100 bird species, The survey is designed to be a simple and enjoyable birdwatching exercise.

Participating in surveys is both rewarding and educational. If you haven't been involved before, it will give you a different perspective on birding and help you develop new skills, such as counting individual birds and using maps to plot their locations. At the same time, you will be helping to gather valuable data to help us understand how our birds are faring and what can be done to help them. Taking part in a survey can seem daunting at first but it soon becomes second nature.

The following provides a summary of the surveys and monitoring run by the BTO that you can be involved with.

Avon Breeding Bird Survey 2020

It should be said first that 2020 was not a 'normal' year! The first Covid-19 Lockdown announcement neatly coincided with the despatch of forms for the 2020 Survey and initially it looked like the season would need to be written off. However, compared with 2001 (the Foot & Mouth year) when only 75 squares were surveyed, all but nine of which were in Bristol, we did ultimately gather some valuable data across the Region.

A total of 159 squares, including 105 for the national BBS scheme (including the three WBBS 'squares') were surveyed. This compares to 232 squares surveyed in 2019 (inc. the three WBBS) of which 164 were national BBS squares. Overall, about 10% of the Avon BTO Region was surveyed with at least one visit and 33585 individuals of 93 species were recorded (compared to 74527 individuals of 108 species in 2019) at the rate of 121 birds per hour of surveying.

Table 1 - Breakdown of squares surveyed

Unitary Authority	Squares Surveyed	% Of UA Area Surveyed	Numbers Recorded	% Of Total Birds Recorded
Bath & NE Somerset	35	10%	8436	25.0%
North Somerset	42	10.7%	10327	30.7%
South Gloucestershire	39	8.9%	6730	20.3%
City of Bristol	25	21.7%	4787	14.2%
Somerset (BTO Avon)	18	5.4%	3305	9.8%
	159		33585	

Table 2 below lists all the species recorded in the Survey in 2020 and gives the number counted, the total of squares in which each species was recorded and the percentage of the total of squares surveyed in which they were encountered.

Species	Number Counted 2020	Distribution in area surveyed 2020 Squares % in which of Squares recorded surveyed		Species	Number Counted 2020	Distribution in area surveyed 2020 Squares % in which of Squares recorded surveyed	
Red-legged Partridge	10	6	3.8	Great Tit	492	116	73.0
Pheasant	336	84	52.8	Skylark	466	58	36.5
Canada Goose	134	5	3.1	Sand Martin	9	1	0.6
Grey lag	2	2	1.3	Swallow	537	100	62.9
Mute Swan	44	8	5.0	House Martin	365	55	34.6
Shelduck	89	9	5.7	Cetti's Warbler	3	3	1.9
Mandarin	1	1	0.6	Long-tailed Tit	172	43	27.0
Mallard	365	48	30.2	Willow Warbler	35	17	10.7
Tufted Duck	15	2	1.3	Chiffchaff	611	122	76.7
Swift	247	52	32.7	Sedge Warbler	25	10	6.3
Cuckoo	1	1	0.6	Reed Warbler	63	18	11.3
Feral Pigeon	731	47	29.6	Blackcap	722	127	79.9
Stock Dove	154	39	24.5	Garden Warbler	12	11	6.9
Wood Pigeon	3705	158	99.4	L'r Whitethroat	17	11	6.9
Collared Dove	402	95	59.7	Whitethroat	274	72	45.3
Moorhen	47	26	16.4	Goldcrest	85	34	21.4

