

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

Mike Smart

**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), nowadays very overgrown; Ripple Lake (east bank) with two deep lakes, one 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 Horsbere 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; a similar much smaller wetland site near Horsbere, also managed by Gloucester City Council, is at Plock Court.

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**

In some ways October 2017 was an unremarkable month, but one event stood out as being exceptional: the passage of ex-Hurricane ‘Ophelia’ on 16 October brought gales to Ireland, but also extraordinary yellow/white skies and a red sun to much of Britain, caused by small soot particles from Iberian forest fires carried on the southerly airflow (hurricanes rarely appear so far west in the

Atlantic). Otherwise however, the British Isles saw a continuation of prevailing westerly winds, so that it was quite wet and unsettled in some upland areas in the west, but many other areas had a dry month. Unlike September it was mild with only one cold night nationally. October was a dull month with little sunshine; it was consistently mild and not much colder than the previous month; the average Central England temperature was 12.7°C, two degrees above average. Nationally there was a huge variation in rainfall, with heavy falls on western uplands, but a dry month for places sheltered from the west; rainfall in the Midlands was 53% of average, in southwest England 52% of average. In the Severn and Avon Vales, weather in October came largely from the Atlantic, with westerly or south-westerly winds, often cloudy but with only very limited rainfall; occasional brighter days on ridges of higher pressure on 6 and 8 October, and again on 12 and 15 October; top daytime temperatures were generally 16° to 18°C, nights not cold. 'Ophelia' had little effect in the Severn and Avon Vales (winds up to 25 mph overnight), but the curious spectacle of reddish brown clouds was apparent here too. Westerly weather with small amounts of rain (9mm on 19 October) continued, as the second named storm of the winter, 'Brian', moved through on the night of 20/21 October, mainly over Ireland and the Irish Sea (where there were gusts of up to 120 mph), but only producing strongish though not damaging winds and some rain in the Vales (maximum gust in Gloucester 22 mph). Very mild from 22-25 October, with drizzle on southwest winds from 22-24, bright and fine on 25 October (temperature reaching 18°C); grey with drizzle on 26 October, brighter on 27 October, cooler on 28 October with a slight grass frost in the morning. Winds came briefly from the north on 29 October, bringing a widespread frost on 30 October, becoming milder, with wind returning to southwest, on 30 and 31 October. Total rainfall in Gloucester in October was only 22 mm (the third dry October in succession with 30mm or less).

Nationally November opened with a ridge of high pressure in the south which brought relatively quiet weather, but most of the month had weather of a mobile westerly type, interspersed with short-lived northerlies. It was briefly mild for most on 20-22 November, when it turned very wet in parts of Wales and north-west England. The last week was generally cold, with widespread overnight frosts, though no outstandingly low temperatures. Snow showers were mostly restricted to high ground, but penetrated widely to low ground in eastern areas on 30 November. The provisional UK mean temperature was 5.8°C, which is 0.4 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average. Mean maximum temperatures were slightly above average in many parts of England, but were below average over much of Scotland. Rainfall was 89% of average overall, and it was generally drier than normal in the southern half of England and in central and southern Scotland and south-east Wales, but wet in northern Scotland and north-west Lancashire. Rainfall was 75% of average in the Midlands and only 59% in the Southwest. Sunshine was generally above normal, and the UK as a whole had 121% of average sunshine. In the Severn and Avon Vales, November opened mainly mild and dry (but with a couple of sharp frosts) with southwesterly winds until 11 November, temperatures not exceeding 15°C by day, prolonged rainfall on 4 November (7mm in Gloucester) and light rain most days from 4-8 November (6mm on 7 November); heavy frost on 6 November though mild later, frost again on 8 November. Bright and fine with a ridge of high pressure on 12 November, but cold north-westerly winds from the Arctic and sharp frost overnight on 12/13 November. Much milder with very light southwesterly winds on 14 and 15 November. Sharp frost on 17 November, then bright fine day. Milder with southwesterly winds from 18-23 November with rain on 18 November (6mm in Gloucester), strong winds and some rain (4mm) on 22 November; brighter with less cloud from 23-25 November, colder with light night frosts; winds going north-westerly on 26 November. Milder on 26 November, then frost again each morning and cold by day until the end of the month, as winds went northerly. Total rainfall for the month in Gloucester was however only 33mm.

Nationally, December provided a wide variety of weather types with many interruptions to the westerlies that had dominated so much of 2017. The month started quietly with a ridge of high pressure covering southern areas. In the second week, high pressure built to the west of the UK, allowing a north-westerly flow to develop. On 10 December fronts moving north-east ground to a halt over southern Britain giving widespread snow; westerly winds returned from mid-month to Christmas. It then became colder with further slight snow on southern hills on 27 December. The jet stream was south of the UK and this brought a succession of lows across southern Britain, giving a wet end to the month. Movement of the jet stream during the month meant there was a mixture of cold and mild spells. Rainfall across England and Wales was a little below average. There were two named storms: 'Caroline' on 7 December mainly affected the northwest Scotland, 'Dylan' arrived in the very unsettled spell after Christmas and provoked strong gusts in the English Channel. In the Severn Vales, late November's weather continued for the first two days of December, with northerly winds and light early morning frosts, small amounts of rain; milder, winds more westerly 3-5 December, 'Caroline' brought strong winds and some rain to the Vales. Sharp frosts on 8 and 9 December with light snow on north-westerly winds on the tops of Malverns; quite heavy snowfalls (the heaviest for four years) came right down to lowest levels in the Vales on 10 December; frost again from 10 to 12 December, snow not thawing until southwesterly winds set in during the afternoon of 12 December. Milder with no frost and southwesterly winds on 13 and 14 December, cooler with light frost on 15 December, still frosty till 18 December, but then south-westerly winds with milder conditions and occasional drizzle set in until 25 December; on 25 December quite strong winds from the south, with rather more rain (12mm in Gloucester); winds went north-westerly on Christmas night, bringing a second snowfall in near frost conditions on Boxing Day night (8mm on 26 December, 13 mm on 27 December); sharp frosts on the mornings of 27 and 28 December. Milder on 30 and 31 December, with strongish southwesterly winds and some rain. Total precipitation (much of it in the form of snow) in Gloucester in December was 68mm, making December the second wettest month of the year after July, and the annual total only 492mm. 2017 was thus the third year in a row with low rainfall (after 520mm in 2015 and 539mm in 2016).

