

Notes on birds in the Severn and Avon Vales (the “Severn Hams”), Gloucestershire and south Worcestershire July–September 2017

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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 and the new pit north of the motorway where excavation was completed in summer 2016, 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 through it 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 on the east bank 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. Along the Avon on either side of Eckington Bridge are more hay meadows, notably Asham Meadows (a Lammas Meadow). 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 used to attract large numbers of feeding gulls (just as Gloucester LS used to do) until October 2016 from when household waste has been processed at the incinerator at Hartlebury; the lagoons there however still attract water birds. Just to the east of Bredon is Kemerton Lake (Worcs), a restored gravel pit managed as a nature reserve by the Kemerton Conservation Trust, 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 along 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 recently established Tewkesbury Nature Reserve along the River Swilgate east of Priors Park; 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 Lammas 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, established to prevent flooding in the Longlevens suburb of Gloucester, as happened in summer 2007; the area was set up in about 2010, since when the brook has overtopped only once in early 2014. 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 throughout the year, and when levels are low, has muddy edges and mud banks.

Weather

July was a month of varied weather; the first half was dry and fine in the south of the UK, with high temperatures at times; by contrast, northern Britain was unsettled with temperatures below the 1981-2010 average; later in the month these regional extremes were moderated by a smaller temperature gradient across the country. A growing influence of low pressure resulted in some heavy falls of rain in places, notably at Coverack in Cornwall on 18 July (160-170mm). Temperatures nationally were a little above average. In the third week, a brief incursion of northerly winds led to western Britain being warmer than the east. Most areas had above average rainfall. Some areas in the south of England had twice the average; southwest England had 139% of the regional average rain for July, while the Midlands had 121%. Most places had slightly below average sunshine totals; winds generally light but a deep depression on 28 July gave strong winds in southern coastal counties of

England. In the Severn Vales, there was a short heat wave for a couple of days round 6-8 July, but the second half of the month was mainly dull and damp (though a maximum temperature of 28°C was recorded on 18 July), largely unsuitable for hay making; in Gloucester 13 mm of rain fell on 21 July and 29mm on 25 July (Kingsholm flooded). July was by far the wettest month of the year so far in Gloucester, with a monthly total of 89mm.

The start of August saw a continuation of the generally westerly flow over UK which had been in place through the second half of July. It was an unsettled month, but climatically close to average across the UK; unusually it was no warmer than June, which this year had been warm; temperatures were close to average in northern Britain, but below average in the south; there were very few hot days and, as in July, some parts of the country (notably Northern Ireland from 22 to 25 August and the Western Isles) suffered from unusually heavy rain. This contrasts with 2016 when a wet June was followed by a dry July and wet August. Rainfall was variable in August; the average for England, Wales and Scotland was close to average but Northern Ireland was very wet; parts of the Midlands were quite dry, helped by relatively infrequent rain in the last ten days of the month; rainfall in the Midlands was 85% of average and in southwest England 86%. In England and Wales sunshine was 105% of average, and there were few strong winds in August. In the Severn and Avon Vales the first week of August was cool, with a series of Atlantic depressions brought in on south-westerly winds, light rain on most days with temperatures barely reaching 20°C. A ridge of high pressure brought a brighter day on 10 August, but for the next two weeks, the weather continued dull and south-westerly: there were small amounts of rain from 14 to 17 August (with top temperatures of only about 21°C on most days, but 23°C on 17 August); cooler and damper from 18 to 20 August, temperatures barely reaching 18°C; winds still south-westerly, but warmer with no rain from 21-28 August (23° and 24°C on several days); cooler and duller with some drizzle from 29-31 August. Total rainfall in Gloucester in August was 38 mm.

Across the UK in general September was an unsettled month characterised by a succession of low pressure areas crossing the country from the west, with frequent north-westerly winds bringing rain belts, interspersed with bright showery weather. This active weather reached a peak on 13 September when a deep depression, the first named storm of the winter ('Aileen'), crossed Britain, mainly affecting Wales (gusts of 74 mph at Mumbles Head near Swansea) and the northern Midlands. A quieter spell followed in the wake of Aileen as a ridge of high pressure edged in from the Atlantic, but the unsettled westerly weather returned for the last ten days of the month. Daytime temperatures rarely exceeded 20°C, and the average Central England temperature was 0.2° below average. Except for southeast England, most areas had quite a wet September with rainfall 128% of average in the Midlands and 129% in southwest England, while sunshine was only 77% of average in England and Wales. In the Vales, September began as August had ended: until 15 September the weather was dominated by westerlies with light drizzle on 3 September and every day from 5-13 September (heaviest rain on 9 September with thunderstorms), mostly grey and dull but with the odd bright period, rather cool (top temperatures barely reaching 18°C). From 16-19 September winds went northerly with the ridge of high pressure over UK and temperatures reached 19°C on 19 September, still with light rain. But westerly weather again took over from the night of 19/20 September, with some rain on 21 September and winds more southerly from 22-24 September; dry and bright, cold at night but warm by day: a grass frost in the Severn Vale on 22 September, but the temperature reached 22°C in Worcester on 24 September; fronts were held back by an easterly wind on 25 September with some drizzle; then winds went southwesterly until the end of the month, with cloudy conditions and some drizzle on most days. Total rainfall in Gloucester in September was 38 mm, almost exactly the same as in August, bringing the total rainfall for Gloucester in the first nine months of the year to only 369mm, the lowest since 2011.

Water levels and flooding: general

2017 was the third successive summer in which most water bodies (with the notable exception of Ripple Lake and the other Worcestershire gravel pits) dried out completely. In 2015 the scrapes at Coombe Hill had dried out by mid-September, in 2016 by mid to late September; this year the north scrape dried out by late July, the south scrape by early August; drying out is becoming a regular event - before these scrapes had dried out completely only in 2011, 2010 and 2003.

The increased rainfall in July 2017 and generally damp conditions did not prevent most sites in the Severn Hams from drying out. The damp conditions also meant that in many cases hay meadows were cut very late, perhaps allowing species like Reed Bunting to be more successful with second broods.

Conditions at some of the main sites

Sites along the Severn

Ripple Lake: Still plenty of water in both the northern and southern lakes throughout the period; one of the few sites with extensive open water, so that many water birds concentrated here, spreading out to prospect other sites in the neighbourhood.

Longdon Marsh: North of Marsh Lane dry throughout the period; very little water left in the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust scrapes to the south

Severn Ham, Tewkesbury: Only 50% of hay cut by 15 July, all cut by early August.

Ashleworth/Hasfield Hams: The only water remaining on the GWT reserve in early August was in the deeper pools by the main ditch. Although most hay had been cut on Hasfield Ham by early August (but not the wet Field 23), hay cutting was late on the GWT reserve; only a small swathe along the main field had been cut by 15 August; all cut by 27 August, but not yet all baled, baling completed by the end of the first week of September.

Coombe Hill: The north scrape had dried out completely by late July, and vegetation was topped in mid-September; the south scrape had dried out by mid-August; the Short Pool had no open water by the end of August, but wet mud remained, levels had risen slightly again by 16 September; the Long Pool held shallow water throughout the period. Remaining hay round scrapes cut by 19 August, though a large area was left uncut for Whinchats.

Leigh and Cobney Meadows: Wildfowling's scrape by Leigh Brook and flight pond in Cobney Meadows still held a little water in early September.

