

Notes on birds in the Severn and Avon Vales April – June 2015. The “Severn Hams”, Gloucestershire and south Worcestershire

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[Editor’s note. Gulls, many Passerines and some other species have been removed from this report. The full report will eventually appear on the web site www.wbrc.org.uk]

General introduction

The main sites are (from the north):

Along the Severn in Worcestershire, a series of well-watched gravel workings attract many water birds, notably waders; these are (from the north): Holt and Grimley (on the west bank just north of Worcester), Clifton (on the east bank just south of Kempsey); Ryall (on the east bank opposite Upton Ham); Ripple Lake (east bank) just south of the M50 (though a new pit is currently being excavated north of the M 50), on the opposite bank from Longdon Marsh. (Upton Warren Nature reserve, north of Droitwich, is outside the area covered by the present report, but is occasionally mentioned as it attracts many significant birds).

Powick Ham, just south of Worcester, the flood meadows where the Teme flows into the Severn.

Upton Ham (Worcs), where the Upper Ham, a hay meadow south of the town, is an SSSI and is the best conserved of the riverside hams in botanical terms; south of the old railway embankment is the Lower Ham.

Longdon Marsh (Worcs), a nearly closed basin on the west bank of the Severn, north of the M50; the Longdon or Bushley Brook flows into the Severn; Worcestershire Wildlife Trust has a major reserve at Hill Court Farm, south of Marsh Lane, while north of the lane the land is subject to extensive flooding when the Severn is high; a little further downriver, upstream of Tewkesbury and just in Gloucestershire is The Mythe and Mythe Hook.

The Avon Meadows (on either side of the Avon, going north from Tewkesbury) including: the restored gravel pits at Bredon’s Hardwick (Worcs), nowadays more overgrown and subject to greater disturbance, hence less favourable for birds; Upham Meadow (sometimes called the “Great Hay Meadow”) and Summer Leasow at Twynning (Glos) which form an SSSI on ornithological grounds; Rectory Farm Meadows (Worcs), across the Avon from Upham Meadow and an SSSI on botanical grounds; and Strensham Pits (Worcs), sludge pools below the waterworks. Upstream of Nafford, a series of new riverside wetlands have been created in the last few years along the Worcestershire Avon by excavation of scrapes and shallow lakes: the Gwen Finch Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Reserve; the new John Bennett Reserve; the Avon Meadows Community wetland and Local Nature Reserve, established in 2008, covering 24 hectares near Pershore Town Centre (where censuses are carried out at least once a week); and land at Lower Moor owned by the Vale Heritage Landscape Trust. North of Lower Moor, between Pershore and Fladbury, is the Throckmorton Landfill Site, which still attracts large numbers of feeding gulls, (as Gloucester LS used to do) and where the lagoons also attract water birds. Just to the east of Bredon is Kemerton Lake (Worcs), a restored gravel pit in the valley of the Carrant Brook, which flows through Cowfield Marsh into the Avon just above Tewkesbury.

The “Severn Hams” proper, between Tewkesbury and Gloucester, in which the main wetland areas are: Ashleworth and Hasfield Hams; Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows (Coombe Hill Canal is a long disused and overgrown canal running from Coombe Hill to Wainlodes); and Cobney and Leigh Meadows alongside the River Chelt and Leigh Brook above Wainlodes. Barrow Ponds were created by the artificial damming of a small tributary of the Chelt, east of the A38. Ashleworth Ham and Coombe Hill are Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust reserves, and are particularly well-watched. This area also includes: the Severn Ham at Tewkesbury; the Severn between Lower Lode and Haw Bridge; and the Severn from Haw Bridge, past Wainlodes, Ashleworth Quay and Sandhurst, to Gloucester. At Sandhurst, Maisemore and at Walham Pools near Gloucester there are a number of abandoned overgrown riverside brick-pits, artificial excavations in the floodplain.

The River Leadon flows into the Severn just above Gloucester, and its valley extends north eastwards past Highleadon and Upleadon. The four most important sites along the Leadon Valley are: the meadows northeast of Highnam; Dark Barn; Tibberton Meadows (former Lamma meadows along a tributary); and the ponds at the Orchard Centre at Blackwells End near Collier’s Brook, a tributary of the Leadon, which have great potential.

Maisemore Ham is now largely converted to arable farming. Sites on the edge of urban Gloucester, once Severn flood meadows: Port Ham, Castlemeads and Over Ponds on Alney Island, Sudmeadow, and the Gloucester Landfill Site (GLS). Port Ham has recently been restored and some shallow scrapes dug; at the southern end of Port Ham is Lower Parting where the two arms of the Severn meet again; Sudmeadow is immediately south of Lower Parting; GLS used to attract large numbers of gulls, but numbers have decreased dramatically since a falconer was employed to disturb them; it has a pond attractive to passage and some resident waterbirds. A little further south, near the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal, are Netheridge Farm and the small Quedgeley Local Nature Reserve. Near the northern bypass, at the foot of Churchdown Hill is the Horsebere Brook Flood Alleviation Area, opened in about 2010 to prevent flooding in the Longlevens suburb of Gloucester, as happened in summer 2007.

Minsterworth Ham, on the west bank of the Severn below Gloucester.

Walmore Common, on the west bank of the Severn below Gloucester; also the little marsh at Rodley (Wilmer Common), west of Walmore, along the stream west of Boxbush Farm.

Elmore Back, on the east bank of the Severn below Gloucester, opposite Walmore.

Most of these sites are marshes which flood when the level of the Severn is high (either because of water coming down from North Wales, or because of high tides downstream; or more often a combination of both), thus preventing local streams from reaching the Severn, so that they back flood. When there is a major Severn flood, with water coming over the flood-banks along the river (a “river flood”), there may be extensive floods over the whole floodplain area. The major Severn tributary, the Avon, has only very low flood-banks in some places and so floods easily above Tewkesbury. The River Chelt holds running water, and when levels are low has muddy edges and mud banks.

Weather

After a generally mild, dry winter with minimal flooding in the Severn Vale, the weather over the UK as a whole at the beginning of April was rather unsettled; but within a few days a more settled pattern emerged under the influence of high pressure. This was interrupted for a few days in the middle of the month, followed by more fine weather with some very warm days and plenty of sunshine across many areas, with temperatures in the southeast nearing 22°C on 10 April (the highest temperature of the year so far) and 25°C on 15 April. However, the final six days of the month were unsettled and cold, with some sharp frosts and snow across high ground in the north. The mean temperature for the month in England was provisionally 0.7°C above the 1981-2010 average; maxima were well above average, but minima close to average. Away from the north-west, rainfall was below average, by a considerable margin in many places, and the overall figure for England was only 45% of the average. It was a sunny month in England as a whole, with an average sunshine figure of 143%, and provisionally the sunniest April in a series from 1929. In the Severn Vale, after strong winds in late March, the weather was dull and grey with cool westerly (sometimes north-westerly) winds from 1-4 April; high pressure over the whole of UK from Easter Day (4 April) to 10 April brought little wind and bright sunlight (morning mist on 7 and 9 April); a sharp change on 11 April, as high pressure gave way to cold Atlantic fronts with the first spots of rain for a week and very strong westerly winds, continuing on 12 April; but high pressure gradually reasserted itself on 13-15 April, with temperatures increasing again (high of nearly 20°C in Gloucester, on 15 April); high pressure, with

easterly winds and fine weather, continued until 27 April, when the wind went southwest. Total rainfall in Gloucester was only 17mm

At the start of May, the UK was in a rather unsettled weather type, with heavy rain in western and northern areas. This set the scene for the month, with a predominantly north-west airflow bringing rather wet and cool conditions, especially in the first half of the month. There were only occasional short fine spells, mainly in the south. Daytime temperatures were generally low, and nowhere was a reading of 24°C reached. In England, though there were some periods of fine spring-like weather from 10 May onwards, there were no notable warm spells, and the month overall was cool and wet. The mean temperature was 0.4°C below average, and the England sunshine figure 135% of average; rainfall in Gloucester amounted to 50mm, making May the second wettest month of 2015, only just behind January with 63mm.

