

## Notes on birds in the Severn and Avon Vales (the "Severn Hams"), Gloucestershire and south Worcestershire. April – June 2017

### General introduction

See Notes on birds in the Severn and Avon Vales January – March 2017

### Weather

Nationally, a weakening area of low pressure brought a showery day on 1 April, but pressure quickly built from the south, and it was often unseasonably warm until 9 April (maximum temperature of 25.5°C at Cambridge on 9 April), with plenty of sunshine for much of the country although it was often cloudier in Northern Ireland and north-west Scotland. From 10 April onwards, temperatures were mostly close to average, with some cool nights, but the dry, anticyclonic theme continued. There was a late cold snap between 24 and 27 April when a northerly outbreak brought scattered wintry showers and some overnight frosts. 30 April was very wet in parts of the south-west. The provisional UK mean temperature was 8.0 °C, which is 0.6 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. Rainfall was below normal except in north-west Scotland and parts of Devon, with 48% of average overall, making it the 10th driest April in a series from 1910. In Gloucestershire, it was mainly dry and warm in the first ten days of April, with ridges of high pressure between bouts of south westerly weather, but with little or no rain, midday temperatures reaching 15-17°C on 3-6 April, even warmer 7-9 April, with high pressure and light winds, sometimes morning mist and temperatures over 20°C on 9 and 10 April; cooler in the following week with little or no rain (less than 1 mm in Gloucester in first half of April). High pressure taking over from 18 April till the end of month, with bright fine conditions until 23 April; the forecast frost on 19 April didn't materialise, the temperature reaching 18°C on 23 April; winds went north-westerly from 23-26 April, cooler, with a touch of frost in Gloucester on 26 April, then going to southeast at end of month but still no rain. Total rainfall for April in Gloucester only 4 mm.

At the start of May, a slackening low-pressure system brought rain and showers to the south of the UK, but it was mostly dry and sunny in the north. During the first 11 days, the weather was anticyclonic with mainly easterly winds, which brought plenty of warm dry sunny weather especially to Northern Ireland and western Scotland, but it was often cooler and cloudier in the south-east and in counties bordering the North Sea. It turned unsettled around mid-month with bands of rain interspersed with brighter showery weather. There was a notable hot sunny interlude for much of the UK between 24 and 26 May, with temperatures widely in the mid to high 20s, followed by widespread thunderstorms on 27 and 28 May, with lightning strikes in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. The provisional UK mean temperature was 12.1°C, which is 1.7°C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it the second warmest May in a series from 1910 (behind 2008). Mean maximum temperatures were generally about 2.5°C above normal in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but nearer 1.5°C above in the south. Rainfall was above normal in Lincolnshire, East Anglia and south-eastern and central southern England, but mostly below normal elsewhere, substantially so in some parts, with 83% of average overall. For the UK as a whole it was the tenth sunniest May in a series from 1929. In Gloucestershire, April's dry conditions continued in the first half of May; for the first ten days, the weather was dominated by high pressure, with generally overcast conditions, and winds from the east or northeast, and even a hint of frost early in the morning of 10 May; winds went southwesterly from 13 May, bringing quite heavy rain on 17 and 18 May; very hot on 25 and 26 May; rainfall totals recovered from the April low, but the total for Gloucester was only 47mm.

The first part of June was largely unsettled, bringing significant amounts of rainfall to most areas. England and Wales became more settled after 10 June, with a build in pressure, though rain-bearing

fronts continued to steer round the northern edge of the high pressure with western Scotland remaining wet at times. Very warm air was drawn up from the south from 16 June onwards, and every day from 17 to 21 June somewhere in the UK exceeded 30°C, the first time this has happened in the UK in June since 1995, and the highest June temperatures since the heatwave of 1976. The highest value recorded during this spell was 34.5°C, at Heathrow Airport on 21 June, the UK's highest temperature reading in June since 1976. Fresher air moved in over the whole UK in the following two days, and low pressure became established for the last four days of the month bringing plenty of rain in many areas. The provisional UK mean temperature was 14.5°C, 1.5°C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it the equal fifth warmest June in a series from 1910. Temperatures were highest relative to normal in eastern counties of England. Rainfall was well above normal over large parts of the country, with up to three times the average amount in parts of southern and eastern Scotland, though a few places in the English Midlands and the Outer Hebrides came in just below average. Overall the UK had its sixth wettest June in a series since 1910, and for Scotland it was the wettest June in that period. Sunshine was above average in south-east England, but below average in northern and western areas of the UK. In Gloucestershire, high pressure dominated for the first few days of June, but south-westerly winds with the occasional shower set in until the heat wave from 17 June: the next few days were the hottest days in the county in the year so far, but the heatwave was over by 23 June. The month's rainfall in Gloucester amounted (as in May) to 47 mm, bringing the total for the half year to only 210 mm.

### Water levels and flooding: general

There was no spring flooding in 2017. After some fluctuations in March, water levels at the beginning of April were generally normal, tending to drop gradually; this tendency continued with very dry conditions throughout April, and on into May and June. Silage was already being cut on 22 April near Tirley; extensive hay-making took place during the warm period in mid-June.

### Conditions at the main sites

#### Sites along the Severn

Ryall Pits: Now heavily overgrown with little open water.

Longdon Marsh: No flooding north of Marsh Lane in early April, fields on Worcs WT reserve south of Marsh Lane drying out, still some water in scrapes.

Severn Ham, Tewkesbury: No flooding throughout the period, but a couple of patches of surface water from a broken water main were drying out fast in early April. Major repairs to the weir on the Mill Avon at Abbey Mill. No hay cut by end of June.

Ashleworth/Hasfield Hams: Water on GWT reserve dropping gradually, following higher levels during March (boards in sluice removed in March); continuing to drop throughout the period, with no spring flooding. No hay cut on GWT reserve during the period, but some cutting begun on neighbouring farmers' fields by 26 June.

Coombe Hill: Still plenty of water in the scrapes in early April (after higher levels in March), but no floodwater outside scrapes; scrape levels dropping steadily through May and June.

Leigh and Cobney Meadows: No flooding in early April; still water in wildfowlers' scrape. Gloucester cattle out at Cobney Meadows by 11 May; report of fox control by shooting in this area.

#### Sites along the Avon

Upham Meadow, Twynning: No flooding throughout the period. Hay cutting just beginning by 24 June.

### Overview of bird records

The female American Wigeon at Grimley stayed into early April, a Marsh Harrier was noted there in the first days of May and a Sponbill occurred on 25 May.

As usual there were records of Ospreys passing through, one in each county, the Worcestershire record on a rather late date in early May.

Through passage of migrant waders was poor in Gloucestershire, but much more marked in the Worcestershire gravel pits, especially in the last few days of April and the first few days of May, with records of waders more unusual inland, such as Grey Plover, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper and Turnstone. A few migrant waders returning southwards were already apparent by late June.

Worcestershire had records of two terns unusual inland, a Sandwich Tern on 9 April and a Little Tern on 1 May, with some of the rather more familiar Arctic Terns and quite good numbers of Black Terns in late April/early May; none of these species were recorded in Gloucestershire.

Numbers of breeding waders were again low and success in producing chicks was poor. Much attention was devoted to a systematic survey of breeding Curlews, like those of 2015 and 2016, but with improved coverage; a figure of 30 breeding pairs in the two counties was once again reached.

A few Waxwings left over from the winter were still present in Gloucester in early April. Notable passerine absentees from hay meadow sites were Yellow Wagtail and Corn Bunting.

From May onwards the Constant Effort Site ringing resumed at Ashleworth Ham, with three sessions per month, using the same nets in the same places over the same time period, to enable year to year comparisons.

Coverage of south Worcestershire is better than in previous reports, thanks to extensive information provided by Rob Prudden and Andy Warr.