Coot	16	6	3.8	Wren	1852	158	99.4
Little Grebe	2	2	1.3	Nuthatch	55	30	18.9
Great Crested Grebe	3	1	0.6	Treecreeper	14	11	6.9
Oystercatcher	7	3	1.9	Starling	1555	73	45.9
Whimbrel	7	4	2.5	Blackbird	2350	156	98.1
Curlew	14	3	1.9	Song Thrush	356	112	70.4
Common Sandpiper	3	2	1.3	Mistle Thrush	32	21	13.2
Common Gull	6	1	0.6	Sp'd Flycatcher	3	2	1.3
Herring Gull	670	87	54.7	Robin	1132	144	90.6
Lesser Bk-backed Gull	659	99	62.3	Redstart	1	1	0.6
Cormorant	13	11	6.9	Stonechat	13	6	3.8
Grey Heron	47	25	15.7	Wheatear	3	1	0.6
Little Egret	6	3	1.9	Dipper	4	2	1.3
Sparrowhawk	12	12	7.5	House Sparrow	2817	113	71.1
Red Kite	8	7	4.4	Duncock	525	123	77.4
Buzzard	114	53	33.3	Yellow Wagtail	1	1	0.6
Tawny Owl	5	5	3.1	Grey Wagtail	24	14	8.8
Kingfisher	3	3	1.9	Pied Wagtail	90	42	26.4
Gt Spot Woodpecker	118	64	40.3	Meadow Pipit	31	7	4.4
Green Woodpecker	66	42	26.4	Tree Pipit	2	2	1.3
Kestrel	16	11	6.9	Rock Pipit	2	1	0.6
Peregrine	4	4	2.5	Chaffinch	481	110	69.2
Jay	58	38	23.9	Bullfinch	45	24	15.1
Magpie	878	134	84.3	Greenfinch	205	71	44.7
Jackdaw	2721	135	84.9	Linnet	325	39	24.5
Rook	1026	55	34.6	Crossbill	1	1	0.6
Carrion Crow	2502	154	96.9	Goldfinch	1183	135	84.9
Raven	82	41	25.8	Corn Bunting	73	11	6.9
Coal Tit	84	35	22.0	Yellowhammer	144	32	20.1
Marsh Tit	7	5	3.1	Reed Bunting	13	9	5.7
Blue Tit	925	138	86.8				



Table 3 - Percentage changes in species recorded in BBS in the BTO Avon Region in 2020

Species	% Change 2019- 20 'Late' visits only	% Change 2018-19 Full Survey	% Change 2009 -19
Pheasant	-2	-16	-4
Mallard	-7	24	-19
Swift	-42	18	-60
Feral Pigeon	10	11	18
Wood Pigeon	2	-8	7
Collared Dove	1	-10	-20
Magpie	-2	3	-1
Jackdaw	15	4	17
Rook	13	-21	-57
Carrion Crow	27	-8	-14
Blue Tit	-20	3	4
Great Tit	-24	-4	8
Skylark	-7	0	-8
Swallow	-11	7	-42
House Martin	-16	17	-5
Long-tailed Tit	-21	28	-2
Chiffchaff	19	7	-8
Blackcap	11	26	73
Whitethroat	47	31	0
Wren	-1	5	13
Starling	39	29	-39
Blackbird	2	-7	-11
Song Thrush	-5	-5	-19
Robin	-1	-1	-8
House Sparrow	8	14	36
Dunnock	13	-7	-4
Chaffinch	-4	-16	-48
Greenfinch	-12	-13	-62
Goldfinch	-8	10	88
Yellowhammer	-11	-14	-18

Out of the 30 species that are assessed above, 17 show a decrease compared to 2019 although that was 5% or less for six of the species. Locally as well as nationally, we have seen a decline in the Chaffinch population from 2007 – 2018, the UK Chaffinch population fell by a staggering 30%.

Swift and House Martin in Avon 1994–2020

Both aerial insectivorous species have suffered significant declines since the inception of BBS in 1994. In 2020 they appear to have fallen again after a good year in 2019 with declines of 42% for Swift and 16% for House Martin. While 2020 was a difficult year for the Survey in 2019 only 14% of the Swifts were recorded before May 16th while the figure for House Martin is 23% and it would seem that the 2020 'Late' visit results should be representative.

Many thanks to the 73 observers who made the time and effort to participate in the Survey - the level of coverage achieved would be impossible, and our knowledge of the changing fortunes of many of our common species much poorer, without your help.

A copy of the full 2020 Avon BBS Report can be obtained from Avon organiser Dave Stoddard at (dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk) and a big thank you for his excellent work in putting this report together.