At the start of June, an intense low pressure system brought rain and unseasonably strong winds to the UK as a whole. After this, the weather was typified by rather quiet conditions. After a spell of fine settled weather (especially in the south and east), rain or showers set in from time to time. Much of June was cool with a westerly or north-westerly airflow; there was a scattering of chilly nights because of the generally clear night skies, but it became very warm at the end of the month; the final day of the month was hot in parts of England, with heat-health alerts being issued. The provisional mean temperature was 0.1°C below average in England as a whole; the average sunshine was well above average at 125%, but rainfall was below average, only 56% for England as a whole, lower still in East Anglia and the south-east; the month's total for Gloucester was only 25 mm, bringing the rainfall total in Gloucester for the first six months of the year to only 206mm (less than half of the total of 451mm in the first six months of 2014).

Water levels and flooding: general

After a winter with no more than average flooding, with floodwater dispersing by late February, and a dryish March, most sites in the Vales were drying out well and in good condition for ground breeding species at the beginning of April; a slight rise in water levels occurred on 4/5 April, when the previous week's rain coincided with the top of the tide cycle (though tides were not that high), but levels soon dropped again. Levels continued to drop throughout the period, and there was no spring flooding at all; indeed many scrapes and ponds (like those at Coombe Hill and Ashleworth) lost water rapidly and looked set to dry out completely by July.

Conditions at the main sites

Upham Meadow, Twynning: All flooding had gone by early April, though the grass was still damp underfoot. Grass looked in good condition for ground-breeding species (topped last autumn and fairly short); it was still fairly short on 24 April; no hay had been cut by 16 June as the grass was still relatively short (following limited flooding last winter), a little hay cut by 22 June.

Ashleworth/Hasfield Hams: The ditches south of the reserve had been comprehensively cleaned out in February/March (for the first time for several years) by the Internal Drainage Board, with much pollarding of willows and removal of ditch side shrubs; clearing of the brash (on the reserve too) lasted well into April. There was a sudden rise in water levels on 4 April, flooding Hasfield Ham; levels were still quite high on 6 April, but beginning to drop by 12 April; the site had nearly dried out by the end of the month, when Hasfield Ham and fields at the north of the GWT reserve were practically dry, and the only remaining wet areas were round the scrape on the main reserve field. Conditions remained dry through May and June, with standing water only on the reserve scrape. The first hay was being cut on fields neighbouring the reserve on 30 June.

Coombe Hill: The scrapes were full in early April, the grassland round about drying out well; as at Ashleworth, there was a slight rise

in water levels from 4-7 April, but no flooding; levels dropped gradually and the area round the scrapes gradually dried out throughout the period, water dropping fast in the scrapes by 20 June, though there was still plenty of water in the Long Pool. All hay on meadows to the north of reserve was cut by 9 June.

Leigh and Cobney Meadows: An early silage cut was taken on some fields north of Leigh Brook on 16 May; most other fields were still uncut on 9 June. Fields round the flight pond on Cobney Meadows were cut for hay by 20 June, but not the fields by the Wainlodes road.

Overview of bird records

The records of Whooper Swans in early April were exceptionally late. Most wintering ducks and geese had left the area by early March but a few Wigeon and Teal stayed on into April, with some Shoveler staying until late May. There was no suggestion of breeding by any of these species, nor by Garganey, of which small numbers of passage birds were noted. Goldeneye stayed into late May in Worcestershire and there was an April drake Goosander (late for Gloucestershire). Shelduck were suspected of breeding at a number of sites, but most were unsuccessful and only one brood of ducklings was found. Tufted Ducks bred only sparsely in Gloucestershire in a dry summer. Teal had already returned by late June.

From the end of May and throughout June Quail were regularly heard at Coombe Hill, with perhaps as many as four birds calling.

Among raptors, records of Red Kite seemed more numerous than ever in both counties. A single Osprey, no doubt a passing bird en route to Scotland, was recorded at Grimley in early April; the Coombe Hill record, also of a passing bird, was on the unusually late date of 21 May. The only Marsh Harrier recorded this year was at Kemerton Lake on 12 May. A respectable series of Hobby records came from both counties.

A singing Spotted Crake was found at Coombe Hill in late June, and may have stayed to breed.

Summer breeding waders were slow to arrive, and signs of passage minimal, in first week of April. Breeding Lapwings already had eggs in first week of April, but productivity of this and other waders species was poor. This year most Black-tailed Godwits on their way to Iceland had already moved through in March. In Worcestershire, the gravel pits along the Severn and the wetlands along the Avon attracted small numbers but a wide variety of northward moving waders (notably Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit and Turnstone) mainly in May; the numbers and variety was smaller in Gloucestershire sites (though up to three Temminck's Stints were at Coombe Hill in late May, but both counties recorded fair numbers of Whimbrel and Greenshank. The first returning migrant waders, Snipe, Ruff and Green Sandpiper had already appeared by late June, and a Redshank, considered to be a returning migrant, was present as early as 30 May.

The Dipper at Nafford on the Avon was a most unexpected record, as was the early April Great Grey Shrike at Ashleworth.

Swans

Mute Swan: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake 18 on 22 June. At Pershore Wetlands ones and twos regularly throughout the period. At Avon Meadows (Fleet Lane) one ringed bird on 16 June.

At neither Ashleworth nor Coombe Hill was there any breeding this year, though several territorial pairs were present into June at Coombe Hill, and a small flock of non-breeding immatures moved about the area. The species did however breed at Hartpur and Walmore, and along the Avon at Upham Meadow. At Ashleworth ones and twos throughout, with two pairs and an immature on 13 April and two pairs on 27 April, seven immatures from the non breeding group on 13 May. At Coombe Hill six on 7 April (including two or three pairs which reappeared until May but did not

breed), four immatures on 21 April; from early May the non-breeding flock seemed to be roosting: a pair of adults and seven non-breeding immatures flew out early on 9 May; three pairs of adults and eight immatures on 16 May; as many as 22 on 17 May, ten on 19 May; seven on 21 May included two pairs and three immatures which were chased off; nine on 23 May, three pairs on 26 May; nine on 30 May; not more than six in June. At Cobney Meadows three unringed birds on 30 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two on 4 April, two adults with a cygnet on 5 June. At Horsbere Flood Storage Area two on 22 April, four on 21 May, a pair on 29 May, 3 June, three (one immature) on 24 June. At Walmore nine on 31 May including a pair with seven cygnets. At Upham Meadow a nest being incubated in Millend marina on 15 April, a family with seven cygnets on 16 June.