Sites along the Avon

Upham Meadow, Twynning: Only a small amount of hay cut by early July; because of the damp weather in late July and early August, large areas of hay still remained to be cut on 5 August.

Overview of bird records

The number of waders that attempted to breed over the area remained low, and breeding success was lower still; nearly all the records of breeding waders were on gravel pits or grassland sites, with very few breeding attempts recorded on arable land. At Upton Ham Redshanks were successful, Ripple Lake on the other hand had a poor year with several pairs of Oystercatcher, Little Ringed Plover, Lapwing and Redshank attempting to nest on the island in the south lake, but very few chicks produced. At Ashleworth a single pair of Lapwings produced chicks, but they did not survive. At Coombe Hill Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover (unusually) and Redshank were successful. At Leigh Meadows Lapwing probably attempted to nest on arable. Lapwing were also successful at Mitton along the Avon. In early July, a few breeding waders were still present on Severn Ham wetlands, though many had already completed breeding in June; all had left by the end of July for wintering areas on the coasts and estuaries. Another survey of Curlews throughout the Severn and Avon Vales this year found about 25-26 pairs which had attempted to nest, but a much lower production of fledged young than last year - only three fledged birds, all of them along the Avon.

From early July the usual trickle of migrant waders was recorded, on their way south from northern breeding grounds, mainly at Worcestershire gravel workings, as most of the Gloucestershire sites were dry; as usual, the most numerous were Green and Common Sandpipers, but returning Black-tailed Godwits, undoubtedly of Icelandic origin, were notable in Worcestershire in early July, there were several records of Greenshanks from late July onwards, a good sprinkling of Wood Sandpipers, and several Ruffs in September; the most unusual species perhaps was a Sanderling in early September, together with a Grey Phalarope. A Common Scoter appeared at Lower Moor on 19 September and Ospreys moved down the Severn over Worcester in August and September.

Constant Effort ringing carried on as usual at Ashleworth (for the 21st consecutive year) throughout the summer, and provided an excellent record of the progress of the breeding season. A catch of 117 birds on 7 July included 72 warblers, most of them locally bred juveniles; a catch of 93 on 22 July was slightly above the average mid-July total, with many young warblers (especially Whitethroats) in post juvenile moult, suggesting they were locally bred. Good catches of 73 birds on 1 August and 115 (in very favourable conditions of low cloud) on 7 August provided interesting information on the passage of the breeding season: by early August, many of the breeding adults had already left (a Sedge Warbler ringed in June was retrapped in Sussex in early August), though some birds of the year born in the area stayed on to complete their post juvenile moult; by 21 August, when the catch numbered 61 birds, numbers of both adult and juvenile migrants had decreased; on 27 August an unusually high catch of 145 birds included only one Sedge Warbler and 10 Whitethroats, but much larger numbers of tits, with 33 Chiffchaffs and 13 Willow Warblers associated with the tit flocks. Ringing continued in September (though not Constant Effort ringing), with a catch of 105 on 4 September (again few warblers other than Chiffchaffs, large numbers of tits and Goldfinches), just 32 in less favourable catching conditions on 7 September (with no Whitethroats, but one Blackcap, four Chiffchaffs and a Willow Warbler, plus six Reed Buntings); a catch of over 50 on 16 September was composed largely of Goldfinches with the only warblers four Chiffchaffs and two Blackcaps, but a catch of 72 on 19 September included 19 juvenile Chiffchaffs and a Willow Warbler; in a catch of 42 in poor catching conditions, on 22 September, the only warbler caught was Chiffchaff (five juveniles), together with 13 Goldfinches and 12 Reed Buntings, all juveniles.

This report includes better information on South Worcestershire, thanks to input from Rob Prudden and Andy Warr.

Swans

Mute Swan: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake the non-breeding flock reached 43 birds on 23 July, 13 August, 25 on 12 September. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits three (no cygnets) on 4 July, 12 on 10 September.

At Severn Ham the regular colour ringed pair were on the Mill Avon with six cygnets on 15 July. At Ashleworth six flew north on 19 September, four on 22 September. At Coombe Hill the colour-ringed local breeding pair were present with their eight cygnets on 2 and 14 July and 13 August; they had moved with their cygnets to Cobney Meadows on 9 September, but were back at Coombe Hill on 16 and 22 September. At Barrow Ponds a pair with five large cygnets on 29 August, not found on 16 September. At Horsbere Brook the nesting pair did not bring off any young this year: pair with a small cygnet on 29 July, the cygnet not seen later; two adults on 7 and 20 August, 15 and 18 September. At Walmore the local breeding pair still had five cygnets on 28 August and 10 September. At Upham Meadow, one with no cygnets on 14 July, unringed pair without cygnets on 5 August, three (no cygnets) on 12 September. At Avon Meadows one at Mitton on 4 and 14 July.

Geese

While increasing numbers of geese breed in the Vales and stay through the summer with their young, many Greylag and Canada

Geese go to moult at Windermere and in Scotland; the latter began to return in early August. In the dry conditions, most concentrated by day at Ripple, most roosting by night at Kemerton Lake; some birds of both species were moving down to Coombe Hill and Barrow Ponds by late August, and some were clearly roosting at Coombe Hill.

Greylag Goose: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake 136 on 22 July, 208 on 23 July, at least 250 on 5 August, 344 on 8 August; 402 on 10 September, 420 on 12 September, 700+ on 16 September; these birds were apparently roosting at Kemerton Lake where numbers peaked at 492 on 4 September. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits 150 with many broods of goslings from 4 to 14 July.

At Coombe Hill, no sign of breeding this year: just two, no goslings, on 3 July, four on 4 July; 14 came in to roost at dusk on 10 July. Birds seemed to be roosting there in August and September, as a flock of 14 were seen, coming from Coombe Hill and heading in the direction of Newent in the early morning of 7 August (but not on 27 August); 20+ on 13 August; 60 came over Coombe Hill from the north on 29 August, apparently destined for Barrow Ponds; none at Coombe Hill on 16 September but large numbers of small white feathers on Long Pool suggested they were still roosting; 120 came in to roost at dusk on 26 September. At Barrow Ponds over 50 on 29 August, only two on 16 September.

Canada Goose: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake 97 on 23 July, at least 100 on 5 August, 141 on 13 August, 170 on 12 September, 750 on 16 September; roosting at Kemerton, where the peak count on 4 September was 144. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits none on 4 July, only two on 8 July, but 30 on 14 July.

At Ashleworth just one by day on 2 August; a flock of 40 was seen coming from Coombe Hill and heading in the direction of Newent in the early morning of 7 August; about 40 arrived at Ashleworth from the Coombe Hill direction very early on 19 September; 15 came in on 22 September, apparently after roosting at Coombe Hill. At Coombe Hill eight on 29 July; a small group of five by day on 4 August; just one on Long Pool on 19 August; over 150 flew in from the north (Ripple?), about 30 landing on the Long Pool, the rest going southwest to Barrow Ponds, on 29 August; 60 on 4 September; only six in flight on 16 September; at least 40 over to south west on morning of 19 September; calling heard from Long Pool early in the morning of 25 September; 15 on 26 September. Thus, some seemed to be roosting at Coombe Hill in August and September, though others were roosting elsewhere (probably in Worcestershire). At Barrow Ponds 120 on 29 August, but only 38 on 16 September. At Upham Meadow none on 6 July, 5 August; none grazing on 12 September, but 40 flying over from the north.