#### Swans

Mute Swan: Worcestershire: At Lower Ham, Upton, the non-breeding flock noted in March had disappeared by 11 May, probably gone to Ripple. At Ryall Pits a pair with a brood of five on 3 June. At Ripple two on 9 April, 46 on 17 May, 27 on 3 June, 37 on 11 June; a pair with a brood on 10 June. At Longdon Marsh a non-breeding flock of 36, grazing on 8 April, perhaps included birds from Upton. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 9 April, six on 14 May, three on 11 June.

In Gloucestershire, broods known to have been raised successfully only at Severn Ham, Coombe Hill and Walmore. At Mythe Hook a territorial pair on 18 April, 18 May (when their nest had been washed away by heavy rain the previous day) and 15 June. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, odd ones in April and May, then a pair with six cygnets on the Mill Avon on 12 June. At Ashleworth Ham a pair, apparently nesting, in April and throughout May, but no nest was made this year; three on 13 June; two in flight on 26 June. At Coombe Hill one on 22 April; nest on Long Pool on 29 April, still incomplete on 13 May; in a different area near the Grundon Hide, a very aggressive male chasing two other swans off on 4 May, pair with eight cygnets on 13 May, all eight surviving until the end of June. At Cobney Meadows three immatures on 19 April. At Leigh Meadows a pair on the scrape on 17 April. At Horsbere two adults with a nest on 18 May. At Walmore the resident pair raised five cygnets. At Upham Meadow none on 8 May. At Mitton five on 2 June, eight non-breeders on 12 June.

#### Geese

Greylag Goose: Many successful broods seen in Worcestershire, but none recorded breeding in Gloucestershire this year.

Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits 20 with goslings on 23 June. At Ripple, only small numbers, none breeding: four on 2 April, 15 on 9 April, six on 10 June, eight on 11 June. At Longdon Marsh two on Worcs WT reserve on 8 April. On Avon Meadows 20 on 1 April, 53 on 3 April. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits 62 on 9 April, 17 on 14 May;

a family with six almost full-grown goslings on 15 May; four broods of goslings on 29 May, about 100 with at least ten broods of goslings on 2 June, 121 on 11 June, at least 75 with many goslings on 12 June.

Gloucestershire: At Ashleworth Ham occasional records of up to six throughout the period. At Coombe Hill 15 on 4 April, then small numbers (maximum four) until 10 June. At Cobney Meadows a pair and a singleton on 19 April, two on 3 May. At Upham Meadow a pair on 1 April, eight including an agitated pair on 8 May. At Mitton four on 12 June.

Pink-footed Goose: One at Coombe Hill on 4 May seems unlikely to have been wild.

Canada Goose: Worcestershire: At Ripple five broods of goslings on 29 May, seven broods on 10 June, 33 birds on 11 June. At Longdon Marsh eight north of Marsh Lane and two on Worcs WT reserve on 8 April. At Ryall Pits ten with goslings on 23 June. On Avon Meadows a few on 1 April, 49 on 3 April. At Ripple 15 on 9 April. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits 47 on 9 April, nine on 14 May; a pair with six goslings, almost full grown, on 15 May; about 20 on 2 June; 16 on 11 June, 25 with some goslings on 12 June.

In Gloucestershire, goslings seen at Mythe Hook, Ashleworth Ham and Hartpury Orchard Centre. At Mythe Hook two pairs on a farm pond, one nesting, on 18 April; pair with six tiny goslings on 8 May. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, three over on 12 and 20 April. Along the Severn above Haw Bridge a pair on 6 May. At Ashleworth Ham 30 on 3 April, 10 on 14 April; a sitting bird on 29 April and 6 May, pair with four goslings from 9 May to 17 June; small numbers of additional adults (up to five) throughout May and June. At Coombe Hill no sign of nesting this year; odd records, usually in single figures but 17 on 15 May, on many occasions throughout the period. At Cobney Meadows 13, including a couple of pairs, on 19 April, ten on 3 May. At Hartpury Orchard Centre two pairs with ten goslings between them on 5 May. At Walmore up to ten during April, four on 18 May. At Upham Meadow 18 on 1 April, at least five on 25 April, flock of 20 on 8 May. At Mitton two on 12 June.

Cackling Goose: Worcestershire: At Ripple, one of the western race on 10, 11 June (bird with a limp seen in previous years).

Egyptian Goose: Near Tewkesbury a pair on 17 May.

Ducks/Shelduck: Worcestershire: At Clifton four on 6 May, a brood of nine ducklings on 4 June. At Ripple one on 19 May. At Longdon Marsh on the Worcs WT reserve a pair on the reservoir on 4 April, three birds on 8 April. At Bredon's Hardwick one on 13 May.

In Gloucestershire several pairs behaving as though they were nesting (male defending feeding territory on ponds, sometimes joined by a female, presumably coming from her nest-hole), but only one brood of ducklings seen. At Ashleworth Ham up to six birds, sometimes obviously paired, through April, numbers dwindling in May (maximum three); a male on 3 June, pair with seven ducklings on 5 June, pair with only one duckling left on 10 and 13 June; neither adults nor ducklings on 17 June. At Coombe Hill up to six (some paired) in early April, others perhaps nesting in northern meadows on 15 April; three pairs on Long Pool on 29 April and much lekking there on 4 May; six (two pairs) on 13 May, a male on 27 May. At Cobney Meadows two on 3 May. At Minsterworth Ham two on 5 April, four on 15 April. At Walmore a pair with nine ducklings on 18 May, probably the first definite record of nesting here since the 1960s.

Mandarin: Worcestershire: At Grimley three on 28 May. At Longdon Marsh WWT reserve a pair on 4 April. At Queenhill Rough three flying down Beachley Brook on 8 April.

Surface-feeding ducks:

Wigeon: Worcestershire: At Holt 21 on 3 April, eight on 5 and 6 April, none left on 8 April. At Ripple 23 on 2 April, four on 9 April, three on 14 April, four on 22 April, a drake with a damaged wing on 29 April found dead next day. At Longdon Marsh three on Worcs WT reserve on 8 April.

At Ashleworth Ham ten on 3 April, four on 8 April; records through April and up to 16 May, generally singles, at least one injured bird. At Coombe Hill two on 3 April, 12 on 4 April, five (four males and a female, the latter thought by some to be an American Wigeon) on 14 and 15 April, pair on 4 May; a male on 17 and 19 June.

American Wigeon: Worcestershire: the immature female frequenting the Grimley/ Holt area for much of February and March was still present with Eurasian Wigeon until 6 April, not present 8 April. A female Wigeon at Coombe Hill up to 16 April was thought by some observers to be an American Wigeon, but this was not confirmed.

Gadwall: No proof of breeding this year.

Worcestershire: At Ripple six on 9 April, four on 22 April, three on 29 April, seven on 1 May, five on 6 May. At Longdon Marsh on Worcs WT reserve six pairs on 4 April, three birds on 8 April.

At Ashleworth Ham five on 3 April, two on 8 and 14 April. At Coombe Hill two on several dates in April and May, four on 27 May. At Cobney Meadows one on 19 April. At Upham Meadow a pair on 8 May.

Teal: Worcestershire: At Ripple six on 9 April, a drake on 22, 29 April. At Longdon Marsh ten on Worcs WT reserve on 8 April.

In Gloucestershire the odd bird summering (probably injured birds; no sign of breeding). At Ashleworth Ham still 200 present on 3 April, 99 on 5 April, 78 on 8 April, 32 on 14 April, 15 on 19 April; in May and June generally one or two summering birds (three on 9 May), some at least were injured birds. At Coombe Hill 30 on 4 April, seven on 29 April. At Cobney Meadows two on 19 April.

Green-winged Teal: At Ashleworth the male seen occasionally from mid-February to late March was still present on 2 April.