Whooper Swan: A group of four (a family group of two adults and one first winter bird, plus a singleton adult, with yellow ring BXI) were seen at Walmore from 23 March until 2 April, then on floodwater at Hasfield Ham on 4 April, from where they flew northwards at 17h00. These are unusually late dates for this species which normally leaves Gloucestershire for its Icelandic wintering grounds by early March; this group had been seen from January to March in the Walmore /Rodley area.

Geese

Greylag Goose: The species has increased sharply in the last thirty years in Worcestershire, and on many waters has become dominant over Canada Geese, ousting the latter from traditional breeding sites. At Ripple Lake ten on 22 June. At Pershore Wetlands two on 22 April and one on 22 May. About five pairs breed each year at Lower Moor.

At Ashleworth three on 13 April, one on 13 May, but no indication of breeding this year. At Coombe Hill two pairs produced young, one fine family of ten, one with a single gosling; in addition a flock reaching up to 30 adults was in the general area in April and May, occasionally appearing by day, and probably roosting. Up to three adults throughout April and early May, then 12 adults plus two pairs with ten and one goslings on 9 May; the goslings were then seen with their parents on many dates until the end of June, though additional adults were in the area on many dates: e.g. 21 on 19 May, 35 on 30 May, 40 on 2 June. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two on 4 April (rarely recorded here). At Upham Meadow three on 4 April, two on 15 April, three flew over on 16 June.

Bar-headed Goose: At Ashleworth one with Canada Geese on 5 April, again on 6 April.

Pink-footed Goose: One at Lower Rea on 19 April was no doubt an escape.

White-fronted Goose: Worcestershire: At Kemerton Lake one from 8 to 11 April was probably not a wild bird.

Canada Goose: Worcestershire: Bred at least at Ripple Lake and Bredon's Hardwick Pits. At Ripple 53 (including a crèche of 15 goslings) on 22 June. At Pershore Wetlands up to five on many dates up to mid May. On Avon Meadows (Fleet Lane), five opposite Upham Meadow on 16 June. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits at least three families with goslings on 16 June.

Gloucestershire: Little evidence of breeding this year: pairs bred at Hartpury and Walmore, but none found at Ashleworth, Coombe Hill, Cobney Meadows or Upham Meadow. At Ashleworth at least 30 on 5 April, at least 40 on 6 April (surprisingly high numbers), eleven (mainly paired) on 11 April; then until the end of the June occasional flocks of up to 23, in addition to a number of injured birds (at least two flightless with broken wings). At Coombe Hill up to eleven on many dates in April; 19 on 23 May and 31 on 26 May were the largest groups for some time, probably the same individuals as those seen at Ashleworth. At Cobney Meadows, a flock of 15 on 30 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two with three goslings on 11 May, four

with ten goslings on 5 June. At Horsbere Brook two on 22 April. At Walmore six on 27 April, 10 and 25 May but a flock of 23 on 31 May including a pair with four goslings. At Upham Meadow 30, mainly paired, on 4 April; about 20, mainly paired, on 15 and 24 April, but no proof of breeding.

Red-breasted Goose: At Coombe Hill a full-winged bird, no doubt an escape, flew in on 21 April, but did not stay long, and was reported again on 26 April; probably the bird seen at Slimbridge on 18 April.

Feral and Hybrid Geese: Worcestershire: At Ripple a probably Bean x Greylag cross on 17 and 23 May.

At Ashleworth one Canada x Greylag cross on 6 April, not one of the six siblings, but with a white line down back of nape.

Egyptian Goose: On the Avon near Tewkesbury Sailing Club a pair on 15 and 17 June.

Ducks

Shelduck: In April and May, pairs at Ashleworth and Coombe Hill remained territorial, with much lekking and several males apparently defending feeding territory for females, which may well have had nests, though no nests were found there, nor were any young seen – the failure rate of any that did attempt to nest was clearly high. The only record of successful breeding was at Cobney Meadows. At Ashleworth up to 12 in the first half of April with three pairs on 13 April; numbers then decreased: only one on 27 April and 4 May, one or two on 13 May, just one on 23 May; a pair on the evening of 27 May fed together, were aggressive towards Mallard and flew off together, perhaps to a nest, as the male returned alone later. At Coombe Hill about seven pairs in the evening of 1 April, lekking hard; up to 15 in the rest of April, often paired and still lekking hard; numbers in May did not exceed ten (often paired), with mating seen on Long Pool on 16 May; seven on 2 June, four on 6 June; two, both males, on evening of 8 June; only one left on 9 June, two on 13, 16 June (last date). At Cobney Meadows a pair with five newly-hatched ducklings on 30 May, no sign of them on 20 June. At Minsterworth Ham one on 11 April. At Walmore two on 12 April, a male on 27 April, two on 6 May. At Upham Meadow, where they are rarely recorded, two flew north on 16 June.

Mandarin: At Ashleworth Ham two drakes and a female on 3 April, two (Hasfield side) on 4 April, on 6 April. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two males on 31 May.

Surface-feeding ducks

Wigeon: Worcestershire: at Bredon's Hardwick Pits a male on 16 June, perhaps the one from Coombe Hill?

At Ashleworth up to ten until 12 April (last date). At Coombe Hill up to 12 until 12 April, then a single male from 28 April to 26 May (last date). At Minsterworth Ham one on 11 April.

Gadwall: At Ashleworth two on 1 April, one on 6 April. At Coombe Hill a pair on several dates in early April and on many dates through May; a pair and a single male on 28 May; two males on 30 May; then ones and twos in June with three on 20 June and two eclipse males on 23 June. Breeding was proved here in July when ducklings were seen.

Teal: Numbers decreased rapidly in April as wintering birds departed to their breeding grounds. No hint of local breeding this year. Returning migrants by late June.

Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands up to four on several dates in April, last one on 30 April.

At Ashleworth 60 on 12 April, 35 on 15 April, six 28 April (last date). At Coombe Hill 80 on 4 April, April, 30 on 18 April, 15 on 25 April, ten on 28 April. At Hartpury Orchard Centre four on 4 April. At Horsbere six on 1 April. At Walmore 16 on 4 April. The

first birds on return passage were at Coombe Hill: two males and a female, not yet in eclipse, on 20 June, a single male on 22 June, four by 28 June.

Mallard: Breeds commonly through the area.

Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands up to 27 recorded throughout the period.