Cackling Goose: At Ripple Lake one on 7 and 23 July and 8 August (same bird as last year).

Barnacle Goose: Worcestershire: At Ripple one with Canadas on 25 August and 12 September.

At Barrow Ponds one with Canadas on 29 August, probably the same bird as the one at Ripple.

Feral and Hybrid Geese: Worcestershire: At Ripple a Canada x Barnacle hybrid on 25 August; a Canada Goose hybrid with a large head and a lot of white on the nape on 12 September.

Egyptian Goose: Along the Avon above Tewkesbury, a pair on 1 and 14 July, and on 30 August.

Ducks

Shelduck: No records, even though there had been nesting attempts earlier in the summer.

Surface-feeding ducks:

Wigeon: Worcestershire: At Grimley eight on 30 September. At Ripple less than ten on many dates in the first half of September, then 15 on 17 September, 30 on 23 September, 70 by 26 September.

Gadwall: Worcestershire: At Ripple up to three in the first half of September.

Perhaps surprisingly, no Gloucestershire records

Teal: As usual the first returning birds appeared in July, considerable increase by early September.

Worcestershire: At Ripple nine on 3 September, 18 on 6 September, 18 on 17 September. At Bredon's Hardwick one on 10 September, two on 24 September.

At Ashleworth one on 9 August; two (flying with difficulty, probably birds that had summered) on 4 September; six on 9 September. At Coombe Hill one on 13 July, three on 15 July; single figures, up to seven, on the Long Pool in August; 24 on 9 September, 100 on 19 September, 50 on 25 September. At Cobney Meadows one on 9 September.

Mallard: Worcestershire: At Ripple 15 on 23 July, six on 13 August, 36 on 10 September. At Bredon's Hardwick 33 on 13 August, 134 on 10 September.

At Ashleworth up to 20 in August and September. At Coombe Hill a female with four middle-sized ducklings on 3 July, 35 on 15 July, 100 on Long Pool in July and August; 40 on 9 and 16 September; ten on 25 September. At Leigh Meadows three on 9 September. At Cobney Meadows 12 on 9 September. At Barrow Ponds five on 29 August, ten on 16 September. At Horsbere Brook 35 including some half-grown ducklings on 13 July; 46 on 29 July, 30 on 7 August, 20 (including two tiny ducklings) on 20 August, five on 18 September. At Upham Meadow seven on 12 September. At Mitton, 39 including at least four broods of ducklings on 4 July, ten with two broods on 8 July; three on 22 August.

Showeler: Worcestershire: At Ripple up to eight on many dates throughout September. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 24 September. At Coombe Hill nine on 15 August, four on Long Pool on 19 August, two on 25 September.

Diving ducks:

Pochard: Worcestershire: At Ryall a juvenile on 27 July, with no adults present. At Ripple nine on 24 August, 16 on 3 September, six on 10 September, five on 12 September, 30 on 28 September.

Tufted Duck: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake seven broods on 15 July; 66 on 23 July, 41 on 13 August; 62 on 10 September, 85 on 16 September, 120 on 28 September.

No breeding records this year in Gloucestershire, conditions probably too dry. At Coombe Hill a female on 15 July. None recorded at Barrow Ponds in August or September.

Pochard x Tufted hybrid: Worcestershire: At Ripple a female on 24 August: one was also seen here in winter 2016/17.

Red-crested Pochard: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake four (one drake) on 25 September.

Common Scoter: At Lower Moor one on 19 September.

Gamebirds

Quail: At Coombe Hill one singing on several dates between 10 and 20 July.

Divers and Grebes

Little Grebe: Worcestershire: at Ripple Lake singles on 15 July, 10 and 17 September.

The only site in Gloucestershire where the species was regularly reported was Horsbere Brook where two adults and a juvenile were noted on many dates from 7 August to 15 September.

Great Crested Grebe: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake two broods on the north lake on 7 July, eight birds on 23 July, at least two pairs with young on 5 August, seven birds on 13 August, at least ten on 12 September. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits eight (all adults, no juveniles) on 14 July, seems a lot, two on 13 August, seven on 10 September.

No records at Barrow Ponds in August or September. Along the Avon, a juvenile at Tewkesbury on 29 August.

Cormorants

Cormorant: Worcestershire: At Ripple nine on 23 July, three on 13 August, four on 10 September, six on 12 September, then 64 on 23 September, 88 on 26 September. At Bredon's Hardwick one on 13 August.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, three upriver on 11 July. At Ashleworth five over on 27 August. At Coombe Hill three over on 4 July; two over on 29 August. At Barrow Ponds six perching on trees on 29 August, two on 16 September. At Horsbere Brook singles from 7 to 28 August, when one was eating an eel, the first time this

prey has been recorded here; shows that eels move from the Severn up the brook.

Herons, Egrets and Ibises

Little Egret: Worcestershire: At Grimley old workings eleven roosting on 22 August. At Ripple Lake singles on many dates from 7 July to 13 August; two on 11 September, one perching in a tree on 12 September, three on 23 September, one on 28 September. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits one on 8 and 14 July.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one on 15 July. At Ashleworth singles on 2 August and 9 September. At Coombe Hill very frequent records in July, with maxima of six on 2 July, nine on 3 July and eleven on 4 July, then only in twos until two on 2 August. At Cobney Meadows one on 9 September. At Barrow Ponds one perching in trees on 29 August. At Horsbere singles on several dates in August, but five on 16 August, two on 28 August. At Walmore one on 7 September. On the Avon above Tewkesbury one on 1 July.

Great White Egret: One and two had been present since the beginning of the year in south Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 25 and 26 September. In Gloucestershire, along the Avon above Tewkesbury, one on 26 July and again on 14 August. Same bird??

Grey Heron: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 13 August, one on 10 and 12 September.

At Ashleworth one on 7 and 9 September. At Coombe Hill present throughout the period, maximum in July seven, in August and September eight. Frequent records from Horsbere Brook too: up to eight in August and September. At Walmore four on 7 September, six on 19 September. At Avon Meadows (Mitton) one on 8 July.

Cattle Egret: Worcestershire: at Chapter Meadows, Worcester, one on 20 August.

Raptors

Red Kite: At Walton Cardiff near Tewkesbury as many as seven, an exceptionally large number for the Vales, following a grass cutter on 5 July.

Marsh Harrier: A good showing of this normally scarce raptor:

Worcestershire: At Grimley an immature on 19 July. At Kemerton Lake one on 4 August.

At Coombe Hill one (a juvenile) seen briefly on 3 August; a single bird on 9 August.

Sparrowhawk: At Ashleworth one on 1 August, a female on 4 September. At Coombe Hill one on 29 July; one being mobbed by Swallows and Starlings on 4 August, one on 13 August, two on 12 September, one on 14 September. At Port Ham one on 24 September. At Walmore a pair taking food to at least one fledged juvenile on 5 August, a female on 2 September.

Buzzard: Worcestershire: at Bredon's Hardwick one on 14 July. At Ashleworth one on 7 July; two on 1, 10 and 27 August; two on 7 September. At Coombe Hill two on 29 July, 29 August, 14 September. At Barrow Ponds one on 16 September. At Horsbere one on 29 and 31 August, four on 2 September, one on 15 September. At Upham Meadow one on 12 September. At Avon Meadows one at Mitton on 4 July.

