

A gathering of Ravens *Corvus corax* over Hipton Hill 26th August 2022

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Ravens are a regular sight nowadays in many parts of Worcestershire; quite a change since their breeding status was described as *very scarce or absent* in the 1970s (Lord & Munns eds 1970). By 2005 this large corvid had become a frequent visitor and an *uncommon to frequent, but increasing, resident* and had already been re-named Common Raven (Harrison & Harrison 2005). Its frequency as a breeding species continues to increase and Raven is now known to breed across much of Worcestershire (Metcalf 2022).

I regularly visit the Lenches near Evesham and on most occasions I will see one or two Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and Ravens in the skies overhead. Their numbers increase from late July as they home in on any tractors cutting hay, in the hope of snatching small mammals exposed by the machines. Although Ravens are not infrequent around the Lenches, their calls still draw my attention whenever I hear them. On 26th August 2022 the Ravens around Hipton Hill near Lenchwick were particularly vocal, sounding somewhat agitated. Calls were also coming from further away and as I gazed upwards I saw a number of corvids massing overhead, all of them Ravens. Their numbers increased and at one point I counted 24 birds - 24 Ravens together in Worcestershire's skies- and there were still further birds calling out of sight. As I watched, the birds were splintering off in pairs from the main group, tumbling and diving together as they went. An extraordinary sight, but what was going on? Were they non-breeding birds pairing up for next year?

I have been told that Ravens are seen very regularly over nearby Bredon Hill and their numbers have been known to reach around 30 birds (R. Prudden *pers. comm.*).

This species is certainly very well established in the county now and is living up to its earlier, premature moniker of *Common Raven*.

References

- Lord, J. & Munns, D.J. eds 1970. *Atlas of Breeding Birds of the West Midlands*. Collins, London.
- Metcalf, M. 2022. Ravens *Corvus corax* breeding in Worcestershire – 2021 update. *Worcestershire Record* 49:6-8.
- Harrison, G. & Harrison, J. 2005. *The New Birds of the West Midlands*. West Midlands Bird Club, Warwickshire.