At Ashleworth 23+ including two white call ducks on 12 April, 60+ on the evening of 27 May; 24 on 2 June, a female with five tiny ducklings on 23 June. At Coombe Hill a female with five tiny ducklings on the Long Pool as early as 8 April, 26 adults on 28 April plus a female with 12 tiny ducklings on the Long Pool; at least 15 on 21 May, plus a female with seven newly-hatched ducklings at the Wharf (only five ducklings left on 26 May); 63 on 6 June, 100 in eclipse on 20 June, 120 on 28 June. At Cobney Meadows 11 with a brood of three ducklings on 30 May; 30 on 20 June. At Horsbere 15 on 22 April, 11 on 21 May with at least three broods of ducklings; on 3 June ten, including two females with large ducklings and one with tiny newly-hatched ducklings.. At Upham Meadow two on 15 April, ten along Avon on 22 June.

Pintail: At Ashleworth a male on 5 April. At Coombe Hill four on 4 April, a male on 28 April and 9 May.

Garganey: No indications of breeding this year.

Worcestershire: a drake at Clifton Pits on 2 May.

At Ashleworth a drake had been seen on several dates since 20 March, often proving elusive; what was probably the same bird was seen again on 2 and 6 April; another on 2 June. At Coombe Hill a pair appeared briefly on 8 June.

Shoveler: No breeding records, though birds stayed into late May.

Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands two on 14 and 21 May.

At Ashleworth two on 5 April, two pairs on 12 April, two on 13 April. At Coombe Hill 12 on 4 April, eight on 8 April, five on 21 April, two on 28 April, one on 2 May, a male on 21 May, a pair on 30 May.

Diving ducks:

Tufted Duck: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake 20 on 22 June. At Bredon's Hardwick three on 16 June.

Results disappointing results in Gloucestershire, very few breeding records in a dry summer. At Ashleworth up to eight on many dates in April, a pair on 17 May, two on 23 May. At Coombe Hill recorded regularly throughout the period by never more than three. At Cobney Meadows a pair on 30 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two on 31 May, 5 June; the species bred but the chicks were predated. At Sandhurst Brick Pits (where there are few records, and the species may perhaps have bred) three males and two females on 17 May.

Goldeneye: Worcestershire: at Clifton Pits a drake on 4 April, two drakes on 5 April, one drake recorded throughout April and May, last seen on 30 May.

Goosander: a male flew up the Severn at Port Ham on 21 April, a late record.

Gamebirds

Quail: The only Gloucestershire records were from Coombe Hill, where several were heard between 23 May and 30 June (and indeed into the first week of July), often early in the morning or late at night; numbers difficult to assess, as birds were often heard singing from different places, though it may have been the same individual moving about; may have bred but no proof. At Coombe Hill one singing intermittently on 23 May; both north and south of the canal

on 24 May; at least four on 27 May; singing from Southern Meadows on 28 and 30 May, with at least three on 31 May, one or two singing from 2 to 13 June; none heard at first light on 20 or 22 June, but one singing on 28 and 29 June.

Grebes

Little Grebe: Very few Gloucestershire records. At Ashleworth singles on 5 and 27 April. At Hartpury Orchard Centre one on 31 May, and the species definitely bred (adult with chicks seen in July).

Great Crested Grebe: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake five on 22 June. No Gloucestershire records (though Lower Lode brickpits, usually a breeding site, was not covered in this period).

Cormorant

Cormorant: Small numbers of this species are regularly seen throughout the Vales. They tend to have preferred sites where they congregate to rest: currently Ripple Lake and Lower Lode Brickpits appear to be the most favoured.

Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake only three on 22 June. At Pershore Wetlands singles on 18 April and 22 May.

At Ashleworth two on 4 May, one flew upriver on 23 May. At Coombe Hill one on 11 April, two on 28 April, one on 2 May, one loafing on the island in the scrape on 21 May, one on 23 May; one caught a large eel on 16 June. Unfortunately no records from Lower Lode Brickpits in this period.

Hérons and Egrets

Little Egret: Numbers in Worcestershire, where the species does not (yet) breed, appear to increase as the summer progresses: at Grimley two on 8 April and 25 May, singles at Camp Lane Pits on many dates in June, two on 29 June. At Clifton Pits singles from 24 June. At Ripple one on 8 June. At Longdon Marsh one on 5 April, two on 27 April. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits two on 17 June, one on 19 June.

At Ashleworth singles on several dates in April and May with six on 5 April. Recorded more regularly at Coombe Hill, where off duty birds from the breeding colony often appear: six roosting on the evening of 1 April; ones and twos on many dates from April to June (but four on 15 April and five on 23 May). At the Barrow Ponds heronry one adult on 13 June. At Horsbere singles on many dates from 1 April to 17 June, three on 3 May. At Walmore one on 27 April, three on 28 April. At Lower Dumball, Rodley, two on 19 April.

Grey Heron: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake two on 22 June. At Pershore Wetlands ones and twos regularly throughout the period.

At Ashleworth up to three on many dates from early April until June. Numbers greater at Coombe Hill: up to seven in April, up to five in May, many June records with ten (five juveniles) on 16 June, while six on 20 June included both adults and juveniles, one adult eating a fish a foot long from the shallow waters of the north scrape; five on 23 June. At Cobney Meadows at least seven on 20 June, four on 22 June (some roosting in trees along the canal), six on 28 June. The Barrow Ponds heronry was occupied this year: several full grown chicks still on the nests on 13 June. At Horsbere Flood Storage Area up to three on many dates throughout the period. At Walmore three on 4 April and 10 May.

Raptors

Red Kite: An increasing number of spring records in both counties.

Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 14 June. At Clifton Pits one flew over on 12 April, one on 13 June. At Ripple one drifted northwest on 27 May. At Longdon Marsh one flew over on 5 April. At Pershore Wetlands one on 14 April.

Singles at both Newent and Highleadon on 10 June. One circling over Ashchurch near Tewkesbury on 4 June. One over Tirley, drifting towards Ashleworth on 30 May; at Haw Bridge two on 5 June. One over Wainlodes Hill on 27 April. At Sudmeadow one on 14 and 15 April.

Marsh Harrier: Worcestershire: At Kemerton Lake one on 12 May.

Sparrowhawk: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands singles throughout the period.

At Ashleworth singles on 5 and 13 April. At Coombe Hill one on 9 May, one flew over carrying prey on 21 May, one on 8 June. At Upham Meadow one over trees round Bredon Church on 15 April.

Buzzard: Widespread and numerous.

Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands up to three regularly throughout the period.

At Ashleworth a single on 6 April, a pair was seen mating in the trees along the main ditch on 11 April and one bird (the female?) then carried a twig to a nearby oak; one or two were seen in this area until the end of June, and it is likely (though not proven) that the birds nested there. At Coombe Hill singles on 25 April and 23 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre eight on 4 April. At Horsbere one on 22 April and 24 June.

Osprey: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane Pits), one over to northwest on 5 April.

At Coombe Hill, one flew over, going from the east towards the Severn on 21 May, a late date.

Kestrel: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands singles throughout the period. At Bredon's Hardwick a male on 16 June.

At Ashleworth two on 4 April, singles on 2 and 13 May. At Coombe Hill one on 10 April, a female over the barley field on 19 May, a male on 21 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre seen throughout the period and a pair definitely nested, with three males fighting over territory on 5 April. At Horsbere a pair on 24 June.