Avon Winter Bird Survey 2019–2020

The winter of 2019–20 was the fourth season of the Avon Winter Bird Survey (AWBS) the aim of which is to monitor the changing fortunes of the common birds that spend the winter months in our area. The BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), with additional local coverage, has been well established in the Avon BTO Region since 1994. This has provided valuable data on the common breeding birds of our area. However, it was clear that we did not have the same level of knowledge of our overwintering bird populations. There is at present no National winter survey equivalent to BBS and this Survey is intended to fill that gap in the Avon Region.

In due course as data is built up it is hoped that we will be able to monitor changes in the populations of our common winter birds with a reasonable degree of confidence as we are able to do for our breeding birds with BBS.

Method

AWBS is conducted by birdwatchers who can recognise all the species likely to be encountered by both sight and sound. In 2019-20 a total of 67 observers participated, many of them members of the Bristol Ornithological Club, the Bristol Naturalists' Society, and the British Trust for Ornithology (or even all three!). The survey consisted of visits to one-kilometre squares, most of which were already being surveyed as part of BBS. A minimum of two recording visits is made to each square, one in November/December and one at least four weeks later in January/February and observers may make an optional third visit. Observers make two one kilometre transects across the square recording all birds seen or heard

Results

It was another mild, wet and rather windy winter with above average rainfall throughout the period and no significant cold spells. A total of 145 squares were surveyed compared to 141 in 2017–18 and 148 in 2018–19. The area surveyed represents approximately 9.2% of the Region. Surveyed squares are spread reasonably evenly across the Region (**Table 4** below) but further coverage particularly in the Somerset section would be welcome. A total of 60287 birds of 96 species were recorded in the 145 squares at the rate of 155 birds per hour.

Table 4 - Breakdown of squares surveyed

Unitary Authority	Squares Surveyed	% of UA Area Surveyed	Birds Recorded	% of Total Birds Recorded
Bath & NE Somerset	29	8.3%	11763	19.5%
North Somerset	35	8.9%	14528	24.1%

South Gloucestershire	42	9.6%	18454	30.6%
City of Bristol	26	22.6%	8261	13.7%
Somerset (BTO Avon)	13	4%	7281	12.1%
	145		60287	

Table 5 - Birds recorded in AWBS in 2019 - 2020

Species	Number Counted 2019-20	Distribution in area surveyed 2019-20		Species	Number Counted 2019-20	Distribution in area surveyed 2019-20	
		Squares in which recorded	% of Squares surveyed			Squares in which recorded	% of Squares surveyed
Red-legged Partridge	111	7	4.8	Merlin	2	2	1.4
Pheasant	335	56	38.6	Peregrine	4	4	2.8
Canada Goose	231	5	3.4	Rg-nk Parakeet	1	1	0.7
Greylag	2	1	0.7	Jay	125	66	45.5
Mute Swan	93	15	10.3	Magpie	1489	136	93.8
Egyptian Goose	2	1	0.7	Jackdaw	5074	128	88.3
Shelduck	25	2	1.4	Rook	1503	58	40.0
Shoveler	1	1	0.7	Carrion Crow	4151	142	97.9
Wigeon	20	1	0.7	Raven	138	61	42.1
Mallard	836	45	31.0	Coal Tit	174	59	40.7
Teal	50	3	2.1	Marsh Tit	17	10	6.9
Tufted Duck	30	2	1.4	Blue Tit	2141	140	96.6
Goosander	9	1	0.7	Great Tit	1136	133	91.7
Feral Pigeon	1667	44	30.3	Skylark	355	32	22.1
Stock Dove	87	20	13.8	Cetti's Warbler	1	1	0.7
Woodpigeon	7671	142	97.9	Long-tailed Tit	792	95	65.5
Collared Dove	244	55	37.9	Chiffchaff	27	8	5.5
Moorhen	84	20	13.8	Blackcap	23	18	12.4
Coot	3	2	1.4	Goldcrest	141	51	35.2
Little Grebe	5	3	2.1	Wren	531	113	77.9
Oystercatcher	6	3	2.1	Nuthatch	126	46	31.7
Lapwing	150	6	4.1	Treecreeper	27	18	12.4
Golden Plover	200	1	0.7	Starling	8819	94	64.8
Curlew	14	5	3.4	Blackbird	1844	143	98.6
Turnstone	1	1	0.7	Fieldfare	1821	59	40.7
Dunlin	220	1	0.7	Redwing	2517	80	55.2
Woodcock	5	2	1.4	Song Thrush	222	80	55.2
Jack Snipe	3	1	0.7	Mistle Thrush	89	40	27.6