Mallard: Worcestershire: At Ripple 34 on 9 April; 128 roosted at dusk on 3 June, 16 on 11 June. At Longdon Marsh five on Worcs WT reserve on 8 April; six with two ducklings on pond north of Marsh Lane on 16 June. At Bredon's Hardwick 36 on 9 April, 17 on 14 May and 11 June.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, seven on 12 April, three on 24 May. At Ashleworth eight on 8 April, ten on 14 April, seven on 3 June; two on 17 June. At Coombe Hill a female with six small ducklings on 20 April, at least two ducklings left on 22 April; a female with two ducklings by the Wharf on 13 May; a flock of 80 on 27 June. At Leigh Meadows six along the Chelt on 17 April; at Cobney Meadows two on 18 June. At Hartpury Orchard Centre a pair with five ducklings on 5 May. At Horsbere 19 on 18 May. At Upham Meadow 20 on 8 May. At Mitton ten on 2 June, 20 (two broods of ducklings) on 12 June.

Pintail: At Ashleworth Ham two pairs on 5 April, two on 8 April, an injured female on 2, 9 and 19 May.

Garganey: Worcestershire: At Grimley a drake on 4 May, eclipse drake on 7 June. At Ripple a drake on 18 May. At Bredon's Hardwick a drake on 14 May.

Showeler: Worcestershire: At Ripple seven on 2 April, two on 9 April.

At Ashleworth Ham 20 on 3 April, three on 8 April, one on 14 and 19 April. At Coombe Hill five on 4 April, two males on 4 May, a female on 27 June may have been an early returning migrant.

Diving ducks:

Pochard: Worcestershire: At Ripple six on 2 April, seven on 14 April, eight on 22 April, a pair on 16 May, six (four drakes, two females) on 17 May. At John Bennett a drake on 29 May.

Tufted Duck: Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits one male on 23 June. At Ripple 73 on 9 April, 63 on 11 June. At Bredon's Hardwick three on 3 April, ten on 9 April, two on 14 May, three drakes on 2 June; two on 11 June, first brood of ducklings seen on 30 June. At Mythe Hook three on 18 May.

Scaup: Worcestershire: At Grimley Gravel Pits; the three birds (two males and a female) seen for much of March were still present from 1 to 8 April; one female on Wagon Wheel Pit from 13 to 29 April.

Gamebirds

Quail: At Ashleworth calling birds were recorded on 31 May and 1 June.

Divers and Grebes

Little Grebe: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh one on reservoir on 4 April.

At Ashleworth Ham one on 30 May.

Great Crested Grebe: Worcestershire: Bred at Ripple Lake: ten on 9 April, 20 on 17 May, 18 on 11 June. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits two on 9 April, four on 14 May, one on 2 June, four on 11 June, three on 12 June.

On the Severn at Tewkesbury one on 10 May.

Cormorant

Cormorant: Worcestershire: near Ripple two on trees by the Severn on 8 April; at Ripple Lake seven on 9 April, six on 10 June, five on 11 June.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one to three flying over on several days from April to June; four catching Eels and Twaite Shad by the weir on 28 May. At Coombe Hill seven over on 27 June.

Hérons, Egrets and Ibises

Cattle Egret: Worcestershire: At Lower Moor two on 24 June.

Gloucestershire: At Horsbere two on 3 June. Two at Slimbridge on 19 June. It seems likely that all these observations refer to the same individuals.

Little Egret: Worcestershire: At Ripple present in single figures throughout the period, generally ones and twos but six on 14 April and 17 May, four on 21 May, five on 29 May. At Longdon Marsh one on 4 and 8 April. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits singles on 2 and 11 June.

In Gloucestershire breeding probably occurred at two sites. At Mythe Hook one on 18 April. At Ashleworth Ham singles on many dates in April and June, five on 5 April. At Coombe Hill up to three on many dates in April, up to two in the second half of May, one or two on many dates in June with three on 27 June. At Leigh Meadows one along the Chelt on 17 April. At Sandhurst one on 21 May. At Horsbere four on 18 May. At Saintbridge Pool in the middle of Gloucester two over a period of two weeks in mid-June, one on 21 June. At Walmore two on 17 and 26 April.

Great White Egret: Continuing records of one or two birds at various sites in south Worcestershire and north Gloucestershire – likely to have been the same individual(s) in each case.

Worcestershire: the bird present in the area for much of March was at Ripple on many dates in the first half of April and at Gwen Finch NR on several dates from 12 to 17 April.

Gloucestershire: At Ashleworth Ham one on 1, 5 and 8 April. At Coombe Hill one on 2, 5 and 25 April.

Grey Heron: Worcestershire: At Ripple two on 3 June. At Longdon Marsh one north of Marsh Lane on 16 June. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 23 June.

Gloucestershire: The Sandhurst heronry was definitely occupied on 21 May but hard to say how many nests; the Boddington heronry was probably occupied, the Staverton heronry not occupied this year. Other records: At Mythe Hook one on 18 April, three on 18 May, one on 15 June. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one on 15 May, 8 June. At Ashleworth Ham two on 8 April; one on 3 June, two on 17 June. At Coombe Hill one on 29 April, 15 May; five on 17 June, one on 27 June. At Leigh Meadows two along the Chelt on 17 April. At Cobney Meadows two on 18 June.

Spoonbill: Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 25 May.

#### Raptors

Red Kite: Over Southwick Farm, south of Tewkesbury, one soaring on 30 April. At Ashleworth one on 31 May. Over Coombe Hill one soaring on 24 June. Over Netheridge Farm one soaring on 28 May. Over Upham Meadow one soaring on 24 June.

Marsh Harrier: At Grimley one through on 1 and 2 May.

Sparrowhawk: At The Mythe one on 7 June. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one carrying prey on 6 April, one on 25 April. At Ashleworth one on 26 April, a male on 25 May. At Coombe Hill a pair displaying on 11 April, a female on 15 April, a male on 16 April.

Buzzard: At Severn Ham one on 18 and 25 April. At Ashleworth one on 2 May. At Coombe Hill one on 27 May following tractor as it cut hay. At Leigh Meadows one on 17 April.

Osprey: Worcestershire: one in flight over Pershore on 5 May.

At Coombe Hill one over to north on 9 April.

Kestrel: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham one on Lower Ham on 23 June. At Queenhill Rough a nest in the girders under the M50 bridge on 11 May. At Longdon Marsh a pair nesting in a Lombardy Poplar on 4 April.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, two on 24 May, one on 8 June. At Ashleworth Ham a female on 25 May, one on 5 June. At Coombe Hill a male on 22 April, one on 19 May.

Hobby: As usual, more records from Worcestershire than from Gloucestershire.

Worcestershire: At Holt two on 2 May. At Grimley (Camp Lane) singles on many dates from 25 April to the end of June. At Clifton one on 2 May, two on 17 May. At Ripple one on 6 and 11 May. At John Bennett NR one on 25 April. At Eckington one on 29 April.

At Coombe Hill one catching dragonflies on 19 June, one on 26 June. At Upham Meadow one on 15 June.

Peregrine: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh one feeding on the ground on 4 April.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, two displaying on 20 April, no doubt the birds that nest on Abbey; an adult male plucking prey and a juvenile on the tower of Tewkesbury Abbey on 8 June. At

Ashleworth one being mobbed by Buzzards on 10 May. At Walmore an immature on 4 June.

#### Rails and Crakes

Water Rail: No records, clearly overlooked.

Common Crane: No spring records this year; in previous years there have generally been records of birds from the Slimbridge/Somerset Levels reintroduction project; maybe they are settling down and losing the wanderlust?

Moorhen: Worcestershire: At Bredon's Hardwick two on 14 May, one on 11 June.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, a pair with five smallish chicks on the Mill Avon on 20 April. At Coombe Hill four on 27 June. At Horsbere at least three on 18 May.

Coot: Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits two or three on 23 June. At Ripple 22 on 9 April, 64 on 11 June. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 9 April, three on 14 May, four on 11 June.