Hobby: Worcestershire: At Grimley Camp Lane Pits singles on 22 and 27 April, two on 29 April, four on 1 May, one hunting on 15 June. At Clifton Pits singles on 3 and 14 May. At Pershore Wetlands one on 22 May. At Lower Moor one on 6 May. At Pershore wetlands one flew through on 22 May.

Over Apperley village one on 23 May. At Coombe Hill singles on 23 and 26 April, two on 11 June. Over Sudmeadow one on 23 June. At Quedgeley one on 3 May. At Walmore a pair unsuccessfully chasing a Swallow on 28 April, one on 31 May.

Peregrine: At Ashleworth a male on the pylons on 15 April, one on 13 May. At Coombe Hill two on 10 April. At Upham Meadow an immature with prey on the meadow on 15 April.

Rails and Crakes

Water Rail: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands singles on five dates in April.

At Ashleworth one on 5 April. At Coombe Hill heard squealing from the Long Pool on 16 and 17 May and 13 June.

Spotted Crane: At Coombe Hill, one was singing at dusk from 15 to 22 June, and in the early morning (until 04h20) on 20 and 22 June, but not on 28 June. At Ashleworth a search for any possible singing birds before first light on 23 June proved fruitless.

Common Crane: All records are likely to be from birds raised at Slimbridge and released in the Somerset Levels under the Great

Crane Project; more records than usual at this time of year, when the migratory urge no doubt causes them to wander.

Worcestershire: At Grimley two circling over the Severn early on 18 April. At Kemerton Lake, two colour-ringed birds flushed on 4 May. Two circling over the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick on 7 May, drifting into Gloucestershire.

At Ashleworth an unringed first year bird on 19 April; five circled, then landed in the pylon field at Hasfield on 22 May. At Coombe Hill a ringed pair (female Yellow Red Yellow with a transmitter that no longer works, male Yellow Green Yellow) was photographed on 24 April; they are two years old, non-breeding and spent most of May in Somerset, before reappearing at Coombe Hill on 1 June, and again on 3 June, when they stayed to roost, though none came to roost on the evening of 8 June. At Elmore Back, a pair flew upstream on 12 April.

Moorhen: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands up to five regularly throughout the period.

At Ashleworth two incredibly aggressive pairs fighting one another on 27 May; a single on 30 June. At Cobney Meadows one with a chick on 20 June. At Horsbere definitely breeding on 21 May, one on 3 June, four on 17 June.

Coot: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake as many as 80 (no young seen) on 22 June. At Pershore Wetlands up to eight regularly throughout the period

At Ashleworth six on 6 April, 26 (a large number for the site at this time of year) on 12 April, just one on 27 May; nesting not recorded this year. Nested at Coombe Hill, both on the canal and on the south scrape: a pair on the canal with seven very early chicks from 10 April, two pairs on the canal with one and two chicks on 25 April; nest on the south scrape on 28 April; seven on 9 May including a pair with chicks on the canal; ten, including four recently hatched chicks on the south scrape on 19 May; ten adults, three families (two on canal, one on south scrape) on 26 May; on 8 June a pair with two largish young on the south scrape; on 13 June two adults making a nest for their single large offspring on the scrape. At Hartpury Orchard Centre a pair with two young on 11 May. At Horsbere at least four nesting pairs, two with chicks, two incubating, on 27 May, six adults with at least one brood of chicks and one bird nesting; on 3 June five and three large young; on 17 June ten; on 19 June one brood of two full-grown young, one nest still being incubated.

Waders

Breeding was well under way with Lapwings at Coombe Hill (six nests found with eggs) in the first ten days of April, some on the reserve and some on a single barley field south of the canal; in all twenty Lapwing nests were found, but productivity was low, probably not above a dozen fledged young. Oystercatchers were preparing to breed at this time, and did better in Worcestershire than in Gloucestershire. Curlews at Upham Meadow were holding territory, but appeared not to have laid by mid April. A few Redshanks nested in Worcestershire, but fared very poorly in Gloucestershire.

A trickle of passage waders appeared at Coombe Hill in April and May – the occasional Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Greenshank and Green and Common Sandpipers (plus three rather more unusual Temminck's Stints) all moving through rapidly, but no great numbers or variety; sites along the Severn and Avon in Worcestershire provided greater variety (but no large numbers) with Dotterel, Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit (the latter at much later dates than in Gloucestershire) and Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper and even Turnstone. Most Snipe records referred to birds in the evening, believed to be departing migrants. Little Ringed Plovers were more regular at Coombe Hill, with ones and twos throughout April and May, also no doubt passing birds, but

breeding was not noted here. Already on 30 May there were signs of return passage, with the arrival at Coombe Hill of the first Redshank for a couple of months, then three more in mid June. The first returning Green Sandpiper was at Coombe Hill on 16 June, after which numbers increased gradually; a returning male Ruff, still in breeding plumage and displaying, occurred there on 18 June; the first returning Snipe was noted on 19 June.

Oystercatcher: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake three pairs nested on the island; one pair was successful, raising two chicks, the other two lost their chicks after hatching. On 22 June two pairs remained. At Lower Moor the first bird had arrived in the Leisure Park area on 4 February, with a pair by 19 February, which nested on a shingle island in the middle lake in April; three large juveniles were seen on 17 May, one of which survived into July. At John Bennett a pair (first seen on 9 March) laid eggs and was seen with three small juveniles on 13 May, one of which fledged and was flying by 22 June. At Kermerton Lake the first birds had arrived on 18 February with two pairs present by 20 March, each pair laying on a separate island. The first pair failed, probably because of gull predation at the egg stage; the second pair (which had secreted its nest in deep vegetation) had hatched young by 8 June and produced two large juveniles which fledged and left the site with their parents in July.

A single late record at Ashleworth: one on 26 June. At Coombe Hill the first of the year were two displaying birds on 4 April, seen regularly afterwards in April; on 11 April the resident pair was severely harassing a singleton, presumably a passing migrant; the pair was mating and apparently incubating on the island in north scrape on 28 April, and were regularly seen incubating from 2 to 26 May; one chick had hatched (definitely a young Oystercatcher this year, not a Lapwing like last year) on 28 May; two adults with one chick seen from 30 May until 16 June; the chick appeared poorly, with unsteady gait, stumbling, unable to keep up with the adults on 17 and 19 June, being brooded by an adult early on 20 June, not seen after this date. Two adults (no chick) until the end of June (they were last seen on 4 July). Not nesting at Upham Meadow, but ones and twos were frequently recorded, often in flight, presumably from nearby breeding sites in Worcestershire.

Avocet: This species has nested for some years at Upton Warren (and at Slimbridge). The increasing number of records along the Severn and Avon are no doubt passing migrants or birds from Upton Warren.

Worcestershire: At Clifton Pits one departed southwards on 10 May, two on 15 May, one on 30 May, one on 14 June. At Lower Moor one on 20 April.

At Coombe Hill one, probably immature, on 28 April; another on 19 May.