Snipe	55	3	2.1	Robin	1763	140	96.6
Green Sandpiper	1	1	0.7	Black Redstart	1	1	0.7
Redshank	28	3	2.1	Stonechat	34	15	10.3
Black-headed Gull	3423	58	40.0	Dipper	1	1	0.7
Common Gull	369	19	13.1	House Sparrow	2224	97	66.9
Herring Gull	1970	114	78.6	Dunnock	410	102	70.3
L. Black-back Gull	449	64	44.1	Grey Wagtail	17	10	6.9
Cormorant	50	16	11.0	Pied Wagtail	394	77	53.1
Grey Heron	44	20	13.8	Meadow Pipit	320	32	22.1
Great White Egret	1	1	0.7	Chaffinch	889	99	68.3
Little Egret	22	6	4.1	Bullfinch	79	34	23.4
Sparrowhawk	39	32	22.1	Greenfinch	172	46	31.7
Red Kite	1	1	0.7	Linnet	279	15	10.3
Buzzard	237	91	62.8	Lesser Redpoll	3	1	0.7
Barn Owl	2	2	1.4	Crossbill	5	1	0.7
Tawny Owl	3	2	1.4	Goldfinch	1184	105	72.4
Kingfisher	6	5	3.4	Siskin	34	3	2.1
Gt Spotted Woodp'r	109	57	39.3	Corn Bunting	39	7	4.8
Green Woodpecker	74	45	31.0	Yellowhammer	124	17	11.7
Kestrel	32	25	17.2	Reed Bunting	5	3	2.1

Table 6 - Percentage changes in species recorded in AWBS in the BTO Avon Region in the winter of 2019-20 (November to February) compared to the winter of 2018-19 (December to February)

Species	% Change	Species	% Change
Feral Pigeon	14%	Wren	-15%
Wood Pigeon	18%	Starling	-14%
Black-headed Gull	8%	Blackbird	-6%
Common Gull	-56%	Fieldfare	69%
Herring Gull	-14%	Redwing	-19%
Lesser Black-backed Gull	4%	Robin	-6%
Magpie	6%	House Sparrow	-13%
Jackdaw	-7%	Dunnock	-32%
Rook	-23%	Pied Wagtail	-29%
Carrion Crow	3%	Chaffinch	-27%
Blue Tit	-13%	Linnet	-63%
Great Tit	-29%	Goldfinch	-16%
Long-tailed Tit	8%		

While the resident Long-tailed Tit shows a healthy increase after its strong showing in the 2019 BBS (+28%) both Blue Tit and Great Tit both show significant declines - a very significant -29% in the case of Great Tit. Several the other smaller passerines also show declines including Wren (-15%), Dunnock (-32%) and Goldfinch (-16%). Linnet shows a large 63% decline in contrast to the 94% increase shown in 2018–19 - in contrast to that season only one flock of 100 or more was recorded in the Survey this season. Chaffinch also shows a significant decline in numbers (-27%) but this may be caused by a reduction in winter migrants as a result of milder conditions to the North and East.

An enormous and very sincere thank you to all observers who have made the effort to contribute to this Survey and add to our understanding of Avon's birds.

A copy of the full 2020 Avon WBBS Report can be obtained from Avon organiser Dave Stoddard at (dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk) and a big thank you for his excellent work once again in putting this report together.

Breeding Bird Survey 2022

The BBS season commences on 1st April, and it is hoped that by then we will be back to a position where the Survey can be conducted as normal

To take part in BBS you do not have to be a great ornithological expert – you just need the ability to identify common birds by sight and sound – if you can recognise the songs and calls of the likes of Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Blackcap then you will probably be fine. In the case of the National scheme the squares to be surveyed are randomly selected by the BTO and several squares are still available throughout the Region particularly in the Somerset section of our Region (western Mendips, Midsomer Norton and the Levels near Axbridge). There are two early morning visits per season plus an extra visit in the first year to check the route and record habitat. Most visits will be completed in two to two and a half hours.