#### Summary of the weather in 2017:

The most notable feature was the prevalence of westerly winds across the UK, probably a factor in making 2017 a year of below average sunshine. This caused some very unsettled weather in the north and west, while the dry anomaly that started in south-eastern Britain in 2016 continued, with only brief interruptions. As in most recent years, temperatures were above average; Central England enjoyed the warmest spring in over 350 years of records. Although the cold snaps in early December and over Christmas aroused much comment, they were not exceptional. The most unusual weather event was probably the oddly coloured skies following the passage of Storm Ophelia across the country on 16 October, 30 years to the day after the Great Storm of 1987; the colours were caused by a combination of smoke from forest fires in Iberia and Saharan Dust.

The average Central England was 0.6°C above average, typical of most of the UK. The highest temperature of the year was 34.5°C at Heathrow on 21 June, the highest June temperature since 1976 in what was also the warmest June since that famous summer. The lowest temperature was -13.0°C at Shawbury in Shropshire on 13 December, following deep local snowfall. Rainfall remained mostly below average in the warm spring, and was above average in summer, though with large regional variations. Dry weather returned in autumn though many western coasts were wet. The outstanding months for dryness were April (very widely) and October (just in the southeast). As usual there were some very heavy daily falls, notably at Coverack in Cornwall on 18 July when 100mm fell within three hours, and at Lancaster on 23 November when 74 mm fell in 24 hours, as intense falls were embedded within a larger area of frontal rain. River flows and groundwater levels remained very low through

the autumn in East Anglia and southeast England, and further sustained rain is needed to replenish water resources.

The strongest wind gust of the year came at Capel Curig in Snowdonia during the passage of Storm Doris on 23 February, when there was major disruption across Britain, especially in the south. Ex-tropical storm Ophelia on 16 October brought strong gusts to Wales, but the impacts were strongest over Ireland.

### Water levels and flooding: general

After a dry spring and summer, many Vale wetlands were very dry, with little or no surface water at the beginning of October; the major exception was Ripple Lake and the other Worcestershire gravel pits, where many water birds were concentrated. It was a very dry autumn, with water levels only beginning to rise in the second half of December and absolutely no autumn flooding. Water levels barely increased in October, and only rose very slowly in the first half of November. Slight rise in Severn level at Haw Bridge to 7.97m (the first time this level had been reached since spring) on 24 - 25 November, 8.37m on 29 November, then dropping until 9 December (down to 7.20m) despite big spring tides in the first week of December. Severn levels continued low (below 8 metres) at Haw Bridge during the period of frost and snow until 13 December, when a sharp increase began (to 9.41m on the morning of 15 December), peaking at 9.94m on the evening of 16 December, but then dropping back over the next week to 8.00m on 23 December, and 7.72m on 25 December. But with the Boxing Day snowfalls there was a sharp rise to 9.04m on 27 December, peaking on 28 December at 10.17m (at the same time the Avon was very high between Strensham and Bredon, with peaks at Bredon on 28 December), then falling back on 29 and 30 December (to 9.30m), but beginning to rise again on the evening of 31 December.

The dry conditions were very similar to autumn 2016, which had been very dry with low water levels apart from a brief rise (higher than in 2017) in late November.

Conditions at the main sites

#### Sites along the Severn

Ripple Lake: Both lakes full of water from October to December; most of the water birds in the Vales concentrated here until there was open water elsewhere from mid-December onwards.

Longdon Marsh: There was no flooding in the area north of Marsh Lane until the last few days of December; quite extensive flooding on 30 December. On the Worcs WT reserve at Hill Court Farm, there was only a small amount of water in the scrapes on 1 November, but following a freak storm there was extensive flooding going beyond the scrapes after Christmas.

Severn Ham, Tewkesbury: Completely dry in October and November, grazed by sheep and some cattle. Some surface water in mid-December, caused not by high river levels, but by the troublesome leak in the underground water main that crosses the Ham and which had already caused problems in the summer, and led to many people in the Tewkesbury area going without mains water for a few days in autumn.

Ashleworth/Hasfield Hams: Throughout October and November and into the first half of December, the area remained very dry, the only surface water being in the pools in the scrapes in the GWT reserve. Cattle were still grazing the GWT reserve and sheep were grazing on Hasfield Ham until early November. Regular pheasant and partridge shoots on the high ground behind the reserve, especially on Saturday mornings, caused disturbance to ducks on the reserve throughout the period. Water levels on the reserve began to rise, but only very slightly, as the Severn rose in the last few days of November. Small area of open water in the ice on reserve on 9 December, held in by boards inserted into the sluice in late November/early December.

Complete freeze-up from 10 to 12 December, only a small area of open water remaining on the scrape, water levels beginning to rise gradually, with thaw from 15 December. Water on GWT reserve much more extensive on 22 December; then another rise in water levels following the snowfalls over Christmas, with levels quite high on 30 December.

Coombe Hill: Throughout October and into the first week of November, the scrapes in the GWT reserve remained dry, but there was limited surface water on the Long Pool. Very gradual increase in water levels in the ditches in the last few days of November, scrapes still less than half full in the first ten days of December, but slightly more pronounced increase in water levels from 15 December as a thaw set in. Water levels quite high over Christmas, iced over in the days after Christmas; further rise by 30 December when almost the whole area in front of Grundon Hide was submerged.

Leigh and Cobney Meadows: Very dry through October and November and up to mid-December, with just a little water on the Cobney Meadows flight pond and the wildfowlers' scrape, though the Chelt continued to flow strongly. Extensive flooding on Cobney Meadows on 30 December, though the Chelt was not breaking its banks.

Minsterworth Ham: Dry until late December, light flooding on 29 December.

Walmore Common: No flooding in October, November or early December; just a few puddles on 25 December, but extensive flooding by 29 December. At Wilmer Common there was quite extensive flooding in late November and early December because a flap on the outlet to the Severn was jammed; still extensive flooding there on 29 December.

#### Sites along the Avon

Upham Meadow, Twynning: Very dry in early October, with cattle and sheep grazing.

### Overview of bird records

The very dry conditions governed bird observations until mid-December, with most water birds concentrated at Ripple. As soon as some surface water appeared in the last fortnight of the year, many more birds appeared at the traditional sites like Longdon Marsh, Ashleworth and Coombe Hill.

