



Glossy Ibis (Chris Knights/ BTO Images) an increasingly common autumn and winter species in our region.

BTO AVON NEWS

Introduction

Welcome to the Autumn 2026 BTO Avon Newsletter

After the long hot summer, it has been wonderful to have some rain. Whilst we are fortunate not to have suffered any wildfires, there have been a number close to us and remind of the impact of climate change. The regular survey work that is the mainstay of the BTO will provide the evidence to measure the impact of this summer on breeding and survival rates. As I write, autumn migration is well underway. I heard and saw Meadow Pipits flying over my house this morning and migrant waders are stopping over in the usual places.

Thank you to those members who took part in Birds in Greenspaces. The BTO is now analysing the data but has already announced that the project will continue next year. You are still able to use the app and record species that you see in your local greenspaces. This continues to provide valuable data about the use of these important spaces.

Bird Atlas 2027-2031

Work on the national Bird Atlas 2027-31 has been continuing, led by the BTO. This includes development of the surveying methods, an app for data collection and how to ensure as wide and engagement as possible. Decisions are also being made regarding the use of apps like Merlin Bird ID and how data from passive acoustic monitoring will be incorporated.

Bristol Ornithology Club (BOC) has agreed to be the sponsors of the 2027-31 Local Atlas, which is wonderful. As Regional Organiser for the Atlas, I have been working with a

steering committee to discuss the project. We have agreed that we will publish an Avon Atlas "hard copy", something in a similar format to the Avon Bird Report. Depending on the output from the BTO we may also look to create and host an interactive web version. For the national Atlas the requirement for each 10km square is that eight 2 km tetrads in each square are surveyed. The key difference for the Avon Atlas is that we will aim to survey every one of the 2km tetrads in each of the 10km squares to get what is called 100% coverage. A key group of people in creating the Atlas are the "square stewards" for each of the **17** 10km squares that are covered by the Avon atlas. The role of the square steward is to support the surveyors for the 10km square so that we get 100% coverage of all **25** tetrads. If you are interested in this role for a particular square, please let me know.

J Ayll

BTO Garden BirdWatch (GBW)



Long-tailed Tit. Edmund Fellowes/BTO Images

Susan Jones, BTO GBW Development Manager tells us that Avon is one of the fastest growing regions for GBW recruitment so thank you to Avon BTO members and let's keep up the momentum. In February 2026, I spoke about GBW at an event organised by the Olveston Parish Wildlife Group in South Gloucestershire. They have support from the parish council and are highly active in making space for wildlife.

In November 2026, I'm planning a joint event with Avon Wildlife Trust and a community wildlife group for a workshop for a village in South Gloucestershire to celebrate local wildlife and discuss the possibility of a community nature reserve, by which we mean a connected network of green spaces across a whole neighbourhood — from gardens, parks, allotments, verges and school grounds to cemeteries and wilder spaces.

This aligns with GBW and Birds in Greenspaces and I'll be speaking about them as the Avon BTO GBW Ambassador.

Daphne Havercroft – Avon GBW Organiser

Time/ skill needed

- As much time as you like, but a minimum of 20 minutes per week is recommended.
- Can identify common birds by sight.

[Find out more about BTO Garden BirdWatch¹](#)

Breeding Bird Survey / Waterways Breeding Bird Survey

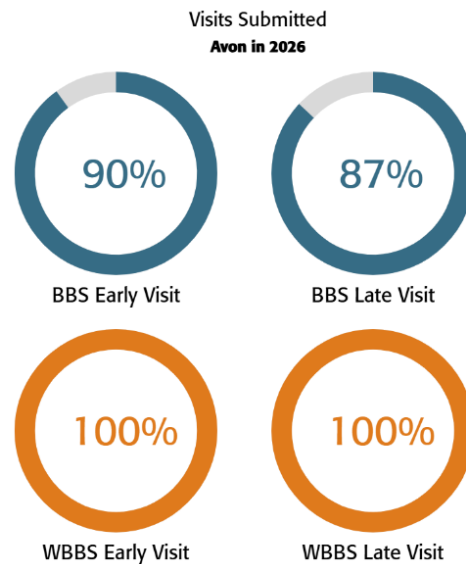
This short report marks the end of the 2026 season for the Breeding Bird Survey, which incorporates two national surveys (the BBS, Breeding Bird Survey, and WBBS, Waterways Breeding Bird Survey) and one summer local survey (Avon BBS).