At Ashleworth Ham 30 on 3 April, 18 on 8 April, two on 14 April, but no sign of nesting with low water levels. At Coombe Hill one on a nest in south scrape on 27 May. At Horsbere four on 18 May.

#### Waders

Among breeding waders, several pairs of Oystercatchers nested; no Avocets attempts this year; Little Ringed Plovers nested at Ripple but did not appear to be nesting in the Gloucestershire sector, until they surprised everyone in July; Lapwings attempted to nest at several sites, but not many outside reserves. No suggestion of breeding Snipe. The Curlew survey recorded about the same number of breeding attempts as in 2016 (about 30 pairs) but few were successful, and many nests were predated. Some Redshanks nested successfully, but numbers were low, and they were absent from several traditional sites.

Northward spring wader passage was nothing like as spectacular in Gloucestershire in 2017 as it had been in 2016 (perhaps because of the dry conditions?), but there was a good variety of migrant waders in the gravel pits along the Severn and the Avon.

As usual, the first returning wader migrants appeared from mid-June, mainly Lapwings and Green Sandpipers, plus some Little Ringed Plovers, Snipe and even Black-tailed Godwits, Greenshanks and Wood Sandpipers.

Oystercatcher: Worcestershire: Breeding attempts at Ripple and probably Bredon's Hardwick. Other records: at Upton Ham two flew over on 5 June; at Queenhill Rough one in flight, probably from Ripple, on 5 June. At Ripple three pairs attempted to nest on the island in the southern lake: six on 9 April, six (one sitting) on 29 April, brood of two hatched chicks from 17 May to 3 June, one fledged chick on 10 June; six birds on 11 June, including one chick of a second brood (which did not fledge). At Bredon's Hardwick Pits one on 3 April, two on 14 May and 2 June, four on 11 June, two on 12 June, one on 23 June. At Avon Meadows two on 12 June.

Gloucestershire: at Coombe Hill a pair raised two chicks, and at Mythe Hook a pair appeared to be nesting. At Mythe Hook a territorial pair on a farm pond on 18 April – a new site. At Severn Ham, two flying down the Severn on 20 April, two near Lower Lode on 28 May, one flying over on 19 June. At Ashleworth Ham several records but no sign of breeding: heard on 3 April, two on 5 and 8 April, a pair on 14 and 19 April, one on 2 May, one on 5 and 13 June. At Coombe Hill, where a pair had been present from late February, a pair throughout April, a singleton on 4 May, two on 11 May, pair incubating from 13 May to 9 June; two adults with two chicks from 10 to 30 June. At Elmore four on 19 April. At Walmore only singles seen on 17 April and on 3 and 18 May. At Upham Meadow a pair on 1 and 4 April, but no later records.

Avocet: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) one on 27 April.

At Ashleworth two flew through on 15 April. At Coombe Hill one on 1 April; two on 21 and 22 May.

Little Ringed Plover: Worcestershire: At Ripple three on 2 April, four on 9 April, six on 29 April, four on 11 June; two pairs attempted to nest on the island in the southern lake, but were not successful. At Longdon Marsh three quite noisy birds, apparently preparing to breed (mating seen on 4 April) on Worcs WT reserve on 4 and 8 April; not clear whether they actually attempted to nest later on. At Ripple two pairs attempted to nest but were not successful.

In recent years there have been few records of breeding attempts in the Gloucestershire sector of the Severn Vales in recent years - none at Coombe Hill, but successful breeding in the early years after the creation of Horsbere. No sign of nesting this year between April and June, but July held a surprise. Many records of birds presumed to be moving through on spring migration. At Ashleworth two on 17 April, one on 22 and 26 April, a pair on 2 May, one heard on 6 May, one on 16 May, one in the evening of 17 June. At Coombe Hill where the first passage birds had been recorded on 18 March, this species was present throughout the period but not thought to be nesting, though this proved to be incorrect in early July, when a late brood (no doubt from a replacement clutch) hatched: one to three on many dates in April, with five on 14 April, mating seen on 16 and 20 April, one (quite vocal) on 29 April; two displaying on south scrape on 4 May, up to three throughout May and until mid-June; larger numbers in the last week of June suggested the beginning of post-breeding dispersal arrival: four on 28 June, seven on 29 June; five on 30 June. At Walmore, where they are unusual, one on 13 May.

Ringed Plover: Worcestershire: At Holt four on 13 May. At Clifton Pits two on 6 May, singles on 14 and 29 May and 4 June. At Ripple one on 22 April, one over, calling, on 6 May; two on 13 May, one on 16, 17 May.

Rather few records in Gloucestershire: At Coombe Hill one from 23 to 25 April; 12 dropped in on 12 May with Dunlin; singletons on 13 and 17 May; one on 28 June, an unusual date.

Grey Plover: Worcestershire: At Clifton one in summer plumage on 1 May.

Lapwing: Breeding noted along the Severn in Worcestershire at Longdon Marsh, Ripple, and in Gloucestershire probably at Lower Lode, at Ashleworth, Coombe Hill, perhaps at Staunton, on Leigh Meadows on arable, along the Leadon on arable at Murrells End; along the Avon possibly at Bredon's Hardwick and at Mitton.

Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh seven on Worcs WT reserve on 4 April, including two sitting females. At Ripple at least eight pairs attempted to nest on the island in the south lake, but only one newly-hatched chick was seen; 14 on 9 April, 12 on 11 June, one chick (which did not survive) seen. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits four on 3 April, two males on sheep-grazed fields on 15 May, 2 and 12 June.

At Mythe Hook one on 8 May. At Brockeridge Common three on dried up pools on 20 June. At Lower Lode two in aerial display on 20 and 25 April. At Staunton six in active display on 1 April. At Chaceley none over arable round Rye Croft Farm on 10 April. At Ashleworth Ham four displaying on 3 April, up to eight until 19 April but no sign of display or nesting; but a pair possibly with a nest on 29 April, a male chasing crow on 6 May; three adults on 2 May, two mating on 19 May; a pair with four chicks on 27 May, but not seen again until after this date; a single adult on 5 June; two adults on 13 and 17 June. At Murrells End along the Leadon chicks reported from a cornfield by a farmer in the last week of April. At Coombe Hill none nested this year on the barley field south of the canal, (though they have nested there regularly for the last few years), nor on the arable fields towards The Leigh (where they have

nested in previous years); on the scrapes in the GWT reserve, it seemed to be a late year: up to ten adults present, though little aerial display was noted, in the first two weeks of April, but two nests were being incubated from 15 April, three nests in the last ten day of April; four nests with sitting birds on 13 May, first chicks (brood of two) not seen until 15 May; four nesting pairs (three with chicks, one still incubating) on 27 May; still up to ten adults apparently breeding in the first half of June; three broods (of four, three and three) on 4 June; at least three broods still present on 10 and 17 June; six chicks on 19 June, two broods on 20 June, three chicks on 28 June. At Leigh Meadows eight displaying over maize stubble on 17 April, appeared on 3 May to have lost any nests to maize planting. On Avon Meadows near Twynning on arable (where they nested last year) none found on 1 April. At Mitton two on 2 June, six adults with at least three broods of young, some almost fledged, on 12 June.

Returning migrants/ post-breeding dispersal: in Worcestershire: along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick 18 on 23 June. In Gloucestershire 22 migrants on 17 June, 42 on mowed meadows on 18 June, 84 on 26 June.

Sanderling: At Clifton one on 29 May. At Ripple one on 16 and 17 May.

Little Stint: Worcestershire: At Holt one on 13 May. At Grimley one on 12 and 13 May. At Ripple one on 19 May. At John Bennett NR one on 18 May.

At Coombe Hill one with Dunlin on 12 May.

Dunlin: Worcestershire: At Holt one on 13 May. At Clifton one on 1 and 6 May, two on 17 May. At Ripple seven on 30 April, four on 1 May, one on 7 and 13 May; one on 3 June. At Longdon Marsh one, no doubt a migrant heading north, on 4 April.