In October, with many wetlands still dry at the end of summer, water birds, especially geese and ducks, were concentrated at the few sites where there was still water, notably Ripple Lake, which held the majority of water birds, especially Wigeon, throughout the period, and where large flocks of Greylag and Canada Geese spent the day (though they did not roost there). Numbers of ducks rose only slowly in October with a couple of hundred Wigeon at Ripple, small numbers of Teal and a few Shoveler at Ashleworth and Coombe Hill. Few waders of note in October, mainly in Worcestershire, including the odd Little Stint and Ruff; a Spotted Redshank at Grimley on 9 November.

With dry conditions continuing into November and mid-December, there was little increase in goose or duck numbers at most of the Severn Vale wetlands; numbers of Teal and Wigeon remained in the low hundreds, except at Ripple which continued to hold the majority of water birds in the area. However, following two snowfalls in December, many other wetlands at last held some water, and Wigeon appeared to spread out from Ripple: ducks at Coombe Hill numbered a couple of thousand on 30 December, including about 80 Pintail, with a similar number of this species at Longdon Marsh, and over 160 at Ashleworth; this influx of Pintail was also registered at other sites in the last week of December; as in previous years, the question of where they had come from remains a mystery: surely not all from the Severn estuary?

There were few north-easterly winds in October or November, when winds were more often north westerly; so little to encourage influxes of birds from the Baltic or north-west Europe. The arrival of a Great Northern Diver at Ripple on the last day of the year was perhaps linked with the cold conditions.

After spring records of a first winter female American Wigeon from late February to early April at Grimley, another female (the same individual?) appeared in the Wigeon flock there from mid-October onwards. Similarly, after records of a male Green-Winged Teal at Ashleworth in the early months of the year, one was found in the same place on 27 December, and may again have been the same individual. Single Great White Egrets had been seen throughout the summer, mainly at Grimley or in the Tewkesbury area (along the Avon or at Ripple) and records continued into October at Grimley and November at Lower Moor; not clear how many birds involved.

The usual autumn increase in Stonechats. The many records of autumn passerine migrants passing over included an unusually high number of Hawfinches, apparently identified on call. A Penduline Tit appeared at Plock Court in the northern suburbs of Gloucester (the second county record, following the first record at Horsbere, a similar site nearby, also coincidentally managed by the City Council, two winters ago).

Ringling at Ashleworth continued into November, rather later than usual because of the dry conditions, but catches were small, 33 on 4 October, 36 on 1 November and 31 on 8 November, the last session.

Coverage of south Worcestershire is better in this report thanks to input of many records from Andy Warr.

#### Swans

Mute Swan: The wintering flock of 30 to 40 birds in south Worcestershire was mobile, moving from site to site.

Worcestershire: At Ripple the wintering flock of 31 on 8 October decreased to 30 (only five cygnets) on 14 October, 18 on 24 October, three on 19 November, only one remaining on 9 and 16 December, five on 30 December. At Longdon Marsh a flock of 12 round the pond north of Marsh Lane on 1 November; a flock of 44 on floodwater on 30 December had moved to the Worcs WT reserve on 31 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick ten on 8 October, 19 on 19 November.

At Ashleworth up to four recorded from 30 November to 9 December; two cygnets on 12 December were perhaps from the brood of eight at Coombe Hill; a single adult on 15 and 22 December. At Coombe Hill the pair with eight cygnets raised on the reserve were all together on 10 and 21 October, but afterwards the young birds moved away gradually; the eight cygnets were on their own on 7 November, the two parents with four cygnets, the other four cygnets separated from them, on 14 November; parents with two cygnets on 18 November, four cygnets on 3 December, five on 15 December; three on 9 December. At Leigh Meadows a pair on the Chelt on 7 October, 18 November and 9 December; on the latter date also two cygnets, perhaps from the Coombe Hill brood of eight. At Cobney Meadows two adults on floodwater on 30 December. At Horsbere three adults on 24 October, very aggressively attacking two unfortunate brown cygnets which flew in; three adults still there on 25 October, 15 and 26 November, an immature on 19 December. At Walmore the local breeding pair was still present with their five cygnets throughout November and on 29 December. At Wilmer Common one on 5 December. At Mitton a lone cygnet on 10 October, two adults on 13 November.

Whooper Swan: Several October observations of this species in both counties, just outside the Severn and Avon Vales proper. As has happened several times in recent autumns, the first birds have gone direct to the estuary, probably because inland sites were very dry,

Worcestershire: At Upton Warren three adults on 5 October departed to the north early in the morning of 6 October; an adult was seen over Lutley near Halesowen on 25 October and was thought to be the bird which arrived at Upton Warren on 26 October and stayed until the end of the year; it was joined by three more on 26 November which flew off to north-east in the afternoon. Near Redditch four flying east on 31 October. At Bromsgrove four flew south at midday on 19 November.

Seven (one cygnet) appeared in the Cotswold Water Park East (Pit 132 near Kempsford) on 28 October, one adult still present on 29 and 30 October.

At Slimbridge the first bird of the winter, an adult, appeared on the morning of 7 October; this bird had heavy iron stains on the head which made it easy to distinguish and was seen at Frampton Pools from 15 October until the end of the year, making occasional visits to Slimbridge (on 7 November and 18 December). A pair occurred at Slimbridge on 6 November, joined by the Frampton bird on 7 November; three adults seen in flight over the estuary at Berkeley Shore on 9 December were presumably these three. An unusually large flock of eleven appeared briefly at Slimbridge on 14 November, possibly birds seen the day before in South Wales, but were chased off by the resident Mute Swans.

At Walmore a family of four (including two cygnets) flew in at 09h45 on 19 November, probably the same family was at Slimbridge overnight on 19/20 November, then back at Walmore on 22 November, and at Wilmer on 29 November; one of the adults seems to have come to grief after this date as only a single adult with two cygnets was at Wilmer on 5 December and then back at Walmore on 29 December. A group of three adults and two cygnets were on floodwater at the Leigh Meadows on 29 December, apparently different from the Slimbridge and Walmore birds.

Bewick's Swan: No records at all away from Slimbridge until late December, and then the only record was of four flying west over Evesham on 22 December, presumably on their way to Slimbridge; hardly surprising given the dry conditions. At Slimbridge the first bird of the year, a yearling, did not arrive until 8 November; three more (a pair and another yearling) on 13 November; total of 17 on 27 November when the first family party arrived; by 15 December 65 were present including three families; by 18 December 70 birds including eight cygnets in three family parties; 92 by the end of the year.