Osprey: Worcestershire: at Grimley (Camp Lane) one flew south at 11.49 on 20 August, no doubt the same bird over the Severn at Worcester at 12.15. Another through Grimley on 26 September.

Kestrel: Worcestershire: Behind Bredon's Hardwick Pits one on 4 July.

At Ashleworth one attacking Curlew on 10 August, one hunting on 21 August, three on 14 September. At Coombe Hill two on the ground, apparently trying to catch Little Ringed Plover chicks on 29 July; one hovering over uncut area on 19 and 29 August; two on 14 September, a juvenile perched on 16 September. At Horsbere a single on several dates in the second half of August.

Merlin: Worcestershire: a male flew south-east through Upper Moor on 28 September.

Hobby: Quite a lot of late records in the second half of August and September, from areas where the species may well be breeding; some of these records may refer to locally bred youngsters, only recently on the wing, and much more easily observed than their discreet nesting parents.

Worcestershire: At Holt one on 21 July. At Grimley one hawking dragonflies on 1 July, one soaring on 2 July, two on 5 July; then one

on 26, 28 and 30 August and 4 and 5 September. At Kempsey one flew over on 9 July; one in flight on 29 August. At Clifton one on 29 July; two on 8 September; a juvenile on 13 September, two on 17 September. At Ripple one on 29 July, one hunting on 23 August, singles on 25 August and many dates until 24 September. At Lower Moor one on 26 July and 7 August. At Kemerton Lake two on 1 August.

At Coombe Hill one on 13 July, one on 14 September, a juvenile on 16 September, one on 24 September. At Horsbere an adult on 16 August. At Quedgeley one over to south on 24 September. At Minsterworth Ham one on 27 August. At Walmore one on 22 July, an adult on 23 August and 2 September.

Peregrine: Worcestershire: At Ripple one hunting on 12 September. At Tewkesbury, two juveniles sitting on the Abbey tower and calling on 11 July. At Ashleworth one on 22 July and 9 August. At Horsbere an adult male on 29 July, one on 31 August. At Port Ham one on 24 September. Along the Avon one at Woodend near Twynning on 26 July.

Rails and Crakes

Water Rail: At Coombe Hill, no juveniles seen in August or September this year (unlike previous years) round the edges of the drying Short Pool.

Moorhen: Worcestershire: At Ripple two on 10 September. At Bredon's Hardwick four on 10 September.

At Ashleworth two on 9 September. At Coombe Hill two pairs with young on 9 July; a pair with two tiny chicks along canal on 15 July; at least 20, both adults and full-grown immatures, on 19 and 29 August; 13 on 9 September, 8 on 16 September, ten on 26 September. At Horsbere ten on 13 July; six on 20 August, ten on 15 and 18 September.

Coot: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake 155 on 23 July, 191 on 10 September, at least 50 on 12 September. At Bredon's Hardwick six on 10 September.

At Coombe Hill, two pairs on canal, one with full grown young, one with tiny red-headed chicks, on 3 July, two with three young on 9 July, two pairs with three young each on 14 July, two pairs with young along canal on 15 and 29 July; four along the canal including full-grown immatures on 4 and 19 August, two or three on 29 August; none left on 9 and 16 September. At Barrow Ponds two or three on 29 August, four on 16 September. At Horsbere Brook ten on 13 July; four (one juvenile) on 7 August, two on 20 August, five on 15 September, four on 18 September.

Waders

Oystercatcher: Many records of small numbers, mostly no doubt birds that had bred or attempted to breed in the area, in July; none afterwards.

Worcestershire: At Ripple three pairs had attempted to nest on the island in the south lake, but only one chick was fledged; two on 7 July, three on 23 July. At Bredon's Hardwick Pits two on 8 July.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury one flew upriver, calling, on 4 July; two on 11 July. On the shore of the Severn above Haw Bridge, four noisy birds, no doubt passing migrants, on 6 July. At Ashleworth one heard on 7 July. At Coombe Hill (where a pair with two chicks had been seen in the last week of June) two on 2 July, pair with one chick on 3 and 7 July; one on 13 July, four on 20 July.

Avocet: Worcestershire: At Lower Moor an immature on 4 and 5 July.

Ringed Plover: Worcestershire: At Clifton three on 5 August. At Ripple four on 3 September, one on 6 and 10 September, three on 16 and 17 September.

Little Ringed Plover: Worcestershire: at Ripple, two pairs attempted to nest on the island in the south lake, but were not successful; singles on 7 July and 13 August.

For the first time for many years a pair bred successfully at Coombe Hill; birds had been present throughout the spring and early summer, but had shown little sign of breeding behaviour; two adults on from 2 to 7 July, then observers were surprised to find two adults with four freshly hatched chicks on 10 July; such a late hatching suggests a replacement clutch; adult and four chicks still present from 12 to 25 July (chicks still intact despite a close encounter with a fox on 13 July); adult and two fledged chicks on 27 July; adult still clearly had chicks on 29 July and was trying to protect them from ground-

hunting Kestrels; no sign of the nesting pair or their chicks on 4 August, so they had clearly departed. After this the usual records of passage birds did not occur, no doubt because of the dry conditions: a juvenile on 8 August was the only record.

Lapwing: Breeding birds: Worcestershire: At Ripple at least eight pairs had attempted to nest on the island in the south lake but only one newly-hatched chick was seen.

Still some late records of young, probably replacement clutches, in Gloucestershire: at Coombe Hill four broods (one flying chick) on 3 July; a tiny Lapwing chick was taken by a Barn Owl on 12 July; in all four broods were probably successfully fledged. At Avon Meadows (Mitton) two adults with two broods of young on 4 July, 12 adults with two broods (one non-flying chick, two flying chicks) on 8 July, an anxious adult apparently still with young on 14 July. Migrants: as usual, numbers of birds arriving from outside the area had already begun to arrive in June, and this process continued through the summer.

Worcestershire: At Ripple flocks of 70 migrants on 8 August, 46 on 13 August, 110 on 12 September. At Avon Meadows 35 on 1 July, 45 on 14 July.

At Coombe Hill a flock of at least 30 on 2 July, 50 on 7 July, 35 full grown birds (some in juvenile plumage, some moulting adults) on 10 July, 54 on 13 July. By the end of July, the flock had built up to almost 200 birds and seemed to have settled in until early September: 180 on 29 July, 175 on 2 August, 120 on Long Pool on 4 August, 150 on 14 and 17 August, 130 on 19 August, 109 on 21 August, 95 on 29 August; 136 on 9 September, 120 on 14 September, only seven on 16 September.

Sanderling: Worcestershire: At Clifton Pits one on 9 September.

Dunlin: Worcestershire: At Clifton two on 5 August, one on 9 September. At Ripple Lake one on 29 July, two on 5 August, one on 16 and 17 September.

The lone Gloucestershire record was an adult at Coombe Hill on 13 July, another indication of the dry conditions.

Little Stint: Worcestershire: At Grimley a juvenile from 21 to 26 September. At Ryall Pits a juvenile on 18 September. At Lower Moor one on 28 September.

Ruff: Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 29 September. At Clifton one on 21 September. At Ripple one with Lapwings on 12 September. At Lower Moor three on 13 July; three juveniles arrived on 11 September and stayed until the end of the month.

At Coombe Hill a juvenile on several dates from 16 to 24 September.