Please also do not forget **the local Avon BBS scheme**. You can pick your own square whether it is around your home or any area where you enjoy birding. Squares in our section of the Mendips would be particularly welcome, the scheme operates on the same basis as the National scheme, and makes a very valuable contribution to our knowledge of the birds of the Region, but is a little simpler as there is no requirement to record habitat. Please just contact Dave (details below) to check that your proposed square doesn't duplicate one already being surveyed.

If you are interested in taking part in the Survey, or have any queries about BBS, then please contact the Avon Regional Organiser, Dave Stoddard (dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk Tel;- 0117 9246968) who will be pleased to help.

WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey)

WeBS surveyors monitor the UK's internationally important non-breeding waterbirds. Following a tradition begun in 1947, wetland sites are counted once per month, providing data for population and trends in abundance and distribution. The network of sites legally protected for their importance to wintering waterbirds depends fundamentally on the WeBS counts. "Waterbirds" includes wildfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), waders, rails, divers, grebes, cormorants, and herons. Gulls and terns are optionally included. In a typical year over 220 waterbird species, races or populations are counted in WeBS, including non-native, feral and vagrant species. National trends are produced for the most numerous 110 of these. So far this year in Avon we have counted 82 species at 24 locations.



We have also the following sites vacant, if you can help:

Avon - Butlers Close to Beese's Tea Gardens
East Harptree Court
Horton Pool
Kennet and Avon Canal Dundas Aqueduct to Grosvenor Bridge
Monks wood Reservoir
River Avon - Saltford (Mead Lane and The Shallows)
River Avon - Twerton Weir to Fielding's Footbridge (Bath)
St George's Park Lake

Where are the survey sites?

A WeBS site can be any wetland area, be it an estuary, lake or reservoir to a river, stream or even your local village duck pond. Many of the larger sites are regularly counted, but high priority vacant count areas do appear from time to time. However, even counts from small waterbodies are important - explore the vacant sites map to find sites near you where we need assistance; more information on using the tool can be found in: <https://app.bto.org/websonline/sites/vacant/vacant-sites.jsp> / or contact webs@bto.org

BirdTrack

BirdTrack is a free and convenient way of storing your bird records online. BirdTrack lets you keep up to date with what others are seeing, view the latest trends, and contribute your data to BTO science.

Taking part in BirdTrack is easy and fun. You simply provide some information about yourself, the sites where you go birdwatching, when you go birdwatching and most importantly, the birds you identify! BirdTrack allows you to store all of your bird records in a safe, easily accessible, and interactive format. Record on the go with BirdTrack Apps - Log your bird sightings anywhere in the world!

For more information go to (email: birdtrack@bto.org)

Chew Valley Ringing Station 2021

We got off to a reasonably good start at CVRS in 2021 and, given full access to the nature reserve, nest recording was able to go ahead more or less as normal. 880 pulli were ringed including 343 Reed Warblers, 240 Blue Tits and 140 Great Tits. However, some covid restrictions seemed still to be in operation and we were unable to run our ringing and theory courses. Only half of the CES visits were completed, and the Canada Goose roundup was called off, both due to lack of manpower. Some general ringing did take place however, and by mid-October our totals were 2100 new birds and 500 retraps. Reed Warblers, as usual, topped the list at 935. Other CVRS specials included 50 Sand Martin at roost, 31 Cetti's Warbler and 13 Bearded Tit.

This year we also 'bit the bullet' and began using Demon (Demography On-line) which involves sending our data directly via the internet into the BTO's central database. After some initial reluctance at having to learn a new system most of us are converts and very impressed with its functionality.

Hopefully things will improve in 2022 and there does seem to be some light at the end of the tunnel with a recent flurry of enquiries about training.

Many thanks to Mike Bailey of the Chew Valley Ringing group.