#### Geese

Greylag Goose: Worcestershire: Until mid-December, most Greylags concentrated at Ripple during the day, though they did not roost there overnight, generally arriving in the early morning. From mid-December, as flooding began away from Ripple, they began to appear in larger numbers elsewhere.

At Ripple 436 on 8 October, 475 coming in from south (perhaps from a roost at Kemerton?) on 14 October; at least 355 on 24 October; 523 on 4 November, only 44 on 19 November, 410 on 9 December, 300 on 12 December, 471 coming in from north on 16 December, only 97 on 30 December. At Longdon Marsh two with swans and Canada Geese on 1 November. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick 56 on 8 October, 172 on 19 November.

At Ashleworth none had roosted in the early mornings of 1 or 8 November; two were present on 30 November; 22 on 2 December, 16 on 22 December, six on 24 December. At Coombe Hill those recorded roosting at night in September continued to do so in early October, but not late October when they seemed to be roosting at Ripple: 29 flew out over Cobney Meadows early in the morning of 7 October, leaving 50 at Coombe Hill; 260 grazing by day on 21 October; none on 7 or 14 November, just three in a large flock of grazing Canada Geese on 18 November, none in late November or the first half of December; then with rising flood levels, at least 50

on 26 December; 300 on 30 December. Along the Avon at Upham Meadow three with Canadas on 10 October.

Bar-headed Goose: At Coombe Hill one on 26 December.

Canada Goose: No colour-ringed birds found this autumn, unlike previous years when a number of birds marked with colour rings at moult sites in the Lake District had been observed.

Worcestershire: Like Greylags, concentrating at Ripple from early October to mid-December, with occasional forays to Coombe Hill by some flocks. In general, keeping quite separate from Greylags, which seem to dominate them in the choice of the best grazing areas.

Definitely not roosting at Ripple either: 494 on 8 October, 520 coming in from north on 14 October; 750 on 22 October, at least 850 on 24 October, 600 on 4 November, 251 on 9 December, 314 on 16 December, 218 on 30 December. At Longdon Marsh, a flock of 15 round the pool north of Marsh Lane on 1 November. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick 52 on 8 October, 194 on 19 November.

At Ashleworth none at all had roosted on early morning of 1 November, a single bird on 8 November, ten on 18 November, two on 20 November, 78 on 30 November; 220 on 2 December, none on 9 or 12 December, just three on 22 December, 66 on 24 December. At Coombe Hill 48 which had roosted early in the morning on 7 October; none by day on 10 October, just seven on 21 October; none by day in early November, but a grazing flock of 125 on 18 November; none on 26 November or 3 December, but 80 grazing at the edges of rising floodwater on 15 December, 340 on 26 December, 450 on 30 December. At Leigh Meadows two over, probably coming from Barrow Ponds on 9 December. At Walmore 126 on 29 December. Along the Avon at Upham Meadow 200 on 10 October.

Barnacle Goose: All the following records may refer to a single individual, apparently paired to a Canada Goose.

Worcestershire: At Ripple one with Canadas on 14, 22 and 24 October (apparently paired with a Canada on the latter date), no doubt the bird seen at Ripple and Barrow Ponds in late September.

At Ashleworth one with Canadas on 2 December. At Coombe Hill one with Canadas on 30 December.

At Witcombe Reservoir near Gloucester one, perhaps paired with a Canada, on 25 October may have been the same individual. If so, they are clearly ranging quite widely.

Feral and Hybrid Geese: Worcestershire: At Ripple one Canada x Greylag hybrid with Greylags on 14 October.

A striking Canada x Greylag hybrid with a white vertical stripe on the black nape at Ashleworth on 2 December and at Coombe Hill on 30 December, probably the bird seen at Ripple on 12 September. At Coombe Hill a striking White Farmyard Goose x Canada Goose on 21 October. A familiar White Farmyard Goose with black flecks (seen in previous winters) at Coombe Hill on 18 November.

Egyptian Goose: At Mitton the familiar pair on 10 October.

#### Ducks

Shelduck: As usual, became more numerous towards the end of the year, particularly when floodwater appeared.

Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh one on floodwater on 30 December.

At Ashleworth two on 30 November were the first of the winter, two on 22 December. At Coombe Hill five on 4 December, two on 9 December, two (both males) on 15 December, four on 26 December,

five on 30 December. At Walmore nine on 29 December. At Wilmer Common seven on 5 December, three on 13 and 25 December.

#### Surface-feeding ducks:

Wigeon: With dry conditions everywhere, most Wigeon concentrated at Ripple, where there is abundant grazing for them and geese on the island and around the edges of the south lake, especially at the south end. They only began to spread to other sites after rises in water levels from mid-December.

Worcestershire: At Grimley 70 on 16 October, about 100 on 23 October; ten on 27 November. At Ripple numbers rose from 180 on 2 October to 800 on 28 October, 736 on 18 November, then 1500 on 16 and 22 December, dropping to 700 on 23 December and only 435 on 30 December, presumably as birds made an exodus to other sites that were now flooded. At Longdon Marsh 120 on floodwater on 30 December; on the Worcs WT reserve 36 on 22 December, 55 on 30 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick ten on 19 November.

At Ashleworth only small numbers in October (maximum 23 on 9 October) and November (maximum 50 on 30 November); in early December 65 on 2 December, down to only four in icy conditions on 12 December, but as waters began to rise on 35 on 15 December and 177 on 24 December. At Coombe Hill four, first of the winter, on 21 October, November maximum of 35 on 26 November; 90 on 4 December, 34 on 22 December, then a sharp increase to 650 on 26 December and at least 1065 on 30 December. At Horsbere one on 11 November, a male on 15 and 26 November (maybe injured – same bird?); three on 15 December, one on 18 December, two on 19 December. At Netheridge Farm where the species is unusual, a female on 2 and 8 October. At Walmore one on 10 December, then 215 in light flooding on 29 December. At Wilmer 80 on 5 December, but 1200 on 25 December.

American Wigeon: Worcestershire: At Grimley where there had been a first-winter female from late February until early April this year, a female with the flock of Eurasian Wigeon from 16 October until the end of the year.

Gadwall: Worcestershire: Recorded in small numbers throughout the period at Ripple with an October maximum of five, highest counts in November and December two. No records from other sites.