Snipe: Few records of returning migrants, no doubt because of the dry conditions.

Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 12 August. At Ripple one on 17 September, three on 23 September.

At Ashleworth one on 9 August. At Coombe Hill, where the first returning birds had been recorded in late June, this species was probably under-recorded because of difficulty of access to its favourite areas: two on 29 July; two on 9 September, three on 25 September, only one at dusk on 26 September. At Cobney Meadows one on 9 September. At Walmore one on 15 and 16 July, five on 28 September.

Black-tailed Godwit: Worcestershire: At Holt one on 6 July. At Grimley one on 1 July, an adult on 5 July, one on 10 July, seven on 11 July, one on 14 and 17 July; an adult on 7 August, single juveniles on 11 and 19 August; one on 7 and 8 September; six on 20 September, one on 25 September. At Clifton 20 flew south on 8 September. At Ripple a juvenile in the evening of 11 August. Along the Avon: at Lower Moor five on 5 July, seven on 6 July, seven juveniles on 6 August, one on 18 September, two on 19 September; at Bredon's Hardwick one on 20 July; three on 19 August.

The only Gloucestershire record was at Coombe Hill: six on the Long Pool on 9 August.

Whimbrel: At Ashleworth a migrant flying over high to the south on 4 September.

Curlew: As in 2016, a survey of breeding Curlew was carried out throughout the Severn and Avon Vales. This year 31-32 pairs were

holding territories at the beginning of the nesting season and 25-26 pairs were thought to have nested – figures very similar to 2016. Predation was even higher in 2017 than in 2016, with only three chicks known to have fledged (as against six to eight last year); several nests were lost because of hay-making activities. 2017 was an early year with the first flying chick seen on 1 July (9 July in 2016), the last on 14 July (23 July in 2016). There was one definite case of a replacement clutch being laid.

Worcestershire: At Upton Ham, none left on 4 July. On the Avon Meadows two near Fleet Lane had freshly hatched young on 1 July, undoubtedly a replacement clutch, sadly predated as they were not present on 11 July; near Mitton a single bird (probably male) appeared to be guarding young on 1 and 4 July, and had a flying juvenile on 8 and 14 July.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury none seen after 4 July. Above Haw Bridge, none left on 6 July. At Ashleworth none left on 7 July. At Hasfield Ham a very interesting early morning observation on 7 August, well after the departure of the breeding birds: a singleton juvenile, clearly nervous and unfamiliar with the site, was present, and was still in the same place and feeding avidly on 9 and 10 August; presumed to have been a bird bred elsewhere, stopping en route to coastal or estuary wintering grounds; there are occasional records of passing juveniles like this in early August, but not many; a Curlew heard on the morning of 21 August may have been the same bird, but was not found in the evening; none found on 27 August. At Coombe Hill, two on 2 July, only one came to roost on the evening of 3 July, the last of the year, so most had no doubt departed for the coast. At Upham Meadow four adults and two birds of the year (one already flying strongly) on 1 July; two adults and two chicks (one the flying bird of 1 July) on 6 July; one adult and two chicks (one flying, one not) on 8 July; one adult and one remaining non-flying juvenile (the other having presumably left already) on 11 July, an adult and a flying juvenile on 14 July; none left on 5 August.

Redshank: Any records after mid-July no doubt refer to birds on passage, not to breeding birds.

Worcestershire: At Upton Ham, none left on 4 July, but three pairs seem to have been successful. At Ripple five to six pairs nested on the island in the south lake, but no chicks were seen; no Redshank were left on 7 July, but two passage birds on 27 July, one on 8 August.

At Coombe Hill one breeding pair had already raised a single chick in June; a second later nesting pair was still present with chicks into July; six (no doubt including some young birds) on 2 July; still one chipping adult with four chicks on 3 July, two adults and two chicks on 5 and 7 July, alarm calls heard on 10 July; five on 13 July; four on 15 July, probably the late hatching brood; none on 29 July. After that one on 15 August, no doubt a migrant.

Greenshank: Worcestershire: At Holt one on 16 August. At Grimley one on 25 and 26 July; one on 19 and 23 August, and on 4, 6 and 10 September. Most records came from Clifton Pits: one on 25, 29 and 30 July; one on 8, 14, 16 and 23 August; up to three on many dates until the end of September. Along the Avon at Lower Moor two on 11 and 12 August; singles on 29 August and 5 September. No Gloucestershire records.

Green Sandpiper: Generally the first returning migrant wader, present (as usual) at Coombe Hill from 17 June.

Worcestershire: At Clifton two on 5 August. At Ryall one on 29 July, 8 and 20 August, 9 September, two on 14 September. At Ripple Lake one on 13 August. Along the Avon: at John Bennett NR five on 29 July. At Bredon's Hardwick one on 22 July, 5 and 13 August, 3 September, two on 24 September.

At Ashleworth one on 1 and 9 August. At Coombe Hill numbers built up almost to double figures by late July (maximum nine on 24 July), present through August and September (maxima five on 19 August and 16 September). At Leigh Meadows one on 9 September. At Quedgeley one at the old cement works on 28 September. At Netheridge Farm two on 2 July. At Minsterworth Ham one on 27 August. At Walmore where the species is unusual, one on 5 August. By the Avon at Mitton singles on 8 and 14 July and 22 August.

Wood Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) a juvenile on 29 and 30 August, and on 2 and 3 September. At Clifton Pits a juvenile from 5 to 8 August. At John Bennett one on 19 and 20 July.

The only Gloucestershire record was along the Avon at Mitton, where one was seen on 4 July.

Common Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Clifton one on 5 August, two on 8 August. At Ripple one on 7 July, three on 22 July, eight on 23 July, two on 29 July, one on 5 August, two on 13 August, three on 24 August, two on 3 September, two on 10 September, one on 12 September. Along the Avon: at John Bennett NR three on 29 July. At Ashleworth one on 14 September. At Coombe Hill two on 2 July. At Upham Meadow, two along the Avon on 1 July were undoubtedly returning migrants.

Grey Phalarope: Worcestershire: At Throckmorton Lagoon one on 13 September

Gulls and Terns

Mediterranean Gull: Worcestershire: At Lower Moor a juvenile on 29 July; an immature on 3 August.

Black-headed Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake two on 23 July. At Bredon's Hardwick one on 13 August.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, 13 loafing on cut grass on 15 July.

Common Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple an adult on 7 July.

Lesser Black-backed: Worcestershire: At Ripple 19 on 23 July, six on 13 August, 30 mixed immature Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 12 September. At Bredon's Hardwick 26 on 13 August.

Herring Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple four on 23 July, 30 mixed immature Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 12 September. At Bredon's Hardwick seven on 13 August.

Yellow-legged Gull: Worcestershire: At Grimley a second calendar year bird on 31 July.

Sandwich Tern: Worcestershire: At Kemerton Lake one on 12 September.

Common Tern: Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake a juvenile on 5 August; one on 11 September.

No nesting attempts in Gloucestershire this year. At Hempsted one flew down the canal at Netheridge on 1 August

Arctic Tern: Worcestershire: At Grimley a first summer immature on 24 July (birds of this age generally stay in Antarctic waters in the British summer); the next one did not appear until 25 September. At Ripple three juveniles on 11 September, one on 14 September. At Throckmorton Lagoons a juvenile on 14 September.