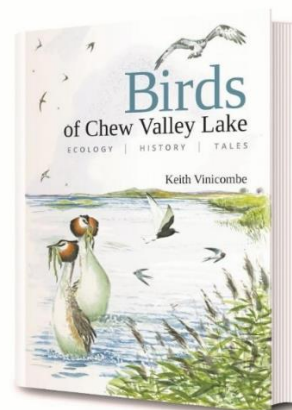
For more information visit <http://www.chewvalleyringingstation.co.uk/>

Birds of Chew Valley Lake

Review by Mike Bailey

This is a beautifully presented book describing a life-times bird watching at Chew Valley Lake. The quality of the whole production is excellent. Hardback with 464 pages, 330 pieces of artwork and more than 200 photographs.

I was asked to contribute about the ringing station and during the various discussions about what was required discovered that there's an inspiring back story to the book itself. Keith had collected a vast number of detailed notes and counts, and it was obviously becoming a daunting prospect for him to turn it into a book on his own. This is when his friends, eventually spearheaded by John Rossetti, stepped in. They helped with collating and checking the data, proof reading, finding the book's designer, organizing the printing and finally the all-important fund raising. The artwork includes lovely illustrations by the late Laurel Tucker and paintings that were commissioned by Ray Scally. Together with the splendid photographs it means that virtually every bird recorded at the lake is illustrated.



However, it is not just about the birds. The introductory chapters cover the history (and prehistory) of the area; the creation of the reservoir; other leisure activities and the lake's ecology. The humorous tales about memorable moments all add up to make this a delightful read. I would wholeheartedly recommend it.

Birds of Chew Valley Lake by Keith Vinicombe
ISBN:978-1-5272-6368-0

Littleton on Severn Ringing Group

Littleton ringing team operate from the Littleton Brick Works, which is an Avon Wildlife Trust reserve site, and I would like to thank Paul House and Mark Dabbs for there summary of work this year. So far they have ringed 1246 new birds, retrapped 374 with a total of 1620 processed.

Very little in the way of more unusual species caught this year. A Redstart was good for us, only the 4th in the 6 years since we have been ringing. A late Garden Warbler on 10 Oct, not an Avon record, but later than all the 3830 captured at Chew over the years where the latest is 23/9. Also, a very late Grasshopper Warbler on 15 Oct which we are told is an Avon record. Another good autumn for Redwing so far - 43 caught on 13 Oct. Willow Warblers were way down this year; only 14 compared to the annual average of 42 for previous years.

A successful nest recording season. 80 records submitted to NRS compared to the previous best of 59. New species recorded were Mallard (1), Greenfinch (5), Linnet (2) and Sedge Warbler (1). The recording area is the reserve plus the adjacent business park grounds which we currently have permission to survey. Contrary to the AWT information boards at the reserve, Sedge Warbler does not appear to have bred at the reserve during the last 6 years until this year. In addition to the 1 nest found, a 2nd pair was seen carrying nesting material. Cetti's Warbler has bred for the 2nd year. No nests found but 3 recently fledged juvs caught (still with some sheath on the primaries) suggesting that there were at least 2 broods wandering around the reed bed.

There is a website with plenty of info at, <https://www.littletonringing.co.uk/>



Garden Warbler photo by Gordon Youdale

Heronries Census

The Heronries Census has been running since 1928 and is still going on today. The surveying year starts with Heronries; so much easier to see those Apparently Occupied Nests when there aren't so many leaves on the trees. Whilst not all heronries could be checked this year, numbers on those that were visited didn't show any great changes. All the "ancient" sites have been checked; they were all uninhabited.



I have received the following data from our Regional Organiser for Avon with comments:

Pond Head Plantation, Orchardleigh: (7)

Newton Park: 4

Brockley Wood / Cleeve Wood:(19) --- (a lot of trees had come down in the recent gales, with some active nests being lost)

East Wood, Broom Hill: (12)
Prior Park Gardens / Widcombe Manor: (4)
The Folly, Pill/Ham Green: (13)
Gordano Valley: 0 (I suspect this is deserted)
Blagdon Lake, SE Corner: 0 (I suspect this is also deserted)

These are the 'No Count sites', some of which need to be deleted, as they've been checked and there's no evidence of any activity. Therefore, they will be removed from the list unless you have any information regarding these sites.