At Coombe Hill one on 25 April, ten dropped in with Ringed Plovers on 12 May; six in summer plumage on 13 May.

Ruff: Worcestershire: At Holt one on 12 and 25 April, two males from 29 April to 8 May, one until 13 May. At Grimley (Camp Lane) a female on 13 and 14 April; two from 15 to 18 April, three on 5 May, a male from 6 to 11 May.

Jack Snipe: At Ryall pits a very late record of one on 6 May.

Snipe: No indication whatsoever of breeding; no drumming males recorded (last one was about 2003). Departing birds left early this year, with just two May records.

Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits one on 6 May.

At Ashleworth Ham one on 1 April, three on 5 April, two on 8 April. At Coombe Hill two on 19 April; then a late record of one on 21 May. At Minsterworth Ham four on 5 April, two on 15 April. A singleton at Coombe Hill on 28 June may have been a returning migrant.

Black-tailed Godwit: After the good numbers (nearly a hundred) recorded in the second half of March, numbers in Gloucestershire decreased sharply in early April, but Worcestershire had another sizeable group at Grimley later in the month, and other records into May, and even some late June records, which must have been returning migrants.

Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) 49 in the morning of 20 April, but only one that evening; (also at Upton Warren two on 21 April and five on 22 April); four off to NNE on 3 May, one from 4 to 7 May, then at Holt on 8 and 9 May. At Ripple one on 2 April. At Lower Moor 12 on 25 April. At John Bennett 24 flew over to southeast on 21 May. Then some late June records, probably of

returning migrants: At Lower Moor seven on 28 June, and at Clifton three on 29 June.

At Ashleworth Ham 17 on 1 April, none left on 3 April. At Coombe Hill one on 3 April, none on 4 April.

Bar-tailed Godwit: Worcestershire: At Grimley one from 1 to 5 May. At Ripple one on 30 April, two on 1 May.

Whimbrel: As usual a flush of northward migrants moving upriver from the estuary in the last ten days of April and the first ten days of May.

Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) one flew off high to the north when disturbed on 14 April; one moved through on 1 May, two on 7 May, one on 8 May. At Clifton one on 6 May. At Ripple one on the evening of 17 April, four on 27 April, three on 29 April, two on 30 April, two on 1 May. At Lower Moor one on 4 May.

At Mythe Hook one over the Severn on 8 May. Along the Severn above Haw Bridge, four being chased off by a breeding Curlew on 6 May. At Coombe Hill one on 16 April. Much larger numbers at Walmore which is nearer the estuary: 24 on 26 April, 27 on 3 May, three on 13 May.

Curlew: As in 2015 and 2016, a complete survey of breeding Curlews was attempted in hay meadows along the Severn and Avon, following the workshop on Curlews held at Slimbridge in February 2017 (for details see the "Southern Curlews" website at [www.curlewcall.org](http://www.curlewcall.org)). Much more attention was paid this year to the habitat in which these Curlews breed, to the vegetation of the hay meadows, and to land management on the nesting fields (in close cooperation with farmers and land-owners). About 30 pairs attempted to nest (a similar figure to 2016), but many were predated, and some lost their nests to agricultural activity. Birds which had lost or abandoned their nests often gathered in pre-dispersal flocks in June. A more detailed account of the 2017 survey will in due course be published on the Southern Curlew website. Some coverage was also achieved of the small remaining populations of breeding Curlews in the Forest of Dean and on higher ground between the Severn and Avon in mid and north Worcestershire; both these areas need greater attention in 2018.

Worcestershire: At Powick Meadows none on 23 May. At Fish Meadow, Upton, none on 5 June. At Upton Ham two pairs attempted to nest but were probably unsuccessful; one chasing crows on 11 May, five on 5 June, at least three on 16 June, one on 23 June. At Ryall Pits two over on 6 May. At Queenhill Rough, probably did not attempt to breed this year: none on 8 April, 11 May or 5 June. At Longdon Marsh a pair on 8 April, bubbling heard on 11 May, but none on 16 June. At Uckinghall Meadows none on 8 or 23 May. On Avon Meadows (Fleet Lane area) four birds (and perhaps three pairs) on 1 April; six birds (at least three, maybe five, pairs) on 3 April; at least four birds on 8 June, one pair on 23 June. At Bredon's Hardwick East two on 9 April, an agitated pair behaving as though they had chicks on 15 May, and 2, 12 and 23 June; at Bredon's Hardwick there was also a flock of six, presumably failed breeders, on 2 June, at least 15 non-breeders, on 12 June and three on 23 June.

Gloucestershire: At Mythe Hook a territorial pair on 18 April, none on 18 May or 15 June. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, where two pairs had been recorded in March, these two pairs were present throughout April, and one of them mating on 12 April; two pairs present during the whole of May, and into June when breeding activity was much less intense and they were thought to have failed; the last record was of three birds on 19 June. At Forthampton none on 15 June, probably didn't breed this year. At Chaceley Stock one on 10 April. North of Haw Bridge a pair on 6 April, at least three on 6 May, three on 18 June. At Ashleworth Ham the colour-ringed male which has been recorded here since 2011 was observed on several occasions in the course of the spring: birds roosting round the scape very early in the morning, then later bubbling on the Hasfield side on

2 April, and two (possibly three) pairs between the Ashleworth scrape and Hasfield Ham on many dates in April; two or three birds in early May, then two or three very anxious birds, behaving as though they had lost their nest, on 9 May; two nests found (one already predated) on 10 May, second nest had been predated by 19 May; some calling on 25 May; unringed pair on 3 June, single on 5 June, four non-breeders on 13 June, two on 17 June, last one heard on 26 June.

At Coombe Hill at least two, perhaps three, pairs on hay meadows during April; the roost on the GWT scrape was used at dusk by 12 birds on 4 April, four on 12 April, five 20 April. One pair each appeared to be nesting on the Southern Meadows and just north of the GWT reserve on 4 and 13 May; one nest appeared to be destroyed by hay cutting on 27 May, another on 16 June; flock of ten, clearly failed breeders, on 17 June; nine on 18 June, seven preening on 19 June; two on 27 June; three on 30 June. At Cobney Meadows at least one pair and a nest with a full clutch of four eggs on 19 April, nest predated by 3 May, none left on 18 June. At Leigh Meadows one pair on 17 April. At Minsterworth Ham one calling in flight but no bubbling on 5 April; two on 24 June were thought to be failed breeders returning to the coast. At Upham Meadow 12+ (seven pairs), including a different colour-ringed bird on 1 April, at least six (including the colour-ringed bird) on 5 April, at least nine on 22 April; probably six pairs, one nest with eggs found on 8 May; maybe six pairs, some behaving as though they had young, on 15 June. On Avon Meadows (Gloucestershire bank) none on 1 April.

Redshank: Mixed fortunes for breeding birds this year. In Worcestershire three pairs appeared to be successful at Upton Ham, several tried at Ripple, but none were successful, and only one pair was successful along the Avon. In Gloucestershire, two pairs were successful at Coombe Hill (even one here has been unusual of late), but as in 2016 there were no records from the long-standing site at Upham Meadow.

Worcestershire: At Upton Ham, a noisy pair apparently with chicks on 5 June; three pairs apparently with chicks on 16 June, still one chipping adult on 23 June. At Ripple 18 on 2 and 9 April, 12 on 29 April (two sitting on nests on the island); trilling heard from across the river at Queenhill Rough on 11 May; ten on 11 June, eight on 30 June; five to six pairs nested on the island in the south lake, but none were successful. Along the Avon, the only nesting pairs found were at John Bennett reserve, where two pairs attempted to breed, one of which raised a single juvenile.