All Gloucestershire records in December: at Ashleworth singletons on 15 and 22 December, four on 26 December, ten on 31 December. At Coombe Hill three on 30 December. At Walmore nine on 29 December. At Wilmer Common 12 on 25 December.

Teal: Ripple, with its open water and limited cover, is less suitable for Teal than for Wigeon, so this species tended to concentrate in areas with thicker cover like Longdon Marsh WWT reserve, Coombe Hill or Ashleworth. Even so, there was a sharp increase (which can't have come from Ripple – perhaps from the estuary?), as soon as water levels rose in December.

Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh at least 100 on floodwater, plus 348 north of Marsh Lane on 30 December; at Worcs WT reserve 120 on 30 October, 75 on 22 December. At Ripple 16 on 2 October, 34 on 24 October, 41 on 19 November, 206 on 16 December, 106 on 22 December, only 21 on 30 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick one on 19 November.

At Ashleworth Ham present throughout the period but much more numerous in late December: October maximum of 66 on 7 October, November maximum of 80 on 30 November; in December 310 on 9 December, 196 round a hole in the ice on 12 December, 290 on 15 December, 137 on 24 December. At Coombe Hill where they were present in pretty stable numbers throughout the period, mainly in the Long Pool which is surrounded by willows and retained some shallow water throughout, with monthly maxima of 160 on 21

October and 155 on 7 November; increase to 280 on 3 December, 250 on 9 December, then with extensive floodwater 800 on 30 December. At Leigh Meadows five on 18 November, four on 9 December. At Horsbere two on 11 November, four (two pairs) on 15 November, four on 15 December, one on 18 December. At Netheridge Farm seven on 8 October. At Minsterworth Ham eight on 23 December. At Walmore 13 on 9 October, 35 on 11 November, 48 on 10 December, but (with some floodwater) 340 on 29 December. At Wilmer (where there was some surface throughout because of a blocked drain) at least 200 on 29 November, as many as 580 on 5 December, only 20 on 13 December, 80 on 25 December. Along the Avon at Mitton five on 13 November.

Green-winged Teal: At Ashleworth Ham, where a male had been recorded from 27 February to 2 April, a male (perhaps the same individual returning to winter?) reappeared on 27, 29 and 31 December.

Mallard: Worcestershire: At Ripple monthly maxima of 15 on 14 October, 16 on 19 November and 56 on 16 December, 26 on 30 December. At Longdon 60 by the pool north of Marsh Lane on 1 November, 70 on Worcs WT reserve on 30 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick 38 on 8 October, 132 on 19 November.

At Ashleworth monthly maxima of 13 on 7 October, 40 on 30 November and 95 on 29 December. At Coombe Hill monthly maxima of 42 on 7 October, ten on 18 and 26 November and 25 on 4 December. At Cobney Meadows ten on 7 October. At Leigh Meadows seven on 7 October, four on 18 November, 14 on 9 December. At Horsbere 80 early in the morning of 24 October, only 14 by day on 25 October; it seems they move by day to nearby Barnwood Park where they are fed by local residents; 49 on 11 November, five on 15 December, two on 18 December. At Minsterworth 48 on 19 November. At Walmore four on 19 November, 150 on 29 December. At Wilmer 20 on 29 November, 70 on 13 December.

Pintail: Numbers only very small in October and November (and Ripple with its broad open waters is not very suitable for this species), but an influx occurred as soon as there was any flooding elsewhere in the last week of December.

Worcestershire: At Grimley a female on 16 October, a drake on 7 November. At Clifton three over on 31 December. At Longdon Marsh 79 on 30 December, as soon as any floodwater appeared there, but only two on 31 December; at Worcs WT Longdon reserve 11 on 31 December. At Ripple one on 14 October, eleven flew in on 16 December, perhaps disturbed by shooters from Ashleworth; four on 30 December. At Lower Moor three in flight with Wigeon flock on 29 December. At Kemerton Lake a drake on 17 October. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 30 December.

At Ashleworth a female and a drake on 20 November, five on 30 November, then 21 on 2 December, less than ten on several dates in mid-December, but at least 37 on 24 December and 163 on 26 December, 53 on 29 December. At Coombe Hill the first three of the winter on 26 November, one on 3 December, 13 on 4 December, seven on 26 December, increase to 80 in high flood on 30 December. At Walmore 30 on 29 December. At Wilmer 15 on 25 December.

Showeler: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh 17 on floodwater on 30 December: at Worcs WT Longdon reserve one on 30 December, six on 31 December. At Ripple up to 12 on many dates in October, up to nine on many dates in November, up to 12 in December.

At Ashleworth 18 on 9 October was the monthly maximum, three on 30 November, eleven on 24 December. At Coombe Hill where they kept company with the Teal in the Long Pool throughout the period, monthly maxima were: ten on 28 October, 12 on 7 November and 20 in more extensive floodwater on 30 December. At Walmore 50 on

25 December. At Wilmer 14 on 5 December, two on 13 December, 27 on 25 December.

#### Diving ducks:

Pochard: All records from Worcestershire, mainly Ripple.

Worcestershire: At Ripple 47 on 8 October, 51 on 20 October, 60 on 22 October, 35 on 24 October, five on 2 December, 13 on 16 December, 14 on 30 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick two on 19 November.

Tufted Duck: Once again, most records from Ripple, few noted in Gloucestershire.

Worcestershire: At Ripple 153 on 8 October, 140 on 14 October, 26 on 19 November, 52 on 16 December, 42 on 30 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick three on 8 October, 72 on 19 November.

At Coombe Hill two on floodwater on 30 December.

Pochard x Tufted hybrid: Worcestershire: At Ripple the female noted in August was seen on 20 and 22 October; same individual as last winter?

Goldeneye: Worcestershire: At Grimley one or two females practically every day from 4 December until the end of the year. At Ripple an adult female on 2 December, a female on 30 December.

Goosander: Worcestershire: at Ripple a female roosted on 22 December.

#### Divers and Grebes

Great Northern Diver: Worcestershire: At Ripple a juvenile on 31 December.

Little Grebe: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 8 October, one or two from 9 December until the end of the year.

At Horsbere two on 12 October. a juvenile on 25 October; one on 16 December. Along the Avon one above Tewkesbury on 20 December.

Great Crested Grebe: Recorded on deeper waters, mainly in Worcestershire.

Worcestershire: At Ripple present throughout the period with monthly maxima of 12 on 8 October, five on 19 November and seven on 9 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick two on 8 October, five on 19 November.