Uphill Grange
Lympsham Manor
Denny Island (between the pandemic restrictions, bad weather and unavailability of a boat, this could not be covered this year)
Blagdon Lake
Dodington Park Lake (remains private)
Cleeve Wood, Longwell Green (should be deleted)
Clevedon Court Farm (should be deleted)
Weston Woods (should be deleted)
East Donnington (should be deleted)

Thank you to everyone who assisted with the survey this year and I hope you will continue next year or if you would like to be involved, please contact our Heronries Regional Organiser, details below.
Eve Tigwell, 01373 451630; email; Eve.tigwell@icloud.com

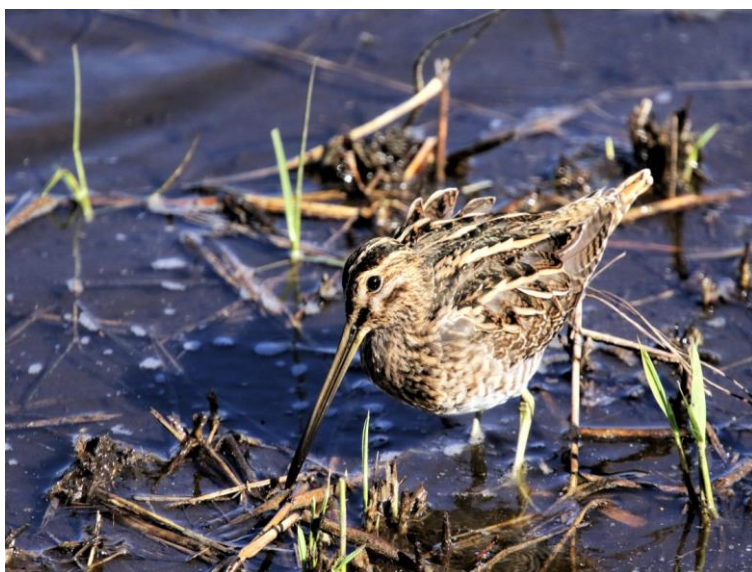
Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows 2020 (Avon)

The purpose of this survey is to assess the importance of both existing and new wet grassland and other breeding wader habitats in England.

Unfortunately, the survey was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. This year however we carried out this survey and I would like to thank all those who took part we really appreciate all the hard work.

The BWWM survey team is extremely grateful for the coverage achieved this summer and especially the really hard work of getting volunteers to enter the data and report those all-important zero counts. In

total, nationally 2238 individual sites were reported as covered, consisting of 518 sites with Lapwing Plots, 471 with Agri-environment management. Then a further 1249 BWWM sites, which had been covered in 1982 and/or 2002.



In Avon we were asked allocated 21 sites of which 62% were surveyed. The analysis is now underway, and we expect to have summary results available later in the winter. The online data entry system will remain open, so if you haven't managed to send in your data, please do so, as we can still include their counts.

Contact: John Worthington-Hill or David Norfolk, breedingwaderswm2@bto.org

Learning about birds and improving your birding skills

Birdwatching is a hugely rewarding and enjoyable pastime; from bringing further enjoyment to a walk in the countryside, through to a life-long career. Being able to identify the birds that you see and hear about you greatly increases your connection with nature and enables you to give something back and make a real, direct difference for conservation by making a note of your sightings through one of the many BTO surveys on offer.

We take you through all stages: from learning to identify common birds by sight, to increasing your repertoire of species, then on to identification by sound. We provide a series of free online videos to help separate confusion species, and then help you to take your birdwatching to the next level by discovering what is involved in surveys and offering survey-specific workshops to hone your skills to perfection.

There is a survey for everyone, regardless of your level of experience, bird identification skill and confidence and so all of our courses and workshops, including bird ID ones, include sections on surveying and guiding you towards the survey that suits you best.