BBS, first established in 1994, is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and RSPB, and is the main scheme for monitoring the population trends of the UK's common breeding species. The survey is organised on a regional basis. The BTO Avon Region includes the four unitary authority areas that formerly constituted the County of Avon, namely BANES, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, together with an area of Somerset (c. **333** square km) that covers much of the Mendips and the area around Cheddar. Squares are assigned by the BTO and allocated to individual surveyors by the Regional Organiser. Results are uploaded to the BTO's online database. The online system enables the Regional Organiser (as well as BTO HQ staff) to monitor the results. Alongside the national BBS, we also conduct a local survey within the Avon region using the same methods but in a simplified form. All surveys were carried out during April, May and June 2026. Results are recorded on forms that are collated by the Regional Organiser.

This year has been very successful with **125** surveyors submitting data from at least one survey site. Of these, **17** conducted just the local survey and a further **29** surveyed a mixture of national and local squares (as many as **16** survey squares in one case). The WBBS, which runs in parallel, is comparatively small in scale, having just four survey sites.

Overall, **226** sites were surveyed with the majority receiving both 'early' and 'late' visits (separated by a minimum of four weeks). In total, just under **70,000** birds were counted from **116** species across the region. The data will be analysed further to identify trends – look out for a report in the 2026 version of the Avon Bird Report.

For the BBS specifically, this year a record **111** surveyors were allocated who, between them, visited **161** BBS sites (1km OS squares), walking **621** kilometres in support of the BBS, a fantastic effort.

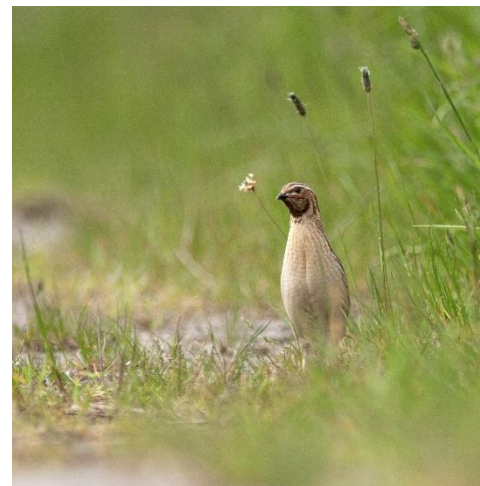


Changes to the BTO online BBS tool made it possible for surveyors to comment on specific records. This has helped to forestall some verification queries and provide an audit trail around some of the more unusual sightings. Examples include Quail, Goshawk, Hawfinch, Firecrest and Sanderling. I would like to thank those who responded promptly to queries that I raised and for the support of all the surveyors this year.

Peter Bryant, Avon Regional Organiser

[Find out more about the Breeding Bird Survey²](#)

[Find out more about the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey³](#)



Quail, Graham Catley / BTO

Heronries Census

This is my first year as Regional Organiser for the Heronries Census and thank you very much to the surveyors for inputting the data and responding to my emails. This census is the longest running census of its kind in Great Britain, and it celebrates its hundredth birthday in 2028!

The table below shows the provisional Apparently Occupied Nests (AONs) for 2026 compared to 2025. The number of Heron nests remains stable compared to last year however, in discussion with Rob Hargreaves, who writes the Heron section of the Avon Bird Report there has been a **17%** drop across the last 10 years. Little Egret has halved and Cattle Egret have been recorded at Denny Island, Chew Valley Lake for the first time.

If you are aware of any other sites that you suspect Grey Herons or similar species may be nesting that are not on the list below, please could you let me know so we can include them in the census.