Only record in Gloucestershire was one on the Severn at Deerhurst on 1 November.

#### Cormorant

Cormorant: As usual, big numbers in early October, perhaps reflecting through passage.

Worcestershire: At Ripple 101 on 8 October, 82 on 14 October; 15 on 24 October, 33 on 4 November, only two on 19 November, seven on 16 December, five on 30 December. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick four on 8 October and 19 November.

At Ashleworth two on 22 and 24 December. At Coombe Hill one landed on Long Pool and ten flew over to the north on 18 November; five on 4 December. Along the Avon at Upham Meadow one in flight on 10 October.

### Hérons and Egrets

Little Egret: Worcestershire: Present throughout the period at Ripple, with maxima of six on 14 October, three on 4 and 19 November and singles all through December.

At Horsbere singles on 11 November and 15 and 19 December. At Plock Court one on 19 December. At Port Ham one on 24 November.

Great White Egret: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) the bird noted in late September was sighted on several occasions in October until 20 October. At Lower Moor one on 14, 16 and 17 November (at dusk).

Cattle Egret: After several records in the Severn Vales of two birds in the earlier part of the year, two birds recorded in the Slimbridge area in November may have been the same individuals.

Grey Heron: Worcestershire: At Ripple present throughout the period, maximum three on 8 October. At Longdon Marsh one on 1 November. Along the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick one on 19 November.

At Ashleworth present throughout, maximum three on 20 November. At Coombe Hill present in larger numbers: October maximum twelve on 10 October, November maximum 16 on 14 November, December maximum nine on 3 December. At Cobney Meadows one on 7 October and 9 December. At Leigh Meadows two on 7 October, one on 9 December. At Horsbere present throughout the period, maximum three on 15 November.

### Raptors

Red Kite: At Coombe Hill one on 8 November.

Marsh Harrier: Worcestershire: At Grimley an adult female on 25 November roosted in willows by the main lake, seen again on the morning of 26 November when it flew off to north at 09h00; one at Upton Warren on 27 November was perhaps the same bird?

Sparrowhawk: Worcestershire: at Longdon Marsh one by the pool north of Marsh Lane on 1 November.

At Ashleworth Ham an immature male netted on 4 October as it chased Meadow Pipits. At Coombe Hill singles on 8 and 18 November and 4 December. At Cobney Meadows a female hunting on 21 October. At Horsbere one on 12 November, a female on 15 November, one on 19 December. At Port Ham one on 26 November. At Walmore two on 26 November. At Wilmer one on 29 November and 5 December.

Buzzard: Worcestershire: At Ripple two on 14 October.

At Ashleworth one on 12 December. At Coombe Hill one on 3 December, perched in trees overlooking the Long Pool and eyeing up the ducks. At Cobney Meadows one on 21 October. At Leigh Meadows one on 18 November. At Horsbere one on 15 November. At Twynning one on 1 October.

Osprey: Worcestershire: at Lower Moor one at midday on 4 October.

Kestrel: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 14 October. At Longdon Marsh one on 1 November.

At Ashleworth two on 12 December. At Coombe Hill one on 7 October, one hunting on 10 October, one on 4 December. At Horsbere one on 19 December. At Port Ham one or two on many dates from late November until the end of December.

Merlin: Worcestershire: At Holt Heath a male on 31 October. At Lower Moor a female on 3 November. At John Bennett a female on 12 and 25 October. Over Bredon Hill one on 12 November.

At Wilmer a female or immature on 29 November.

Peregrine: At Tewkesbury one on the abbey tower on 29 November. At Ashleworth one catching a large prey item on 8 November. Close to Horsbere one hunting on 11 October, two on 12 November. At Walmore a female on 19 and 26 November, an adult on 29 December. At Wilmer Common an adult on 25 December.

### Rails and Crakes

Water Rail: Worcestershire: At Ripple, one on 19 November; one calling from Bow Farm near Ripple on 16 December.

At Coombe Hill one on 9 December. At Horsbere three on 19 December. At Port Ham singles on 13, 19 and 26 November and 15 December. At Walmore one calling at dusk on 14 November.

Moorhen: Worcestershire: at Ripple five on 8 October, two on 19 November. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 8 October, nine on 19 November, one on 9 December.

At Ashleworth two on 22 December. At Coombe Hill at least six on 10 October, ten on 28 October, three on 26 November, 11 on 4 December. At Leigh Meadows one on 9 December. At Horsbere at least ten on 24 October, 14 on 15 November, four on 26 November, minimum of two on 15 December.

Coot: Yet another species for which Ripple acted as a reservoir in dry conditions.

Worcestershire: At Ripple 180 on 8 October, 61 on 19 November, 60 on 9 December, 71 on 30 December. By the Avon at Bredon's Hardwick 16 on 8 October, 93 on 19 November.

At Coombe Hill singles on 18 and 26 November, two on 4 December. At Horsbere four on 24 October, seven on 15 November, six on 26 November, seven on 15 December.

### Waders

A few late southward-bound migrants in early October, mainly at Worcestershire gravel pits, but because of the dry conditions, few records of wintering waders, not even Lapwings. Some records of Golden Plover, mainly in Worcestershire and on agricultural land.

Oystercatcher: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 18 November, a most unseasonable date.

Ringed Plover: Worcestershire: at Ripple a juvenile, no doubt a migrant, on 5 and 8 October

Golden Plover: Worcestershire: at Ryall 50 in fields along the A38 on 11 October, 543 on a grass field south of the pits on 25 November, 250 on 7 December, 25 on 9 December. At Longdon Marsh 12 over on 30 December when the first floodwater appeared. Along the Avon at Lower Moor 180 on 3 November, 368 on 16 November, at least 120 on 17 November.

The only Gloucestershire record was of 11 on 13 December at Wilmer near the estuary.

Lapwing: Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh (Worcs WT reserve) four on 22 December; at least 700 on floodwater on 30 December had moved to the reserve on 31 December. At Ripple one on 19 November, 365 on 22 December, 670 on 30 December. Along the Avon at John Bennett a large flock on 20 October; at Bredon's Hardwick six on 8 October.

No records at all in the Gloucestershire sector of the Vales from October and November, no doubt reflecting the dry conditions. At Ashleworth two on 2 December; a noisy flock of 110 (new arrivals with rising water levels?) on 15 December, 65 on 22 December, 120 on 24 December, 162 on 26 December. At Staunton 100 on a ploughed field on 25 December. At Coombe Hill two on 30 December. At Cobney Meadows 50+ on flooded grassland on 30 December. At Wilmer 250 on 13 December.