Little Ringed Plover: At Ripple Lake a pair reared three young on the island. On 22 June one adult remaining.

The status of this species at Coombe Hill, which provides most records from the Gloucestershire sector of the Vales, is uncertain and complicated. Birds early in the season are no doubt northward migrants, and birds after mid-June no doubt include return southward migrants. But the species is recorded almost uninterruptedly throughout the period (though they only very rarely show any sign of breeding behaviour or display calls), so there must be some wandering local birds, perhaps off duty birds from local breeding areas (e.g. the Worcestershire gravel workings), perhaps failed breeders, perhaps non-breeders. At Coombe Hill (after a few records from 17 March onwards) a constant stream of ones and twos, recorded through April, was considered to be made up of migrants on their way to breeding places further north, as they did not seem to be the same individuals all the time; sometimes more than two: up to seven on 14 April, not staying for any length of time; three (a little more vocal than usual) on 21 April, but still considered to be migrants. This stream of ones and twos continued throughout May

and up to 14 June; then four on 17 June; ones and twos for the rest of the month including an adult on 22 June which was quite vocal before first light, five (including two juveniles not locally bred) on 28 June, at least seven on 30 June. Thus there was no real sign of a break between northward and return southward passage; the appearance of juveniles in June however suggests definite southward passage. At Horsebere, the only site in the Gloucestershire sector of the Vales where breeding was considered to have been attempted (though neither eggs nor chicks were seen), one on 4 April, two on 7 April, a pair on 22 April; on 21 May three adults, including a pair with some display and a female making a nest scrape, two on 26 April; on 27 May three, calling loudly and mating seen; on 29 May four very agitated birds doing distraction display to a Carrion Crow; on 3 June at least three very active and vocal birds; two, very vocal, on 10 June; two adults on 17 June, one adult on 19 June, an adult in moult on 24 June. At Minsterworth Ham six on 11 April, three pairs on separate pools. At Walmore Common one on 27 April.

Ringed Plover: Small numbers occurred at Coombe Hill on northward passage, sometimes in the company of Little Ringed Plovers: one, with Little Ringed Plovers, on 21 April; one with a Little Ringed Plover on 9 May; a single on 12 May was briefly joined by a little group of 12, clearly northbound migrants which stayed only ten minutes; two on 18 May, two on 30 May.

Dotterel: Not exactly Severn or Avon Vales, but two flying north over Bredon Hill on 2 May showed that they still move through the area in spring!

Golden Plover: At Coombe Hill seven flew over on 25 April.

Lapwing: Still breeds in the Severn and Avon Vales, though is increasingly restricted in distribution, using only a few favoured sites, rather than the many arable fields where it used to occur; very few indeed still breed on grassland in the Severn Vale. Special efforts were made this spring to record the progress of the breeding season and breeding success at Coombe Hill, one site where reasonable numbers still attempted to breed. As usual, some post breeding movements were noted by mid June.

Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh no breeding Lapwings nested this year on the Worcs Wildlife Trust reserve at Hill Court Farm, though they may have tried on farmland north of Marsh Lane. At Ripple Lake many pairs attempted to nest on the island, but most lost their young; just one brood raised one young, and all breeding birds had left by 14 June; on 22 June one adult remaining. At Lower Moor, three pairs held territories on the Wick side of the Avon at the start of the breeding season, but no juveniles were seen; this traditional breeding site had been favoured from the beginning of the year till the end of May by up to 2,000 immature large gulls, which spent the daytime hours loafing in the area as exiles from the Landfill Site to avoid the scaring tactics employed there; the presence of these gulls caused much consternation to the Lapwings and although at least some eggs were laid, failure was always going to be the outcome. At John Bennett, three pairs held territories at the beginning of the breeding season; two appeared to lay eggs and one of them was sporting two fledged juveniles by July (both surviving to leave the site). At Kemerton Lake a small arable area is host to breeding pairs each year, although the number has dropped dramatically in recent times. This year four pairs bred but (as has become the norm in recent years) all were predated either at egg stage or shortly after hatching. At Avon Meadows, two flew over on 16 June,

Breeding birds in Gloucestershire:

None bred on the Ashleworth/Hasfield Hams SSSI; any birds seen there probably came for a wash and brush-up from a nearby maize field, where they were nesting; one pair was apparently nesting on maize fallow on 13 April, at least two pairs on 14 April, but this field had been ploughed and sown by 27 and 28 April, when two disconsolate Lapwings were sitting round; a replacement nest with four eggs was noted on 13 May, two nests with eggs on 23 May, but

both were probably unsuccessful, as there were no sign of nests or young on this field on 13 June.

At Coombe Hill there were two groups of breeding birds, each of about 12 birds, one on grassland round the scrapes on the GWT reserve north of the canal, the other on a nearby barley field north of the canal; birds from the barley field no doubt moved at times to the scrapes on the reserve for a wash and brush up. None nested on grassland south of the canal, nor on the arable (maize) fields on higher ground at The Leigh, both of which have been used in previous years. In all, ten nests were found in each site over the course of the breeding season on each site, a good number of them undoubtedly replacement clutches.

On the barley field at least three nests had eggs on 4 April when the field was still under stubble before sowing. With the kind cooperation of the farmer, two nests were marked and avoided destruction during ploughing and sowing on 7 and 8 April; both had hatched young by 28 April and, to judge by the anxious behaviour of the parents until at least 28 May, produced fledged young, though it was impossible to be certain because of the height of the barley. The other birds nesting on the barley field in early April were casualties of the ploughing and sowing, and from 18 to 21 April at least four replacement clutches were being incubated, two of which may have been successful. Another four replacement clutches were seen from early May onwards but no young were seen. The parents took some broods on to higher ground in a neighbouring oil seed rape field; the young may have been affected by spraying of both barley and rape. It seems unlikely that the ten nests produced more than half a dozen fledged young.

Among those nesting round the GWT scrapes four had eggs by 11 April, two of which hatched chicks successfully, but only one chick fledged. Six other nests, probably replacement clutches following loss of eggs to predators, were seen from 21 April to 19 May; of these, four did not appear to produce fledged chicks, while one nest produced two fledged chicks, another three. Total fledged chick production from ten nests round the scrapes was therefore six chicks. On 9 May many existing nests appeared to have lost eggs and chicks; on 19 May a Coot predated one nest by pecking the eggs and drinking the yolk. Only a couple of pairs adopted nesting sites on the two islands in the scrapes. The adults stayed on until June to guard the young: ten adults were attending young on 22 June, two adults were attending three broods on 28 June.

At Cobney Meadows a single on 30 May. At Sandhurst one displaying over tilled field on 16 May. At Walmore Common, no definite records were made of nesting Lapwings, though a local farmer reported that they had nested there.

Migrants in Gloucestershire:

At Ashleworth a single on the reserve on 30 June. At Coombe Hill a small flock of ten birds (presumably northward-bound migrants) appeared on 11 April and stopped to rest and preen, but were rapidly seen off by the resident breeders. On 9 June a group of 32 adults on the reserve (in addition to breeding birds) undoubtedly included incoming birds from outside that had finished breeding, perhaps some from the barley field; 12 birds on 28 June were probably migrants.