Black Tern: Worcestershire: At Grimley three on 25 September. At Lower Moor one from 13 to 23 September.

Cuckoo

At Coombe Hill one heard on 2 and 14 July.

Owls

Barn Owl: At Coombe Hill one hunting on the evenings of 3, 6 and 12 July (taking a tiny Lapwing chick on the latter date) and one on 13 July, two hunting at 21h00 on 7 August; clearly breeding locally. At Hartpury three at dusk on 17 September. At Quedgeley one at dusk on 5 August. At Netheridge Farm one on 2 July. At Woodend, Twyning, one on 20 and 21 August.

Little Owl: Worcestershire: At Bredon's Hardwick one on 10 September.

Above Haw Bridge, one calling on 6 July. At Coombe Hill, rather more records than in recent years, and in different parts of the site, so probably more than one individual concerned: one on 6 July, two on 12 July, one on 14 and 23 July, singles on 3 August and on 12, 22 and 25 September; and one calling at dusk from a third area on 26 September; several nest boxes erected for this species which has declined sharply in the Vales on 27 September. At Walmore one calling on 2 and 28 September.

Tawny Owl: At Ashleworth two calling from 20h15 on 21 August. At Woodend, Twyning, two on 25 August.

Short-eared Owl: Worcestershire: at Throckmorton Lagoons one drifted westwards on 28 September.

Swift

Several records extending well into August this year. At Tewkesbury two on 15 July; ten flying south strongly on 2 August. At Coombe Hill five on 3 July, eight on 10 July; three late birds on 31 August.

Over Longlevens three flew south on 5 August, 30+ on late afternoon of 10 August. At Horsbere Brook two on 7 August, small numbers over on 15 August, 13 on 16 August. 10+ on 22 August. At Netheridge Farm eight on 26 August. At Twynning nine over on 18 August.

Parakeets

Ring-necked Parakeet: At Ashleworth Ham one on 17 September. At Longlevens one over a garden on 23 August, and again on 15 and 16 September.

Kingfisher

Worcestershire: At Ripple Lake one on 23 July.

At Ashleworth a juvenile caught on 22 July; at Ashleworth Quay one on 13 August. At Wainlodes one in flight by the Severn on 24 August. At Coombe Hill one on 14 and 20 July, and one along canal on 2 August, three (two juveniles) on 13 August, one on 19 August; one along the canal on 7 and 22 September. At Walmore one on 28 August. At Horsbere one on 16 and 31 August. At Walmore one on 28 August. At Upham Meadow one over Avon on 5 August. Along the Avon near Twynning one on 25 August.

Woodpeckers

Great Spotted Woodpecker: At Ashleworth one adult caught on 7 August.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: Worcestershire: At Rippler a male on 24 September

Passerines

Skylark: Something of a gap in records from mid-July to mid-September. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, at least five (some singing) on 4, 11 and 15 July. At Ashleworth none on 27 August or 7 September; five migrants over to southwest on 19 and 22 September. At Coombe Hill just one on 19 August, two on 29 August; three on 9 September, five on 16 September (no song on any occasion) and on 25 September. At Cobney Meadows one (no song) on 9 September. At Quedgeley at least 500 over to south in 24 September. At Upham Meadow still some singing on 1 July; five present with some singing in the first two weeks of July; two (with no song) on 12 September.

Sand Martin: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, two on 15 July. At Ashleworth a few passing south with Swallows on 15 August. At Coombe Hill one on 13 July. At Walmore 60 on 15 July, 70 on 16 July, 50 on 22 July. At Avon Meadows (Mitton) five on 4 July.

Swallow: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, five on 15 July. At Ashleworth 20 hawking insects over the reserve on 22 July and ten on 1 August may well have been migrants passing through; hundreds of hirundines, mainly Swallows, passing south on 15 August; 50 on the evening of 21 August, apparently looking for a roost; at least 100 arrived mid-morning on 27 August, probably migrants, six caught; about 100 migrants moving through on 4 September; at least 50 hawking insects on 7 September, but no particular direction of movement; 40 on 19 September, ten on 22 September. At Coombe Hill 50 on 13 July, 20 on 29 July. 20 on 19 August, steady stream of 100 going to southwest on 29 August; at least 100 through on 3 September; at least 50 on 9 and 16 September, 'masses' on 18 September, 20 on 25 September. At Leigh Meadows 25 on 9 September. At Cobney Meadows ten on 9 September. At Barrow Ponds 50 high up on 29 August, 20 on 16 September. At Walmore 50 on 22 July, 90 on 10 September. At Upham Meadow one moving southwest on 12 September.

House Martin: Over Tewkesbury 40-50 on 11 July, at Severn Ham 10 on 15 July. At Ashleworth 20 hawking insects over the reserve on 22 July and ten on 1 August may well have been migrants passing through; at least 100 arrived mid-morning on 27 August, probably migrants. At Coombe Hill 20 on 29 July; 20 going southwest on 29 August; at least 20 through on 4 September, one or two on 16 September. At Leigh Meadows one with Swallows on 9 September. At Barrow Ponds 50 high up on 29 August, ten on 16 September. At Walmore 30 on 22 July, 60 on 5 August. At Avon Meadows (Mitton) ten on 4, 8 and 14 July.

Meadow Pipit: This species usually moves through the Vales in September and October and efforts are made to net them for ringing at Ashleworth: little or no sign of autumn passage on 7 September, when migrants were not attracted to a tape lure and just two were

seen; about 20, five juveniles caught, on 19 September; about ten, one juvenile caught, on 22 September. At Coombe Hill six on 9 September suggested beginning of autumn passage, ten on 14 September, five on 16 September, only one on 25 September, just two on 26 September. At Leigh Meadows 75 on 19 September. At Walmore 42 on 16 September. At Upham Meadow two on 12 September.

Yellow Wagtail: Worcestershire: At Ripple three pairs present on 7 July; two or three pairs produced young this year. One on 17 September.

All records in Gloucestershire were of post-breeding migrants. At Coombe Hill an adult male on 5 July, two on 7 July, singles on 13 and 15 July; eleven on 4 August, one on 31 August. At Horsbere Brook one on 9 July. Over Netheridge Farm one on 22 August. At Walmore two on 16 July, one on 22 July and two on 23 August, eight on 10 September, one on 19 September.

Grey Wagtail: Worcestershire: At Ripple two on 13 August, 10 September.

At Coombe Hill one on 16 September. At Horsbere one on 16 August.

Pied Wagtail: At Coombe Hill one on 29 August; three on Short Pool on 9 September, two on 16 September.

Wren: At Ashleworth nine (nearly all juveniles) caught on 7 July; seven (all but one juveniles) caught on 22 July; five (all juveniles) caught on 1 August; four juveniles caught on 7 August; four (mainly juveniles) on 27 August; four juveniles caught on 4 September, with six (all juveniles) on 7 September; two juveniles caught on 19 September, two juveniles (one re-trap) on 22 September.

Duncock: At Ashleworth two caught (an adult and a juvenile) on 22 July, same on 1 August; four juveniles caught on 7 August, four more (mainly juveniles) caught on 27 August, one juvenile caught on 4 September; two juveniles caught on 19 September, two juveniles caught (one re-trap) on 22 September.