Virtual Training Courses

Virtual training courses cover a variety of topics, including Wader, Gull and Songbird ID. These courses involve weekly online sessions of 90–100 minutes, with a trainer: participant ratio of about 1:30. Participants' microphones are muted during the sessions but there is a large interactive component, using chat messaging, polls, and non-verbal signals to your webcam. The live sessions are complemented by supported self-study exercises which participants are encouraged to complete between the sessions. We place a strong emphasis on providing tools and techniques that will help you to continue your learning after the course.

BTO Annual Conference - dates for your diary

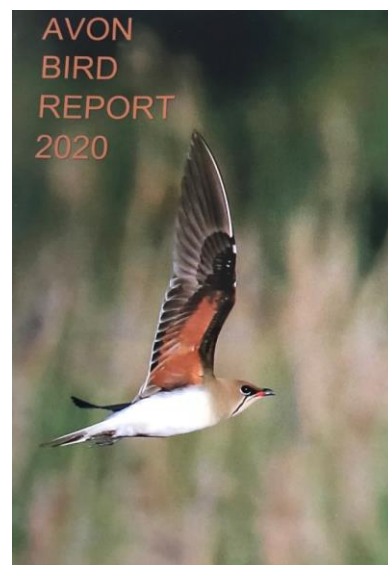
Our annual conference was a big hit last year with thousands of you joining during the week or watching the sessions on [our YouTube channel](#) later. We are excited to be planning another virtual conference this year, with talks every day from Monday 29 November 2021 until Saturday 4 December 2021. Everything will be free to attend, and the full programme will be available soon. Make a note in your diary and join us for a fascinating series of bird-themed talks.

Avon Bird Report

Copies of the 2020 edition of Avon Bird Report are now available. The Report is 212 pages plus photos and apart from the regular features it has six papers about particular species seen in Avon.

Buy your copy now by contacting Harvey Rose:

email bktlgodwit@gmail.com to obtain online banking details or send a cheque payable to AOG for £12 (£10 for the Report and £2 for postage) to Harvey Rose, Arncliffe, Coast Road, Walton Bay, Clevedon, BS21 7FW.



Thank you

Perched at the top of ecological food chains, birds are ideal barometers of wildlife and environmental health. They are easy to observe, with hundreds of thousands of people in the UK able and willing to watch birds and make their observations available to science. This means that birds and people together can provide us with a highly cost-effective measure of the health of our environment. This approach also delivers significant societal benefits through health and well-being, additionally strengthening public engagement with science.

Established for over 80 years, the knowledge gathered by BTO is the longest-running and most comprehensive nature data set in the world. It tells us how wildlife has fared alongside rapid human development, and how it is affected by changes in land use and climate. Our data provide a natural barometer of the state of the environment in a fast-changing world.



I would like to thank everyone who has helped in our many surveys this year and you are a key part of the work that the BTO, I hope you will continue to contribute again next year and maybe more of you will join as members in our citizen science work.

Your local bird club Bristol Ornithological Club (BOC) provides the opportunity to pursue your hobby and find enjoyment in birds with like-minded people through assistance in the field and at indoor meetings. For further details visit www.bristolornithology.co.uk

There is also excellent local birding websites to keep you up to date with what is going on :-

Avon Birds ; - <https://avonbirding.blogspot.com/>
Birds of South Gloucestershire; - <http://www.thebirdsofsouthgloucestershire.co.uk/>
Sevenside Birds ; - <http://www.sevensidebirds.co.uk/>
Blagdon Lake Birds ; - <http://blagdonlakebirds.com/>
Newton St. Loe Birding ; - <https://newton-st-loe-birding.blogspot.com/>
Oldbury Power Station ; - <http://www.opsbirding.co.uk/>

Contact details:

Regional Representative: Gordon Youdale E-mail: gordon.youdale@blueyonder.co.uk Tel: 01454881690

Regional Ambassador: Dave Stoddard E-mail: dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk Tel: 0117 9246968

WeBS: Inland sites: Rupert Higgins E-mail: rupert@wessexeco.co.uk,

WeBS: Severn Estuary: Harvey Rose Email: H.E.Rose@bristol.ac.uk

GBW Ambassador: Jane Cumming E-mail: kittiwake@yahoo.co.uk

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Twitter: @_BTO @AVONBTO

Instagram: @btobirds

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