At Ashleworth Ham trilling heard and birds seen on several dates from 3 to 17 April, but no later records, so clearly did not nest. At Coombe Hill two pairs nested, one somewhat earlier than the other: the first time for many years that there have been two pairs here. Much trilling heard and up to three birds seen throughout April, two mating on 23 April; one trilling on 4 May, then seen returning to nest on an island on 4 and 13 May; chicks from this nest first seen on 22 May, four chicks seen on 24 May, at least three on 27 May, pair with one large chick on 9 June, an adult with one large chick nearly flying on 23 June. Second pair with tiny young on 9 and 10 June, adult with at least three chicks on 26 June. At Upham Meadow none on 8 May or 15 June.

Greenshank: Worcestershire: At Holt one on 18 April. At Grimley (Camp Lane) one on 18 April, two departed to the north on the evening of 6 May, one on 9 and 10 May. At Clifton two on 6 May. At Ripple one on 30 April. Possibly returning migrants: at Lower Moor two on 28 June; at John Bennett NR one on 28 June.

Green Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Ripple two on 2 April.

At Ashleworth one on 5 April; at Leigh Meadows one along Chelt on 17 April. First returning bird at Ashleworth on 17 June. At Coombe Hill two on 27 June.

Wood Sandpiper: At Holt one on 5 and 6 May. At Grimley one from 6 to 8 May, then one on 16 June, and one on 27 and 28 June, the later perhaps returning migrants. At Clifton one on 6 May. At Lower Moor one on 3 May.

Common Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Ripple four on 14 April, six on 22 April, eight on 29 April, six on 7 May. Then one returning bird on 30 June.

Along the Severn above Haw Bridge two on 6 May. At Coombe Hill two on 23, one on 24 and 28 April. At Upham Meadow one along the Avon on 8 May.

Turnstone: At Clifton one on 17 May.

#### Gulls and Terns

Little Gull: Worcestershire: At Grimley two first summer birds from 3 to 10 June. At Lower Moor one flew through in mid-afternoon on 9 April; a first summer bird on 15 and 16 June.

Black-headed Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 9 April, 11 June.

Common Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple nine on 22 April.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple nine on 9 April, seven on 11 June. At Bredon's Hardwick 13 on 9 April, 111 on 14 May.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, two on the ground on 3 April, two flew over on 18 April; one colour-ringed bird, seen here in previous years, on 19 June. At Ashleworth 100 on recently cut hayfield on 26 June. At Coombe Hill 25 following hay-making tractor on 27 May.

Herring Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple 16 on 9 April, three on 11 June. At Bredon's Hardwick 73 on 14 May.

Yellow-legged Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple a second summer bird on 1 May, a first summer bird on 10 June.

Great Black-backed Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple two on 9 April.

Common Tern: Worcestershire: At Grimley three on 28 May. At Ripple two on 30 April, two on 1 May, one on 6 May, five on 29 May.

At Coombe Hill one on 24 May.

Arctic Tern: Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 30 April, two through on 6 May.

Sandwich Tern: Worcestershire: Probably the same bird seen on 9 April in mid-afternoon at Lower Moor and at Avon Meadows Nature Reserve, Pershore, where one flew off high to north east at 18h00.

Little Tern: At Ripple one on 1 May.

Black Tern: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) two on 30 April, up to ten on 1 May, moving through, morning only, one on 7 May. At Ripple 18 on 30 April.

#### Cuckoo

Worcestershire: At Upton Ham one on 11 May. At Queenhill Rough one on 5 June. At Ripple one on 29 April and 1 May; three (one hepatic female) on 29 May, a male on 3 June.

Along the Severn near The Mythe four singing on 31 May. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one on many dates from 10 May to 12 June. At Forthampton one singing on 15 June. At Ashleworth one on 18 April, then on many dates in May and until 17 June. At Coombe Hill the first one singing on 23 April, then ones and twos recorded throughout May and until 27 June, when one was still singing. At

Cobney Meadows one singing on 19 April. At Port Ham one on 21 April. At Walmore one on 13 May. At Netheridge Farm two singing on 19 May. At Twynning one singing on 21 April, at Puckrup near Twynning one singing on 16 May, two flying together on 18 May.

#### Owls

Barn Owl: At Netheridge Farm one with prey on 19 May.

Little Owl: Remarkably few records of this once widespread species. Near Town Street, Chaceley, two calling on 10 April.

Short-eared Owl: At The Mythe, Tewkesbury, one flew downriver on 3 May.

#### Swift

Worcestershire: At Ripple four on 1 May.

Over Gloucester one on 26 April. At Mythe Hook one on 8 May. Over Tewkesbury one on 15 May, several hawking insects on 2 June, at least five on 8 June, six hawking insects on 28 June. At Coombe Hill four on 15 May.

#### Kingfisher

Worcestershire: At Upton Ham one along Severn on 11 May.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one each on the Severn and the Avon on 7 April, one on 28 May. At Coombe Hill singles on 24 April and 18 June. At Leigh Meadows one along the Chelt on 17 April. At Port Ham one on 15 April.

#### Woodpeckers

Green Woodpecker: At Over along the Leadon a nest with young on 12 June.

Great Spotted Woodpecker: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one drumming on 3 May. At Coombe Hill one drumming on 29 April. At Sandhurst two nests with young on 21 May.

#### Passerines

Skylark: Worcestershire: At Powick Meadows several singing on 23 May. At Upton Ham 3-4 singing on 23 June. At Longdon Marsh several singing on 11 May.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, up to three birds singing from early April until late June. Along the Severn above Haw Bridge several singing on 6 May. At Ashleworth three singing, and nest with three eggs found, on 2 May. At Coombe Hill several singing in April and May. At Staunton several singing on 1 April. At Leigh Meadows, several singing on 17 April. At Upham Meadow several singing on 8 May and 24 June.

Sand Martin: Worcestershire: At Powick Meadows, small colony with at least ten birds in the banks of Teme on 23 May. At Ripple at least 500 on 14 April.

Gloucestershire: Passage noted at Coombe Hill: three on 3 April, small passage on 14 April, 25+ on 24 April. The traditional colonies at Forthampton (10 on 15 June) and Malthouse Farm above Haw Bridge (singleton on 6 April, about ten on 6 May, at least five on 18 June) were both occupied this year; the colony south of Haw Bridge was not occupied because the bank has become overgrown with willows. About 25 birds round nest holes in the Severn Bank at Minsterworth Ham. None found nesting in drains on the Mill Avon at Tewkesbury this year: records at Severn Ham were perhaps of birds from the Forthampton colony: one on 7 and 20 April, three on 25 April, two on 3 and 10 May, one on 24 May, one on 8 June. Swallow: Worcestershire: At Queenhill Rough one along Severn on 8 April.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, singles in April and May; several hawking insects on 2 June. At Ashleworth three on 5 April. At Coombe Hill one on 5 April, small passage on 14 April, five on 29

April; ten on 13 May. Between Minsterworth and Over about 100 on evening of 6 May. At Mitton five on 12 June.

House Martin: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, 20 on 24 May; several hawking insects on 2 June, 20 on 8 June. At Ashleworth six on 17 June. At Coombe Hill one on 14 and 15 April; 20 hawking insects on 29 April. At Mitton two on 12 June.

Meadow Pipit: At Coombe Hill five on 15 and 22 April.

Yellow Wagtail: No evidence anywhere of breeding in hay meadows, though some bred around gravel pits or in arable crops.

Worcestershire: At Grimley a "Channel" Wagtail (Blue-headed x Yellow) on 8 May. At Clifton six on 6 May. At Ryall Pits two on 6 May, a pair on 3 June. At Ripple, where two or three pairs produced young, one on 9 April, three on 1 May, two on 6 May, five on 17 May, two pairs on 29 May, two on 3 June.

Gloucestershire: At Coombe Hill one on 14 April, two on 15 April, a male on 18 April, one over on 22 April, one on 11 May. Just south of Gloucester near Over (a site where they have been recorded on arable crops in previous years) two pairs on territory on 24 June. At Elmore Back one in a maize field on 27 June. At Upham Meadow one flew over on 8 May.