Robin: At Ashleworth eight (nearly all juveniles) caught on 7 July; three juveniles caught on 22 July; two juvenile re-traps on 1 August; one juvenile caught on 7 August, two on 27 August and 4 September; one adult re-trap and some song on 7 September; one juvenile caught and some song on 19 September, two retraps (an adult and a juvenile) on 22 September. At Coombe Hill some song on 16 September.

Redstart: At Ashleworth, where this species remains numerous, few juveniles caught in this year's ringing season: one adult caught on 7 July; one seen on 1 August; two caught on 7 August were both adults in moult, so unlikely to depart before their moult is complete; (a female ringed here as an adult in July 2014 was caught by a cat in Dumfries and Galloway in July 2017, an unexpected direction of travel); on 21 August, three caught (an adult and two juveniles, the first juveniles of the year); on 27 August an adult and a juvenile caught; one moulting adult caught on 7 September; an adult that had completed its moult on 19 September. At Coombe Hill two on 13 July, one on 14 July; four on 7 August, an adult male on 13 August, one in 22 August. At Leigh Meadows one on 19 September. At Horsbere a juvenile on 12 August must have been a migrant. At Port Ham one on 21 August. At Netheridge Farm, two on 20 July. At Minsterworth Ham four on 27 August, three on 2 September. At Walmore singles on 22 July and 5 August.

Stonechat: At Ashleworth two on 9 August, three on 17 September. At Coombe Hill a juvenile on 13 July – no sign of local breeding, almost certainly an immigrant; one on 20 August; one on 18 September, pair on 24 September, one on 25 September. At Walmore two males on 28 September.

Whinchat: Quite a good showing on return passage in August and September, at a number of sites in both counties.

Worcestershire: At Holt Heath one in set-aside on 25 August and 8 September. At Kempsey Ham one on 7 September. At Clifton Pits an immature on 16 August. At Longdon Marsh seven on 29 July; eight on 3 August. At Lower Moor two on 7 September. At John Bennett two on 7 September. At Gwen Finch one on 4 September. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one in uncut hay on 28 July. At Ashleworth/Hasfield two on 18 July; two (one juvenile caught) on 27 August, four on 4 September, one on 7 September. At Coombe

Hill a male on 3 July; an adult and an immature on 13 July; four on 15 August, three in uncut grass area on 19 and 20 August, four on 29 August, three on 31 August; three on 3 and 5 September, one on 7 September, two on 9 September. At Horsbere three on 29 July; three on 16, 26 and 28 August and 2 September; one on 15 September. At Port Ham one on 21 August, two on 24 September. At Walmore four on 15 July, six on 16 July, six on 17 July, eight on 23 and 28 August, two on 7 September, two on 24 September, still three late ones on 28 September.

Wheatear: At Coombe Hill three juveniles on 9 August; two on 20 and 21 August, singletons on 22 August, and 19 and 26 September. At Netheridge Farm one on 29 August. At Walmore one on 7 September, two on 10 and 28 September.

Blackbird: At Ashleworth two caught on 7 July; one juvenile caught on 1 August; two caught, one adult re-trap and one juvenile, on 7 August.

Song Thrush: At Ashleworth two (an adult and a juvenile) caught on 7 July; some song but none caught on 22 July; one adult caught on 7 and 27 August.

Redwing: At Netheridge Farm first of the autumn on 26 September.

Mistle Thrush: At Upham Meadow ten feeding on cut hay meadow on 11 July.

Cetti's Warbler: At Coombe Hill one singing persistently on the evening of 26 September. At Walmore one on 28 August, brief burst of song on 7 September.

Grasshopper Warbler: Worcestershire: At Grimley (old workings) two trapped on 13 August, another on 20 August.

At Ashleworth, after several records earlier in the summer, there was no song on 7 July, but an adult female with a very strong brood patch was caught, suggesting local breeding, perhaps a late (replacement?) clutch; a juvenile caught on 22 July confirmed breeding and a very young juvenile was caught on 1 August, then retrapped on 26 August at South Foreland in Kent, illustrating timing and direction of migration – most unusual to have a recovery of this species; two young birds caught on 7 August were much more advanced in body moult than the two juveniles caught on earlier visits, suggesting that two pairs may have bred this year (even though song had not been heard for some time). At Coombe Hill where singing birds had been heard from late April onwards, one near hide on 2 July; two singing on evening of 12 July.

Sedge Warbler: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 23 September. At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, where there had been large numbers of singing birds earlier in the summer, still one singing on 4, 11 and 15 July. At Ashleworth nearly all the locally breeding adults and their offspring had left by late July or early August; a good illustration of this was one juvenile, ringed at Ashleworth on 26 June, and retrapped in Sussex on 31 July. Little song on 7 July (but the ones singing sang very strongly, perhaps birds moving in from outside for replacement clutches?) and 12 were caught, seven of them adults, a smaller proportion of juveniles than other warblers – maybe this species breeds later; one little burst of song on 22 July when two adults and seven juveniles were caught; only four caught, all juveniles still in post-juvenile moult, so probably locally bred, on 1 August; no local adults or juveniles caught on 7 August, the only two caught were considered to be migrants, one a very fat adult, the other a bird of the year that had already finished its post-juvenile moult; only one juvenile, probably a migrant, caught on 27 August, the last of the summer. At Coombe Hill some song on the evening of 3 July, still some song on 29 July (at least eight birds present); five on 2 August, three or four churring in ditches on 4 August, two on 12 August, at least ten on 13 August, five on 21 August. At Walmore nine (two pairs and fledged juveniles) on 22 July. At Upham Meadow two still singing on 1 July, three on 6 July, one on 8, 11 and 14 July.

Reed Warbler: At Ashleworth none heard or caught in July or August; they clearly didn't breed there this year. At Coombe Hill some song along the canal on 3 July, one on 4 and 9 July; two on 2 August, snatches of song from one bird on 4 August, one on 10 August, six on 12 August, two on 13 August, one on 19 and 20 August. At Horsbere an adult feeding at least one fledged juvenile on 29 July; two on 26 August. At Netheridge Farm a late one on 26

September. At Walmore 30 (five pairs with fledged juveniles) on 22 July, two on 23 August.

Lesser Whitethroat: At Ashleworth no song on 7 July, but one juvenile caught; no more records until a late juvenile caught on 4 September. At Walmore a family party of five on 22 July. At Woodend near Twynning one on 26 July.

Whitethroat: At Ashleworth the remarkable increase of this species continues in lower-lying parts of the area, where they never used to be caught in large numbers: as many as 41 caught, all but one juveniles, on 7 July; 32 caught, again all but one juveniles, on 22 July; 23 caught on 1 August were all juveniles, still in post-juvenile moult, so almost certainly locally bred; 34 caught on 7 August were again all juveniles; only six caught on 21 August; ten, mainly juveniles, caught on 27 August, only two juveniles caught on 4 September; none caught but two seen on 7 September. At Coombe Hill still one or two in vegetation on 4 August. At Horsbere five on 29 July. At Walmore a late bird on 28 September.

Garden Warbler: Very few records of this species, which is rare in the Vale. At Port Ham one on 21 August.

Blackcap: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one singing on 11 July. At Ashleworth five (all juveniles) caught on 7 July; seven (mainly juveniles) caught on 22 July; seven (all but one juveniles) caught on 1 August; two juveniles caught on 7 August; six (mainly juveniles) caught on 27 August, two juveniles caught on 4 September; one juvenile caught on 7 September; last two caught on 16 September. At Coombe Hill one on 9 September, one with sub-song on 16 September. At Cobney Meadows one on 9 September. At Horsbere one calling on 18 September.

