

Further records of note from Shakenhurst, Worcestershire 2015-16.

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I am fortunate to live in a cottage on the Shakenhurst estate in north-west Worcestershire close to the Shropshire border. Much of the estate is either semi-natural ancient woodland occupying steep-sided slopes alongside a series of small streams flowing into the River Rea, or agricultural land farmed for arable and mixed cattle/sheep grazing purposes. There are many veteran trees within some of the grazing pastures close to Shakenhurst Hall indicative of former 'pasture woodland' communities that once covered larger areas of the countryside than they do now. The veteran trees are predominately pedunculate oak, but there are also veteran ash and sweet chestnut trees.

BIRDS (alphabetically).

The bird population here is interesting in that some areas represent a distinct western extension of the habitat found in Wyre Forest, but this is abruptly combined with intensively farmed arable land and grazing pasture away from the steeply-wooded valleys. Species of interest listed below reflect the variety of habitats here.

Bullfinch. Frequent in wooded areas and our garden. Noted in flocks of up to six during January 2016.

Cuckoo. Uncommon, reflecting the low numbers elsewhere generally.

Dipper. One pair probably bred during 2016 underneath a bridge over the River Rea along the abandoned railway line. One was occasionally seen in March 2016 along Mill Brook; a small tributary of the River Rea in Wissetts Wood.

Garden Warbler. Uncommon, up to three heard calling throughout the area during May 2016.

Grey Wagtail. Up to two birds occasionally seen. Possibly bred somewhere along the River Rea during 2016, but unconfirmed.

Hobby. One adult was seen flying south-east across the pasture woodland area during early evening on 26.08.2016

House Martin. The main Shakenhurst Hall and attached buildings comprise an important breeding colony of House Martins. An estimated 40 – 50 pairs bred successfully (many with double broods) during 2016.

Kingfisher. Uncommon. Very occasionally seen at an ornamental pool near Shakenhurst Hall and along the River Rea.

Kestrel. A male is seen regularly along the private road leading from Bayton towards the Shakenhurst estate.

Mandarin. Probably bred somewhere alongside the River Rea during 2016, but unconfirmed. Up to ten individuals are seen regularly at an ornamental pool close to Shakenhurst Hall, but approx. thirty on 15.10.2016 was exceptional.

Marsh Tit. At least two pairs probably bred in Wissetts Wood during 2016, with another pair breeding alongside the River Rea along the abandoned railway line. A pair were regulars at our feeding station in the garden during the winter and early spring period.

Mistle Thrush. A thriving population occurs in this area generally. It is not uncommon to see loose flocks of up to twenty birds in the

pasture woodland areas on occasions; unusual for this species in my experience.

Raven. A pair bred successfully during 2016. The nest was close to the top of a very tall Douglas Fir inside a mixed woodland with commanding views

Red Kite. Uncommon. Up to three individuals are seen on occasions, but their presence is intermittent.

Redpoll. Uncommon. A single male in full breeding plumage was in our garden on 16.04.16.

Redstart. Judging by the singing males observed during May 2016 at least two pairs probably bred in Wissetts wood, with a further pair along the abandoned railway line at the River Rea.

Spotted Flycatcher. A pair raised two broods in our garden during 2016. The nest was in a dilapidated old nest box badly damaged by Woodpeckers! The box lies against a north-west facing wall behind a large buddleja bush. The first brood raised just one chick, but the second brood produced two. They were last recorded from the garden on 13.08.2016.

Stock Dove. Up to six birds are occasionally seen in the vicinity of the veteran trees in the pasture woodland, but breeding was not confirmed.

Swallow. As with the House Martins, Shakenhurst Hall and its associated buildings are an important site for breeding swallows. Approximately twenty pairs produced double broods here during 2016.

Willow Warbler. Uncommon. Just a few heard calling from Wissetts Wood during the spring/early summer period.

Yellowhammer. Several breeding pairs using hedgerow field boundaries in the general area, winter flocks of up to twenty birds in fields west of Bayton.

Butterflies (alphabetically).

The butterfly assemblage here is sadly impoverished. Even common species such as Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small & Green-veined Whites, and Peacocks are rarely seen in numbers. The most successful species here appear to be Orange-tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Large Skipper and Speckled wood. The more interesting species are listed below.

Common Blue. Uncommon. There is a very small population in one field presently left fallow and becoming increasingly covered by developing hawthorn scrub because it is too steep to cultivate.

Essex Skipper. Just one male has been recorded from the grassland area described above (07.08.2015).