Grey Wagtail: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one on 18 April.

White/Pied Wagtail: Worcestershire: At Ripple one White on 9 April.

At Coombe Hill records of White Wagtails as follows: three on 1 April, one on 2 April, two on 3 April, one on 5 April, two on 6 April; two Pied on 18 April, one on 29 April.

Wren: At Ashleworth two adults caught on 2 May, one a female on eggs; two caught on 19, 25 May; two caught on 3 June; five juveniles caught on 13 June, four (at least one juvenile) caught on 26 June.

Duncock: At Ashleworth one adult caught on 2 May, three caught on 18 May, one on 25 May; one retrap on 3 June, six caught including several juveniles on 13 June, seven caught (several juveniles) on 26 June.

Robin: At Ashleworth the first juvenile of the year caught on 25 May, two juveniles caught on 3 and 13 June; three caught (some juveniles) on 26 June.

Nightingale: Worcestershire: at Ripple one heard from across river at Queenhill Rough on 11 May, up to three recorded singing from a thicket by the Lake at this time.

At Brockridge, north of Twyning, one singing on 30 April.

Redstart: As usual many birds found nesting in holes in trees (usually willow pollards) in the Severn Vale.

Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh one singing on 11 May and 16 June. At Ripple one singing on 6 May; just south of Ripple one singing on 8 May.

Gloucestershire: Above Haw Bridge one singing in a willow on 6 April, five singing on 10 April, three on 6 May, alarm calls on 18 June. At Ashleworth one on 8 April, one singing from 11 to 18 April, a pair on 22 April, three singing on 28 April and 2 May; some song, female with brood patch caught on 9 May; two pairs and song on 25 May; two or three singing on 3 June; some song early, three adults caught on 13 June little or no song on 26 June, when three moulting adults were caught, indicating that they had finished breeding. At Coombe Hill one singing on 22 April, two singing on 29 April. At Cobney Meadows two singing on 19 April, one on 3 May, two singing on 27 May, one on 18 June. At Leigh Meadows one singing on 17 April. At Minsterworth Ham three on 15 April, two males on 24 June.

Stonechat: At Coombe Hill one male on 26 June.

Whinchat: Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 29 and 30 April. At Ripple two on 1 May. At Avon Meadows, Pershore, one on 30 April.

At Hasfield Ham two males fly-catching on 22 April. At Coombe Hill one on 16 and 17 April. At Netheridge Farm two on 7 May. At Walmore one on 13 May.

Wheatear: At Coombe Hill a female on 18 April, a male on 20 April. At Elmore Back four on 19 April. At Minsterworth Ham two on 15 April.

Blackbird: At Ashleworth one retrap on 19 May, two adults retrapped on 25 May; two caught on 13 June; six caught on 26 June.

Song Thrush: At Ashleworth one caught on 13 June.

Cetti's Warbler: At Hartpury Orchard Centre one singing on 5 May. On Alney Island two singing at midday on 13 April. At Port Ham one on 5 May.

Grasshopper Warbler: A more unusual species of warbler, often singing in early morning or late evening, producing a good number of records of singing birds: it is not at all clear whether these refer to migrants moving through on their way north (as is likely with late April or early May records) or to birds which sing for a short time until they have attracted a mate, and then proceed quietly with nesting.

Worcestershire: In Worcester one singing at Battenhall on 13 April, but not on 14 April; one singing at Chapter Meadows on 25 May. At Kempsey three singing on 25 June, one on 27 June. At Castlemorton Common two singing on 13 April. At Lower Moor one singing on 26 May.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one singing on 3 and 18 May, but not later. At Ashleworth none singing early in the morning on 2, 9 or 10 May, but a male in breeding condition caught on 19 May; one on 21 May; no song, but the male from 19 May was retrapped on 25 May, 13 and 26 June, and breeding was confirmed in July. At Coombe Hill one singing north of the GWT reserve on 29 April; one singing at the west end of reserve from 4 May to 17 June, but not singing there on 27 June; two singing near canal from 11 June until the end of the month.

Sedge Warbler: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham one singing on 5 and 16 June. At Queenhill Rough two singing on 11 May.

At Mythe Hook at least six on 18 April, two singing on 8 May, six singing on 18 May. At Breakingstone Meadow, Tewkesbury, three singing on 18 May. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, two singing well on 12 April, at least four singing on 18 and 20 April, six singing on 25 April; at least seven singing on many dates in May; rather fewer in June. Along the Severn above Haw Bridge two singing on 6 May. At Ashleworth one singing timidly on 14 April, many singing, nine caught, on 2 May; many singing, at least eleven caught, on 9 May, ten caught (nine retraps, mainly from earlier in 2017, a few from 2016) on 25 May; some singing, six adults caught (five retraps mainly from this year) on 3 June; some song, six adults caught, on 13 June; little song but eight (six adults and the first two juveniles of the year) caught on 26 June. At Coombe Hill five singing along the canal on 11 April, seven on 13 April, at least 15 singing on 29 April; still singing throughout May and June. At Cobney Meadows several singing on 3 May, two singing on 18 June. At Leigh Meadows one singing on 17 April. At Alney Island two on 22 April. At Port Ham one on 5 May. At Netheridge Farm five on 7 May. At Upham Meadow several singing on 8 May, one singing on 15 and 24 June.

Reed Warbler: Not a common breeder in Gloucestershire, where the lack of reed-beds, its favourite habitat, limits breeding attempts. The few birds occurring there are generally in old osier beds which once held Marsh Warblers.

Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits many singing in thick vegetation on 23 June. At Longdon Marsh one singing on Worcs WT reserve on 16 June.

At Ashleworth none singing in May; an adult caught on 19 May, the only one caught all summer; just one singing on 26 June. At Coombe Hill one singing from 13 to 19 May, four singing from 21 to 27 May; one singing on 10 and 11 June, two on 18 June, two singing on 27 June. At Hartpury Orchard Centre several singing on 5 May. At Port Ham one on 14 April. At Netheridge Farm one newly arrived on 17 April, four on 7 May. At Upham Meadow two singing along the Avon on 8 May and 24 June.



Lesser Whitethroat: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh song on 11 May.

At Mythe Hook one singing on 8 May Along the Severn north of Haw Bridge one singing on 6 May. At Ashleworth one singing on 11 April, brief burst of song on 14 April, one singing on evening of 19 April; some singing, two caught, on 2 May; some song on 9 and 10 May; one adult caught on 13 June; no song, but one juvenile caught on 26 June. At Coombe Hill one singing on 11 April, one briefly on 15 April, two on 22 and 29 April, one singing on 4 May; one heard on 18 June, some song on 27 June. At Port Ham two on 5 May. At Netheridge Farm one on 7 and 19 May. At Upham Meadow one singing on 8 May.

Whitethroat: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham one singing on 16 June. At Longdon Marsh song on 11 May, two singing on 16 June. At Uckinghall one singing on 8 and 23 May.

At Mythe Hook one singing on 18 April and 18 May. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one singing on 24 May, 2 and 12 June. Along the Severn north of Haw Bridge two singing on 6 May, three on 18 June. At Ashleworth several singing, four caught (one a re-trap from last year) on 2 May; several singing on 9 May, when one caught was in egg; four caught on 19 May, four on 25 May; some song, four adult retraps, on 3 June; ten caught including three juveniles, on 13 June; no song but 15 caught (mainly juveniles) on 26 June. At Coombe Hill one singing on 13 and 15 April, two on 22 April, at least 15 on 29 April; continuing to sing throughout 1 May, with six on 11 May, but rather fewer on 10 June, three singing on 17 June, still several singing on 27 June. At Cobney Meadows one singing on 19 April, 3 May and 18 June. At Leigh Meadows one singing on 17 April. At Netheridge Farm one newly arrived on 17 April, 17 on 7 May.