Chiffchaff: Worcestershire: At Ripple several calling on 12 September.

At Ashleworth some song (maybe birds on second broods?) on 7 July when 12 (eight juveniles) were caught; eleven juveniles caught on 22 July; six caught (one moulting adult, the rest juveniles) and many juveniles calling from the vegetation on 1 August; 13 (two moulting adults, the rest juveniles) caught on 7 August; some juveniles calling from vegetation on 21 August; as many as 33, mainly juveniles, caught on 27 August, mainly with tit flocks; 16 (one adult, the rest locally bred juveniles still in body moult) caught on 4 September; four (one adult and three juveniles) caught on 7 September, four caught on 16 September; as many as 19 (all juveniles) caught on 19 September; some bursts of song, five juveniles caught, on 22 September. At Coombe Hill large numbers of immatures calling from hedges on 29 July; several immatures calling from hedges on 4, 19 and 29 August; at least six juveniles calling and a couple of bursts of song on 9 September, at least five juveniles calling on 16 September, one singing on 25 September. At Leigh Meadows five on 9 September. At Cobney Meadows three juveniles calling on 9 September. At Horsbere two singing on 13 July; one or two immatures calling on 20 August, two on 28 August, three on 2 September, two on 18 September. At Alney Island at least nine on 24 September. At Netheridge Farm three singing on 26 September. At Upham Meadow one or two juveniles calling on 12 September.

Willow Warbler: Much less in evidence than the previous species. At Ashleworth no song, none caught on 7 July; just two (an adult and a juvenile that had finished moulting) caught on 22 July; a few bursts of song (practically the only birdsong heard - perhaps birds of the year practising?), and five (one moulting adult, the rest juveniles) caught on 1 August; once again several bursts of song and 12 (couple of moulting adults but mainly juveniles) caught on 7 August; 13 (many juveniles) caught on 27 August; couple of bursts of song and one adult caught on 4 September; one juvenile caught on 7 September; a late juvenile caught on 19 September. At Coombe Hill three or four (with bursts of song) on 4 August.

Goldcrest: At Ashleworth one caught with tit flocks on 27 August. At Horsbere 40 on 13 July.

Spotted Flycatcher: At Ashleworth Ham one on 6 July; at Ashleworth Quay two on 13 August. At Coombe Hill one on 23 August. At Hartpury Orchard Centre at least five on 30 July. At Port Ham one on 21 August. At Minsterworth Ham two on 27 August.

Long-tailed Tit: At Ashleworth three caught on 7 July; five (one adult) caught on 22 July; slightly more of this species caught than Blue or Great Tits in August: just one juvenile caught on 1 August, none on 7 August, but 24 caught on 27 August; 14 caught on 4 September, five caught on 22 September. At Coombe Hill five on 26 September.

Blue Tit: At Ashleworth; only two (both juveniles) caught on 7 July; a single juvenile caught on 22 July; very few caught in August, despite signs earlier in the year of a more successful breeding season: none on 1 August, but six (an adult and five juveniles) on 7 August, and 18 caught on 27 August; 13 (all adults but two) caught on 4 September; four juveniles caught on 7 September; seven (mainly juveniles) caught on 19 September, one juvenile caught on 22 September.

Great Tit: At Ashleworth a single juvenile caught on 22 July; very few caught in August, despite signs earlier in the year of a more successful breeding season: just one juvenile caught on 1 August, none at all on 7 August, but seven on 27 August; four (three juveniles) caught on 4 September; one juvenile caught on 7 September, one on 19 September, two juveniles on 22 September.

Nuthatch: At Ashleworth where this species used to be uncommon, now seen regularly by the roadside hide where crumbs are left for them; two on 2 August.

Tree-creeper: At Ashleworth one juvenile caught on 7 July; two juveniles caught on 1 August, one on 27 August; a juvenile caught on 7 September; a juvenile caught on 19 September.

Jay: At Ashleworth one caught on 4 September. At Coombe Hill one or two on 16 September. At Barrow Ponds one on 29 August. At Horsbere two on 20 August.

Raven: At Ashleworth one on 1 August, probably a local breeder; one calling from pylons on 7 September. At Avon Meadows (Mitton) one over on 4 July.

Starling: Worcestershire: at Bredon's Hardwick ten with Lapwings on 14 July.

At Coombe Hill at least 200 on 20 July, about 20 on 4 August, 30 on 16 September.

Chaffinch: At Ashleworth one juvenile caught on 4 September.

Goldfinch: Many were present in post-breeding flocks. At Ashleworth five caught on 7 July, a single juvenile on 22 July; a flock of at least 50 feeding together and three juveniles caught on 1 August; single juveniles caught on 7 and 27 August; 43 (all juveniles but one) caught on 4 September, but only five juveniles caught on 7 September; 17 (all juveniles) caught on 19 September; small flock on 22 September (13 caught). At Coombe Hill about 20 with Linnets on 29 August; flock of 50 on 9 September, 30 on 16 September, 140 on 19 September, 40 on 25 September. At Horsbere 35 on 29 July, ten on 18 September. At Minsterworth 50 on 27 August, 60 on 2 September. At Walmore 30 on 5 August.

Linnet: At Ashleworth where the species breeds one juvenile caught on 7 July, an adult on 22 July; three caught on 1 August were all juveniles, as were three on 7 August. At Coombe Hill a flock of 60 by uncut grass on 29 August, 50 on 12 September. At Leigh Meadows three on 9 September. At Horsbere one or two on 18 September. At Minsterworth Ham 31 on 2 September. At Walmore 40 on 16 July.

Lesser Redpoll: Worcestershire: At Ripple 23 on 28 September.

Bullfinch: At Ashleworth four (all adults) caught on 7 July; one adult and one juvenile caught on 7 August; four caught, including one very freshly fledged juvenile, on 27 August; one juvenile caught on 7 September. At Coombe Hill three along canal on 9 September

Yellowhammer: At Coombe Hill one singing on 4 August.

Reed Bunting: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, at least five, still clearly nesting in early July. At Ashleworth several singing on 7 July, probably birds with a second brood, and six caught, all juveniles; nine juveniles caught on 22 July; seven caught on 1 August were all juveniles, as were all but one of the 22 caught on 7 August (the adult was a bird ringed at Oxenhall near Newent in December 2010, already caught as a breeding adult at Ashleworth in May); 13 caught on 21 August; this suggests that the late hay cutting at Ashleworth this year was favourable for this species; but only two juveniles caught on 27 August; only two seen, none caught on 4 September; six juveniles caught on 7 September; five caught on 16

September; good catch of 12, only one adult, on 19 September; 12 caught, all juveniles, on 22 September. At Coombe Hill two still singing on 15 July; none at all found on 19 August, 9 September, but two or three on 16 September, four on 22 September, none at dusk on 26 September. At Horsbere five on 29 July, none found on 20 August, three on 28 August. At Walmore ten, including at least three juveniles, on 16 July; five on 10 September. At Upham Meadow four singing, some carrying food, on 6 July, still present on 11 July. Corn Bunting: After a couple of spring records at Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, none later in the year.

These are unconfirmed records, compiled by M. Smart from his own observations and those of Les Brown, with additional records from Gordon Avery, Mervyn Greening, John Fletcher, 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.