Little Stint: Worcestershire: at Grimley where a juvenile had been seen on several dates in late September, another juvenile from 16 to 20 October. At Kemerton Lake one on 14 December, an unusually late date.

Dunlin: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 2 December.

Ruff: Worcestershire: At Grimley (Camp Lane) up to five from 2 to 5 October, and a singleton from 1 to 4 November. Along the Avon at Lower Moor, up to six juveniles noted on the pools since 11 September remained through the first half of October: four on 1 October, five on 3 October, three on 7 and 15 October, one on 22 October. At John Bennett two with Lapwings on 20 October.

Jack Snipe: At Quedgeley one on 20 December was the only record.

Snipe: Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits 20 on 19 November. At Ripple one on 19 November, two on 9 December, one on 16 December. At Bredon's Hardwick three on 19 November.

Only small numbers recorded in Gloucestershire, no doubt because of the dry hard ground, then freezing conditions in early December (unlike November/December 2016, when there were up to 50 at Ashleworth). Perhaps they had moved to the estuary? At Ashleworth maxima of five in October and November; three on 2 December, two on 9 December, none in icy conditions on 12 December, nor after thaw on 15 December, but 11 on 22 December, 13 on 26 December, 12 huddled together on the ice on 27 December. At Coombe Hill three on 9 and 10 October, two on 28 October; many blank days in November and the first half of December, but two on 14 November and one on 18 November; no December records. At Leigh Meadows singles on 7 October, 18 November, 9 December. At Cobney Meadows one on 21 October. At Horsbere two on 19 October, singles on 15 and 26 November, five on 12 December, three on 15 December, two on 18 December, one on 19 December, two on 29 December. At Walmore six on 9 October, seven on 5 November, ten on 11 and 14 November, eleven on 19 November, eight on 10 December. At Wilmer one on 29 November. Along the Avon at Cowfield Marsh one flushed on 25 October. At Mitton one on 13 November.

Woodcock: At Forthampton one flushed on 7 November. At Hasfield one at dusk on 16 December.

Black-tailed Godwit: Worcestershire: at Lower Moor one on 17 November.

Spotted Redshank: Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 9 November.

Greenshank: Worcestershire: At Grimley one on 9 and 19 October

Green Sandpiper: Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits one on 7 October. Wintering at Ripple with singles on many dates in October, two on 18 November, and two on several dates in December. At Bredon's Hardwick one on 8 October.

At Coombe Hill the only record was of a single on 21 October. At Leigh Meadows one along the Chelt on 7 October and 18 November, with one (maybe two) on 9 December. At Netheridge Farm, Hempsted, singles on 2 October and 5 December.

Common Sandpiper: Worcestershire: Two wintering at Ripple, when most birds of this species winter in southern Europe or Africa:

singles on 2 and 8 October, two on 28 October and 11 November; singles on 18 November and 2 December; two on 9 and 23 December, one on 30 and 31 December.

At Coombe Hill two on 9 October.

#### Gulls and Terns

Little Gull: Worcestershire: At Lower Moor one briefly on river flash on 22 October.

Black-headed Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple six on 8 October, 20 on 14 October, 14 on 9 December. At Bredon's Hardwick 42 on 8 October, 49 on 19 November.

At Ashleworth 102 on 22 December. At Coombe Hill 20 on 14 and 18 November. At Cobney Meadows 50 on floodwater on 30 December. t Horsbere 15 on 24 October, 25 on 26 November, 31 on 15 December, 30 on 18 December.

Common Gull: Worcestershire: At Clifton Pits one on 7 October. At Ripple an adult on 2 and 8 October. At Bredon's Hardwick two on 8 October.

At Horsbere one on 15 December.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple five on 14 October; 50 adults on 24 October. At Bredon's Hardwick three on 8 October.

At Cobney Meadows 15 on floodwater on 30 December. At Horsbere three on 18 December.

Herring Gull: Worcestershire: At Ripple 20 adults on 24 October. At Bredon's Hardwick 11 on 8 October.

At Coombe Hill 30 in fields on 18 November. At Horsbere one on 26 November, 17 on 15 December.

Yellow-legged Gull: Worcestershire: At Clifton, one in gull roost in late afternoon of 30 October.

Great Black-backed Gull: At Ripple one flew over on 22 December.

Common Tern: Worcestershire: At Ripple a late juvenile made a long stay from 5 to 14 October.

#### Owls

Barn Owl: At The Mythe, Tewkesbury, one on 12 December. At Staunton one on 28 December. At Maisemore one on 13 December. At Port Ham one hunting at dusk on 26 November and 19 December. At Farley's End near Elmore one on 25 and 27 December. At Walmore one hunting at dusk on 14 November

Little Owl: At Ashleworth Ham one calling early on 4 October. At Coombe Hill one calling on 6 October, one on 8 November. At Minsterworth Ham one on 9 October and 29 December.

Tawny Owl: At Ashleworth Ham one or two calling early on 4 October.

Short-eared Owl: Worcestershire: At Lower Moor one briefly on 16 November.

#### Kingfisher

Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 16 December.

At Haw Bridge one on 15 October. At Horsbere one on 12 and 19 October and on 11 November. At Plock Court one on 22 December. Along the Avon above Tewkesbury two on 2 October; one on Mill



Avon on 25 November and 1 December. At Walmore one on 11 November.

### Passerines

Skylark: Worcestershire: At Ripple five, one singing, on 14 October.

At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, one or two and a little song on 28 October. At Ashleworth Ham five (no song) on 4 October, two or three on 1 and 8 November; on 12 December none on snowy ground, but five flew over to the southwest. At Coombe Hill ten (no song) on 10 October, two or three over (no song) on 28 October; five (one singing timidly) on 7 November, two on 14 and 18 November. At Leigh Meadows five on 7 October. At Walmore 18 in the snow on 10 December. Along the Avon at Upham Meadow four over on 10 October.

Swallow: At Ashleworth Ham the last one on 4 October.

Meadow Pipit: Worcestershire: At Ripple five on 14 October.