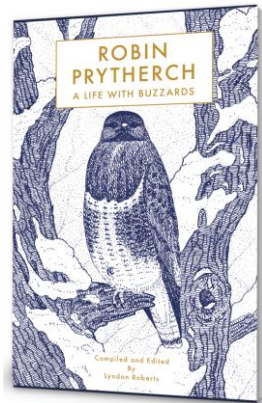
Grey Heron, Adam Jones / BTO

	2025			2026		
	Grey Heron	Little Egret	Cattle Egret	Grey Heron	Little Egret	Cattle Egret
Pond Head Plantation	14	5		14	3	
Newton Park, Corston	4			4		
Brockley Wood/Cleeve Wood	20			22		
Denny Island, Chew Valley Lake	23	5		21	2	31
Blagdon Lake	3			2		
East Wood, Broom Hill, Brislington	9			13		
Prior Park Gardens / Widcombe Manor	8			6		
The Folly, Pill/Ham Green	14			14		
Gordano Valley NNR	0			0		
Lady's Wood, near Yate	0			0		
Totals	95	10	0	96	5	31

Jon Angell, Avon Regional Organiser

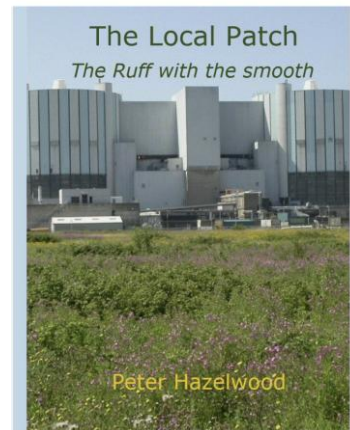
Local Bird Watching Books

A Life with Buzzards – Robin Prytherch



As many of you will know Robin Prytherch spent a huge amount of time studying Buzzards in this area. His drawings of individual buzzards have been collated together in a book which is available here: [Robin Prytherch: A Life with Buzzards — Bristol Books CIC](#)⁴

The Local Patch – Peter Hazelwood



Peter Hazelwood blogs about the birds and other nature sightings at [Oldbury Power Station](#)⁵ and has written an account of his "patch". The book is available on [eBay](#)⁶ or at [Oldbury Community Shop](#).⁷

Useful resources

The BTO has recently launched two very useful sources of information; Bird Facts Places and Bird Facts Species

Bird Facts Places provides you with information at a region level. This is a link to [Avon Birdfacts Species](#).⁸ provides you with a wealth of information from identification, key statistics, trends, movements as well as links to research for the species of your choice.

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 [Bristol Ornithological Club](#).⁹

Other local Natural History groups are:

[Bristol Naturalists Society](#).¹⁰

[Bath Natural History Society](#).¹¹

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

[Avon Birds](#).¹²

[Birds of South Gloucestershire](#).¹³

[Severnside Birds](#).¹⁴

[Blagdon Lake Birds](#).¹⁵

[Newton St. Loe Birding](#).¹⁶

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BTO on social media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/The.BTO>

Instagram: @btobirds

Bluesky: @btobirds.bsky.social

Website: www.bto.org

BTO e-newsletters

Sign up for BTO e-newsletters to stay up to date with the latest news and events

BTO e-news: <https://www.bto.org/community/news/e-newsletter>

Science e-news: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/enews>

Full page links

¹ Find out more about Garden BirdWatch: <https://www.bto.org/get-involved/volunteer/projects/gbw>

² Find out more about the Breeding Bird Survey: <https://www.bto.org/get-involved/volunteer/projects/bbs>

³ Find out more about the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey: <https://www.bto.org/get-involved/volunteer/projects/waterways-breeding-bird-survey>

⁴ Robin Prytherch: A life with Buzzards: <https://www.bristolbooks.org/shop/p/alifewithbuzzards?rq=A%20life%20with%20Buzza rds>

⁵ Birding at Oldbury Power Station: <https://www.opsbirding.co.uk/>

⁶ eBay link: <https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/116668677731>

⁷ Oldbury Community Shop: <https://oldburyonsevern.uk/community-shop/>

⁸ Avon Birdfacts places: <http://data.bto.org/birdfacts-places/?search=avon-bcra>

⁹ Bristol Ornithological Club: <https://bristolornithologicalclub.co.uk/>

¹⁰ Bristol Naturalists' Society: <https://bristolnats.org.uk/>

¹¹ Bath Natural History Society: <https://www.bathnats.org.uk/>

¹² Avon Birds: <https://avonbirding.blogspot.com/>

¹³ Birds of South Gloucestershire: <http://www.thebirdsofsouthgloucestershire.co.uk/>

¹⁴ Severnside Birds: <http://www.severnsidebirds.co.uk/>

¹⁵ Blagdon Lake Birds: <https://www.blagdonlakebirds.com/>

¹⁶ Newton St. Loe Birding: <https://newton-st-loe-birding.blogspot.com/>