Sanderling: Worcestershire: At Clifton Pits singles on 8, 12 and 14 May, two on 27 May. At Ripple one with a flock of Dunlin and Ringed Plover on 18 May, two with Ringed Plover on 25 May, two on 27 and 30 May, one on 31 May.

Curlew Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Clifton Pits one on 8 and 9 May. At Ripple Pits one on 20 May.

Temminck's Stint: At Coombe Hill two in summer plumage were found on 24 May, three present on 25 May, just one on 26 May. This is the second Coombe Hill record of this uncommon spring

migrant, the previous one being of a single on the similar date of 3 June 2012 (in a very wet summer).

Dunlin: At Coombe Hill one in summer plumage on the scrapes on 9 April was undoubtedly a new arrival; on 11 April a bird in winter plumage was present, illustrating the turnover of migrants; one in summer plumage with migrant Little Ringed Plovers on 14 April; five on the evening of 25 April, singles on 9 and 12 May, six on 18 May. At Horsbere one in summer plumage on 26 April, a sluggish looking bird in summer plumage on 3 June.

Ruff: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane Pits) a male from 6 to 10 April. At Clifton Pits one on 9 April. At Lower Moor one on 23 April.

At Coombe Hill four (three males and a female) on 5 April, one on 15 April. On return passage, an adult in breeding plumage with a white ruff, displaying on 18 and 19 June, in the Curlew roost at first light 20 June.

Jack Snipe: At Ashleworth two by day with Common Snipe on 13 April.

Snipe: Once again this year, no indication at all of breeding, and no drumming birds were recorded; it appears certain that Snipe has been lost as a breeding bird from the Vales. There was the usual crop of records of excited birds on April evenings, apparently migrants departing at dusk for night migratory flights.

Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands one on 15 April, two on 18 April, singles on 20 and 27 April.

At Ashleworth three on 1, five on 5 April, at least twenty calling as they flew off at dusk on 6 April, with even a little whickering display call; some calling at dusk on 12 April, but no display calls nor drumming; 20 flushed by day on 13 April; only about five on the rare wet areas on 27 April; six on 28 April, all round the only remaining wet area by the scrape. At Coombe Hill one heard flying off to the northeast at dusk on 8 April; two flushed by day on 18 April. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two on 22 April, one on 27 April. At Horsbere singles on 1 and 22 April. At Walmore 19 on 4 April, a late bird with an odd fluttery flight on 27 April. The first bird on return passage was at Coombe Hill on 19 June.

Black-tailed Godwit: Worcestershire: At Grimley Camp Lane Pits three from 10 to 13 May. At Clifton Pits one from 2 to 5 May. At Lower Moor three on 21 and 22 April, one on 1 June had disappeared by late morning. At John Bennett reserve one on 27 April.

At Coombe Hill two on 10 April; one in bright summer plumage on 11 April was feeding avidly as though it was a hungry passing migrant; one on 12 April.

Bar-tailed Godwit: At Clifton Pits one from 24 to 26 April.

Whimbrel: As usual there was a spate of records in late April and early May, no doubt migrants en route to breeding areas in Iceland. Worcestershire: At Grimley Camp Lane Pits one briefly in the evening of 25 April; two on the evening of 26 April flew off northwards. At Clifton Pits one on 24 April, two over to the north on 12 May. At Ripple Lake singles on 5 and 9 May. At Lower Moor one over in the early morning of on 24 April. At Gwen Finch reserve one briefly on 17 May before it flew off to the northwest.

At Coombe Hill two in the evening of 25 April, two on 26 April; one, newly arrived, on the morning of 28 April, three joining the Curlew roost the same evening; one on 29 April; on 12 May one in morning, four in the roost that evening.

Curlew: Careful observations were made of the pairs that breed in the Vales (though for most of them fledging does not take place until

July). Three birds colour marked on their Severn estuary wintering grounds were found breeding on local sites (others from the same wintering area go as far afield as Sweden and Finland). As in previous years, at Coombe Hill and sometimes at Ashleworth, surprising numbers of apparently breeding birds joined a communal evening roost; quite why they should do this when they have vulnerable eggs or young in the meadow is not obvious.

Worcestershire: Along the Severn: At Ripple Lake the colour-ringed bird from the pair that appears to nest across the river at Queenshill Rough was seen on 1 and 8 May. At Longdon Marsh a pair was holding territory north of Marsh Lane on 8 April. Along the Avon: At Fladbury Meadows a male was singing from 4 to 10 April, but there were no other signs of breeding. At Lower Moor the pair seen since March apparently held territory on the Wick bank of the Avon, and was regularly heard from Lower Moor; they appeared to lose their young after hay cutting round Wick on 9 and 10 June, and were last seen on 12 June. At Asham Meadows, Eckington, the pair seen from early March regularly visited Gwen Finch and John Bennett to wash and preen from 19 March to 25 May, and were loudly defending young from dogs and humans on 10 and 17 June, when three half grown young birds were seen. On Eckington Meadows a pair had been resident since 8 March; an adult was accompanying a large juvenile in cut hayfields on 29 June. On Avon Meadows (Fleet Lane) two were feeding on 16 June. At Bredon's Hardwick East one was calling from the banks of the Avon on 16 June.

Gloucestershire: It seems likely that no Curlews bred successfully this year at Ashleworth, Coombe Hill or Leigh Meadows, since they seemed already to have given up by the end of June; however it transpired by early July that they were successful at the Severn Ham, Tewkesbury and Upham Meadow. Along the Severn: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury one bubbling on 17 May. At Ashleworth one or two birds were seen throughout the period, bubbling from the Hasfield side; one which came in to roost on the scrape on the GWT reserve on several evenings and was also observed with its mate on the Hasfield side, was the colour-ringed bird marked on the estuary which has been seen in the area for four of the last five springs; it was also seen several times at Coombe Hill, usually at the roost; no sign of chicks..

At Coombe Hill numbers seen and heard bubbling by day throughout the period (usually two pairs and rarely more than four individuals) were always much lower than those recorded coming to roost in the evening round the scrapes; a courtship pair apparently choosing a nest site on 18 April; on 28 May one near south scrape with alarm call as though it had chicks; on 30 May, four present, one of them near the south scrape and one doing stalling flight by north scrape. Twenty came to the roost on the evening of 1 April, chasing one another more actively than on 16 March; 13 (including the colour ringed bird from Ashleworth) came in to roost at dusk on 7 April; 16 on 8 April, ten on 28 April, six on 12 May; the number coming in to roost in the late evening rose to nine on 17 May and 15 on 2 June; on the evening of 8 June the number roosting had risen to 21, suggesting that some birds had perhaps finished or failed in their breeding attempt (victims of hay cutting?). On 9 June a group of eight on a cut hayfield included the colour-ringed bird from Hasfield, suggesting it had abandoned breeding. Sixteen came to roost in the evening of 16 June; at first light on 20 June 16 were in the roost, and at first light on 22 June there were 18; early on 28 June 13 were in the roost, including the colour ringed bird; on 30 June nine came to roost in the evening.