Purple Hairstreak. Most of the veteran pedunculate oaks in the pasture woodland approaching Shakenhurst Hall contain small populations of Purple Hairstreak. Several were recorded during the early evening high in the canopies between 27.07 and 15.08.2016.

Silver-washed Fritillary. Small populations occur in Wissetts Wood and along the abandoned railway line at the River Rea.

Macro Moths (alphabetically).

I have not undertaken any serious moth recording. All of the moths recorded have been on a purely casual basis and all the species to date are unremarkable and to be expected. A few of some note follow below.

December Moth. Two males at the kitchen window on 01.12.2015.

Humming-bird Hawk. One at phlox flowers in the garden on 16.09.2015.

Small Yellow Underwing. Recorded from a field margin along a woodland edge on 14.05.2016.

Micro Moths (alphabetically).

Cauchas fibulella (Lep; Adelidae). Two at Common Field Speedwell flowers along a field margin on 16.06.2015. One observed similarly on 28.05.2016.



01. *Cauchas fibulella*. Kevin McGee.

Olindia schumacherana (Lep; Tortricidae). One at rest on low vegetation at a trackside in Wissetts Wood on 16.06.2015.



02. *Olindia schumacherana*. Kevin McGee.

Coleoptera

Cychrus caraboides (Col; Carabidae). One in rotting birch log at Wissetts Wood on 10.01.2016.

Poecilus versicolor (Col; Carabidae). One collected from open ground near Wissetts Wood on 25.03.2016.

Stenostolus dubia (Col; Cerambycidae). Notable B. One on lime foliage in pasture woodland on 30.05.2016.



03. *Stenostolus dubia*. Kevin McGee.

Plateumaris sericea (Col; Chrysomelidae). Several on water-side vegetation at an ornamental pool on 17.05.2016.

Enochrus coarctatus (Col; Dytiscidae). One collected from a small pool near Wissetts Wood on 13.03.2016.

Hygrotus impressopunctatus (Col; Dytiscidae). One collected from a small pool near Wissetts Wood on 13.03.2016.

Ilybius chalconatus (Col; Dytiscidae). One male collected from a small pool near Wissetts Wood on 13.03.2016. Grateful thanks to P.F.Whitehead for determining the identification of this specimen.

Dorcus parallelipedus (Col; Lucanidae). One on the ground in pasture woodland on 22.08.2016.

Hygrobia hermanni (Col; Paelobiidae). One at a small pool near Wissetts Wood on 13.03.2016.



04. *Hygrobia hermanni*. Kevin McGee.

Pyrochroa coccinea (Col; Pyrochroidae). Notable B. One at Wissetts Wood on 31.05.2016.

Deleaster dichrous (Col; Staphylinidae). Notable B. One collected from shingles alongside Mill Brook, Wissetts Wood on 14.05.2016. A search on NBN Gateway reveals very few Worcestershire records, but there are recent records from Dowles Brook in Wyre Forest, including one from Denise Bingham in April 2015.

Diptera (alphabetically).

Brachyopa scutellaris (Dip; Syrphidae). One of three collected from lush ground vegetation along the abandoned railway near the River Rea on 04.05.2015.

Brachypalpoides lentus (Dip; Syrphidae). One on bramble foliage along the abandoned railway near the River Rea on 30.05.2016.



05. *Brachypalpoides lentus*. Kevin McGee..

Criorhina berberina (Dip; Syrphidae). Three were present along the abandoned railway near the River Rea on 15.05.2016.

Chrysotoxum bicinctum (Dip; Syrphidae). One was recorded from a steep grassy bank on 17.07.2015.

Volucella inflata (Dip; Syrphidae). Notable B. One female was on brambles at Wissett Wood on 17.07.2015.



06. *Volucella inflata*. Kevin McGee.

Hymenoptera (alphabetically).

Andrena apicata (Hym; Andrenidae). Notable B. One female visiting goat willow blossom at Wissetts Wood on 10.04.2015.



07. Female *Andrena apicata* at rest beneath a flowering goat willow. Kevin McGee

Andrena labiata (Hym; Andrenidae). Notable A. One female visiting Common Field Speedwell flowers on 16.05 2016 on an uncultivated steep bank close to the abandoned railway line.

Anthidium manicatum (Hym; Megachilidae). One briefly seen in the 'wild-flower' meadow in our garden on 06.06.2016.

Eucera longicornis (Hym; Apidae). Notable A. UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species.

There is a very small colony occupying a short section of approximately 100 metres of the abandoned railway line alongside the River Rea. A worn male was photographed on 09.06.2015, a further two males were observed in flight on 28.05 2016.



08. Male *Eucera longicornis* along the abandoned railway line. Kevin McGee.