Garden Warbler: No records at all in the Gloucestershire sector of the Vales, where this species remains extremely unusual.

Blackcap: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham three singing on 16 June. At Queenhill Rough one singing on 11 May. At Longdon Marsh song on 11 May.

At Mythe Hook at least five singing on 18 April, one on 18 May. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, up to three singing in trees and bushes around the edges of the Ham from April to June. At Chaceley one singing on 10 April and 6 May. At Ashleworth Ham one on 8 April, three singing on 14 April, some song on 9, 10 May; one adult caught on 3 June, five juveniles caught on 13 June, two juveniles caught on 26 June. At Coombe Hill one or two singing on 22 April, at least ten singing on 29 April, six on 11 May, seven on 15 May, song on 27 May, two singing on 10 June. At Cobney Meadows two singing on 19 April.

Wood Warbler: At The Mythe Nature Reserve, one singing on 3 May – a rare species in the Vales.

Chiffchaff: Worcestershire: At Queenhill Rough song on 11 May. At Longdon Marsh one on 8 April, song on 11 May.

At Mythe Hook three or four singing on 18 April. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, ones and twos singing throughout April and May. At Chaceley two singing on 10 April. At Ashleworth Ham ones and twos singing on April and early May; two caught on 19 May; four adults caught (three retraps) on 3 June, five caught (including some juveniles) on 13 June, six caught (mainly juveniles) on 26 June. At Coombe Hill seven on 3 April, one singing on 22 April, several on 13 and 27 May, 10 June, some song on 27 June. At Cobney Meadows two singing on 19 April, three singing on 29 April. At Leigh Meadows two singing on 17 April.

Siberian Chiffchaff: One recorded at Port Ham in February and March, presumably the same bird still present on 5 and 15 April, singing on the latter date.

Willow Warbler: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh one on 8 April, song on 11 May. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits one singing on 3 April.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one singing on 12 April. At Chaceley one singing on 10 April. At Ashleworth two singing on 14 April; several singing, one caught, on 2 May, some song on 9 May, four caught on 19 May, two retraps on 25 May, four adults caught on 13

June, several caught, mainly moulting adults but one juvenile, on 26 June. At Coombe Hill three on 1 April, two singing on 3 and 11 April, three or four singing on 15 April, five singing on 29 April; several singing on 4, 13, 27 May, 10 June, some song on 27 June. At Alney Island one singing on 13 April. At Netheridge Farm one newly arrived on 17 April.

Spotted Flycatcher: At Coombe Hill one along the canal on 11 June, two on 26 June.

Long-tailed Tit: At Ashleworth nine caught on 25 May, five (mainly juveniles) caught on 26 June. At Coombe Hill 20 on 17 June.

Blue Tit: At Ashleworth two caught on 2 May, one caught on 19 May; six (three juveniles) caught on 25 May; three juveniles caught on 3 June, ten (mainly juveniles) caught on 13 June, only one juvenile caught on 26 June.

Great Tit: At Ashleworth one caught on 2 May, four caught on 19 May, two retraps on 25 May; eight (mainly juveniles) caught on 3 June; five (some juveniles) caught on 13 June; about five (including some juveniles) caught on 26 June.

Coal Tit: At Ashleworth a juvenile caught on 3 June, most unusual here, probably coming down from higher ground.

Nuthatch: At Ashleworth two on 8 April, 30 May and 17 June.

Treecreeper: At Ashleworth two on 30 May, one caught on 26 June. At Coombe Hill four on 19 May.

Great Grey Shrike: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh one on 4 April, no doubt the bird seen previously in mid-March.

Jay: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one carrying food on 2 June.

Jackdaw: At Coombe Hill five on barley field, 25 round scrapes on 29 April.

Rook: At Upham Meadow ten on cut swathes on 24 June.

Carrion Crow: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham 12 on 16 June. At Longdon Marsh 35 on 8 April.

At Mythe Hook at least 55 on 18 April. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, at least 12 on 3 and 6 April; nest in willows along Severn on 6 April; 26 on grass on 12 April, at least 15 on 18 and 20 April, at least ten on 25 April. At Coombe Hill at least 40 on barley field on 29 April, 46 gleaning on 4 May. At Leigh Meadows 20 on grass on 17 April.

Raven: At Severn Ham, two on 12 June. Over Apperley two on 6 April may well have been nesting in the area, one on 18 June. At Ashleworth one on 5 June. At Norton Hill one calling on 10 May, maybe nesting? At Coombe Hill one in moult on 27 June.

Starling: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham 20 on 5 June.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, 15 on wires on 20 April, 25 on 25 April, 20 on 8 June. At Mitton 50 on 12 June.

Waxwing: After many records in January and February, there were 11 in central Gloucester on 4 and 5 April.

Chaffinch: At Ashleworth three caught on 3 June.

Greenfinch: At Ashleworth where the species is rarely caught, one adult caught on 26 June.

Goldfinch: At Ashleworth two caught on 19 May, one caught on 25 May, one on 3 June.

Linnet: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, five on dock plants in 18 May. Along the Severn north of Haw Bridge five on 6 May. At Ashleworth four adults caught on 19 May, two caught on 3 June; three (two juveniles) caught on 13 June. At Coombe Hill two gathering food on 27 May. On Avon Meadows 20+ on maize stubble on 1 April.

Bullfinch: At Ashleworth one caught on 25 May, one caught on 3 and 26 June. At Coombe Hill a pair with three young on 18 June.

Yellowhammer: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh song on 11 May, one singing on 16 June.

At Chaceley one on 10 April. At Staunton two or three on 1 April. At Coombe Hill one on 22 April, two singing on 4 May.

Reed Bunting: This species may well have benefitted from late hay cutting this year, perhaps producing second broods before hay was cut.

Worcestershire: At Powick Meadows several singing on 23 May. At Ryall Pits several singing in thick vegetation on 23 June. At Upton Ham song on 11 May, many singing on 5 June, three singing on 16 June, still some song on 23 June. At Queenhill Rough song on 11 May. At Longdon Marsh one singing on 16 June.

At Mythe Hook at least four singing on 18 April, three singing on 8 May, two on 18 May and 15 June. At Breakingstone Meadow, Tewkesbury, one singing on 18 May. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, two on 3 April, one on 6 April, at least three on 12 April (one carrying nesting material); up to four singing on many dates in late April, and throughout May and June, still several singing from tall vegetation in the middle of the Ham on 28 June. Along the Severn north of Haw Bridge two singing on 6 May. At Ashleworth Ham five on 3 April; several singing, two caught (one a re-trap of a bird first ringed near Newent last winter) on 2 May; some song, one caught on 9 May; five adults caught on 19 May; only one caught on 3 June; three (one juvenile) caught on 13 June; still plenty of song (probably birds with second broods?) on 26 June when four juveniles were caught; nest with four eggs found in an uncut hay meadow on 27 June. At Coombe Hill four (three males) on 3 April, three singing hesitantly on 15 April, one or two on 22 April; then records of good numbers (e.g. eleven on 11 May) until the end of June. At Minsterworth Ham two on 5 April. At Upham Meadow one or two on 1 April, several singing on 8 May, three on 15 June, five on 24 June.

Corn Bunting: Worcestershire: At Upton Ham no records despite regular visits in May and June.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, a male singing strongly on 20 April – welcome return; but not found on 25 April or 3 May, then one singing on 15 and 18 May, but not afterwards.

### **Recorders**

These are unconfirmed records, compiled by M. Smart from his own observations and those of Les Brown, with additional records from Gordon Avery, John Fletcher, Mervyn Greening, Andy Jayne, Rob Prudden, Graham Smith, Andy Warr, Les Waring and John Wiltshire, and the Ashleworth and Coombe Hill logbooks, with some cherries picked from the Gloster Birder and Worcester Birding websites and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust website.