At Leigh Meadows none found on 16 May, but one was bubbling over Cobney Meadows; on 30 May one by flight pond at Cobney Meadows; none at Leigh Meadows on 9 June; one bubbling over Leigh Meadows on 20 June. South of Haw Bridge, one heard on 13 June, and birds were reported to have been in the usual breeding area there this year. At Netheridge Farm a completely white bird with alarm call on 20 May. At Minsterworth Ham a pair on 11 April, none on 11 June. At Walmore Common one on 4 April, none on later visits in April.

Along the Avon: At Upham Meadow twelve on 4 April, apparently territorial, including a third colour ringed bird from the Severn Estuary at Wibdon, the first record of this individual at this breeding site; on 15 April about 13, mainly paired, had probably not yet commenced laying, the colour-ringed bird still present with its mate; on 24 April still about 12, with some display between pairs; on 16 June one pair appeared to have young, other pairs still bubbling; on 22 June at least seven birds present (including the colour ringed bird), many with alarm calls as though they had young.

Redshank: While some pairs seem to have bred successfully in Worcestershire, this was a desperately bad breeding season for Redshank in Gloucestershire.

Worcestershire: Along the Severn: at Longdon Marsh no Redshank nested this year on the Worcs Wildlife Trust reserve at Hill Court Farm south of Marsh Lane; at Ripple Lake at least six pairs nested on the island (14+ adults between 1 and 8 May), and two pairs raised three young (six large young seen on 18 May), none remaining on 22 June. Along the Avon: at John Bennett two pairs, present from late March until early June, attempted to nest and one pair fledged one juvenile. At Asham Meadow one pair bred and was seen defending two large juveniles from 10 to 17 June.

Gloucestershire: Along the Severn: at Coombe Hill, no attempt at nesting this year, and no records in April, nor for most of May. On 30 May a single adult in summer plumage appeared briefly, before flying on to the south, apparently a bird which had finished breeding or had failed and was on return southward passage already; on 13 June three adults in summer plumage, no breeding behaviour; two on 15 June. Along the Avon: At Upham Meadow none recorded, but the local farmer reports that they were perching on fence posts and making chipping alarm calls in early June and certainly bred.

Greenshank: Worcestershire: At Grimley Camp Lane Pits one over to north on 15 May. At Lower Moor one on 13 and 23 April.

At Ashleworth two on 2 April. At Coombe Hill one recently arrived in the evening of 25 April, two in summer plumage (apparently recent arrivals) on 28 April, one on 29 May; one on 2 May; an adult in summer plumage flew in on 16 May.

Green Sandpiper: Only small numbers moving north on spring passage: at Coombe Hill one flew over to northeast calling on 8 April; one at dusk, calling, on 28 April. At Horsbere one on 22 April. On return passage, the first adult appeared at Coombe Hill by day on 16 June, two that evening; then up to three until the end of the month.

Wood Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Grimley Camp Lane Pits one on the evening of 26 April. At John Bennett reserve one on 29 April.

Common Sandpiper: At Coombe Hill one on 25 April, two on 26 and 28 April, one on 12 May.

Turnstone: Worcestershire: At Clifton Pits one on 3 May, three on 8 May, one on 15 May.

Cetti's Warbler: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands the first record had been on 26 March, then regular records of one or two throughout the period; nest found later in the season.

At Coombe Hill one singing from Broadmere on 4 April. At Over Ponds one singing on 20 and 21 April. At Lower Rea one on 13 and 27 April.

Grasshopper Warbler: Worcestershire: At Gwen Finch reserve one singing on evening of 23 April.

None at all recorded (neither singing nor in ringing operations) this year at Ashleworth, where in previous years they have been recorded more often than at Coombe Hill, with a number of breeding records. At Coombe Hill on the other hand one was singing from Southern Meadows on 23 and 28 April; then a series of June records, suggesting that they were breeding: one (perhaps two) singing from Southern Meadows by day on 8 June, another singing from Broadmere that evening; two singing on the evening of 16 June, one on the evening of 17 June, four or more on 18 June and two singing in the early morning of 20 June, singles singing early in the mornings of 22 and 28 June. At Lower Rea one singing on 26 April, still there early morning on 27 April.

Sedge Warbler: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands the first on 15 April, then up to ten throughout the period with peaks of 14 on 30 April, 26 on 4 May and 15 on 7 May.

At Ashleworth a singing male on 11 April may well have been a passing migrant; none caught or heard on 13 April; about five singing on 27 April, when eight were caught (two retraps), none in breeding condition yet; at least six singing on 4 May when 11 were caught (one of them a bird originally ringed at a coastal lagoon in eastern Brittany on 20 August 2014, clearly on its way south; this individual was retrapped several times during the present period, so was clearly nesting at Ashleworth); several singing, nine caught (only one in breeding condition) on 13 May; on 23 May 12 caught, all in breeding condition, mainly males, suggesting that the females were probably on their nests; on 14 June only one adult retrapped, but plenty of song still – seems likely that many birds were still on eggs or feeding small young; on 23 June some song before first light but none afterwards, and seven birds were caught included one juvenile (the first of the year); on 30 June at least five still singing, seven caught (five juveniles). At Coombe Hill two on 15 April, three singing on 18 and 21 April, five singing on 23 and 28 April, nine singing on 29 April; at least two singing on 9 and 12 May, at least three singing on 21 May; some song and one bird carrying food on 30 May; some song on 13 June, five singing early in the morning in late June. At Leigh Meadows one singing on 16 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre one on 31 May. At Horsbere Brook Flood Storage area, one singing on 6 and 11 May; none singing on 3 June, but, surprisingly, one singing on the evening of 10 June - perhaps a bird unsuccessful elsewhere; none on 17 June. At Port Ham four singing on 21 April. At Walmore two singing on 27 April. At Upham Meadow one singing on 24 April, at least five on 16 June, two on 22 June.

Reed Warbler: Worcestershire: At Pershore Wetlands the first on 27 April, then about six recorded on every visit through the period, with a peak of 11 on 18 June.

At Ashleworth, none singing during a series of early morning visits from 27 April to 23 June, but on 30 June two were singing and a juvenile was caught, so they must have been there all the time! At Coombe Hill the first record of three on 26 April, then up to three singing (generally in withies since there are no reeds at Coombe Hill) along the canal, from Broadmere or the Long Pool until the end of June. At Hartpury Orchard Centre five on 11 May, eight on 31 May, five on 5 June. At Port Ham three on 20 and 21 April. At Upham Meadow, none in April, but two singing on 16 June, at least three on 22 June.

These are unconfirmed records, compiled by M. Smart from his own observations and those of Les Brown, with additional records from David Anderson, Gordon Avery, Mervyn Greening, Mark Grieve, Andy Jayne, Rob Prudden, Lawrence Skipp, Graham Smith, John Sanders and John Wiltshire, and the Coombe Hill hide logbook, and from the Pershore Wetlands records, with cherries picked from the Gloster Birder and Worcester Birding websites.