At Ashleworth Ham only light passage on 4 October, when seven (an adult and six immatures) were caught; passage light again on 1 November, when seven (two adults) were caught; ten feeding along the edge of rising floodwater on 30 November; three on 9 December, one on 12 December, 18 on 29 December. At Coombe Hill five on 6 October, ten on 10 October; two on 7 November, five on 14 November, two on 18 and 26 November, and on 3 December. At Cobney Meadows twenty on 7 October. At Leigh Meadows one on 18 November. At Horsbere seven on 15 November, 22 on 19 December, four on 18 December. At Plock Court one on 18 and 26 December. At Walmore 15 on 5 November, 25 on 14 November, two on 26 November, eight on 10 December. At Wilmer 14 on 13 December.

Rock Pipit: Worcestershire: At Clifton one on 22 October.

Grey Wagtail: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 25 November.

At Coombe Hill one on 18 November. At Horsbere one on 15 November.

Pied Wagtail: At Ashleworth 13 on 30 November, 30 feeding along the edge of rising floodwater on 30 November, 11 on edge of rising waters on 15 December, 25 on 24 December. At Plock Court 25 on 26 December. At Horsbere two on 18 December. At Wilmer 15 feeding along edge of floodwater on 5 December.

Wren: At Ashleworth Ham four immatures caught on 4 October, three juveniles caught on 1 November, one juvenile retrap on 8 November.

Dunnoek: At Ashleworth one juvenile retrap caught on 1 November.

Robin: At Ashleworth Ham some song, one immature retrapped on 4 October; two juveniles caught on 1 November.

Black Redstart: At Tewkesbury Abbey (where one was seen last winter) one first photographed by the Peregrine camera on 21 November, there again on 25 November.

Stonechat: Good numbers moving in to winter, especially along hedges and ditches.

Worcestershire: At Longdon Marsh Worcs WT reserve two on 31 December. At Ripple four on 25 November, one on 9 December, four on 16 December, two on 23 and 30 December.

At Ashleworth a male and a female on 15 and 18 October; an immature female caught on 1 November; a male on 6 and 30 November; a female on the Hasfield side on 12 December, three on 16 December, a male on 22 December. At Coombe Hill present

throughout the period with maxima of six on 9 October, and five on 7 November (and two pairs on 14 and 26 November), with two females on 3 and 17 December and a pair on 4 December. At Cobney Meadows two on 9 December. At Horsbere ones and two observed throughout the period, with four on 12 December and three on 19 December. At Plock Court a pair on 24 December, one on 26 December. At Alney Island a pair on 24 and 26 November, and five on 19 December. At Lower Rea, Quedgeley, four on 20 December. At Walmore two on 9 October, six on 11 November, a female on 26 November, two on 10 December. At Wilmer a male on 5 December. Along the Avon at Upham Meadow one on 10 October.

Wheatear: At Coombe Hill a last record on 25 October.

Fieldfare: At Deerhurst 40 on 1 November. At Ashleworth 20 on 14 November. At Coombe Hill 40 flew over on 28 October; many in hawthorns on 6 November, 15 flew over on 7 November, "hundreds" on 8 November, 150 (some going over to northwest in migrant flocks) on 14 November, about 50 on 18 November, ten on 26 November; 40 on 3 December; 20 feeding on grass (sign of increasing water levels pushing invertebrates to surface) on 15 December; six feeding on wet grassland on 30 December. At Minsterworth Ham 165 on 23 December. At Wilmer 200+ on 29 November, 450 on 13 December.

Redwing: Worcestershire: At Ripple 20 flew over to the west on 24 October. At Longdon 30 flew north-westwards on 1 November.

At Ashleworth Ham five on 18 October; eight on 6 November; good numbers came to a tape lure on 8 November, when 26 (four adults and 22 birds of the year) were caught, one of them carrying a Belgian ring; 20 on 9 December. At Coombe Hill six flew over to southwest (first of winter here) on 21 October, 15 over on 28 October; at least five on 2 November; 25 apparently roosting on the morning of 7 November, "hundreds" on 8 November, 50 (some going over to northwest in migrant flocks) on 14 November, about 40 on 18 November, 20 on 26 November; 15 on 3 December; 30 feeding on grass with Redwings on 15 December. At Horsbere two on 11 November. At Plock Court a male on 19 December. At Quedgeley 14 flew over on 23 October. At Wilmer 190 on 13 December. At Cowfield Marsh two on 25 October.

Cetti's Warbler: At Port Ham one calling on 13 and 26 November, two on 15 December, one on 19 December. At Netheridge Farm where this species is rarely recorded, one singing on 8 October. At Walmore one calling on 5 November.

Sedge Warbler: Worcestershire: At Ripple a late bird on 2 October.

Blackcap: At Tewkesbury one in a garden on 27 November. At Ashleworth a female caught on 1 November. At Coombe Hill a female seen on 2 November, a male along the canal on 8 November, a female on 26 December.

Chiffchaff: Worcestershire: At Ripple two juveniles calling on 14 October; short burst of song on 24 October; eight on 19 November, two on 2 December.

At Ashleworth Ham a few juveniles calling, just one caught, on 4 October. At Coombe Hill one juvenile calling on 6 October, one singing on 10 October, one on 26 December. At Cobney Meadows one juvenile calling on 7 October. At Horsbere one on 12 October, 11 November, 12 December. At Castle Meads up to three from 24 November to 19 December.

Siberian Chiffchaff (subspecies): Following regular records last winter, one at Castle Meads with a nominate race Chiffchaff on 24 November.

Goldcrest: At Ashleworth Ham one caught on 4 October, and on 1 and 8 November.

Long-tailed Tit: At Severn Ham, Tewkesbury, ten on 28 October. At Coombe Hill flock of 20 on 30 December.

Blue Tit: At Ashleworth Ham one juvenile caught on 4 October; two retraps (one adult) on 1 November.

Great Tit: At Ashleworth Ham two immatures caught on 4 October; two (one adult) caught on 1 November; one adult retrap on 8 November.

Penduline Tit: At Plock Court, a small wetland created and managed by the Gloucester City Council in the northern suburbs of Gloucester, one feeding on reed mace every day from 16 to 31 December. The bird had been ringed in the Channel Islands on 28 October 2017 as a first calendar year bird (ring read from photographs!). This is the second county record (the first having been at nearby Horsbere, also – coincidentally - managed by the City Council two winters ago, and also on reed mace).

Nuthatch: At Ashleworth two on 7 October, 6 and 20 November, 2 and 22 December.

Raven: Worcestershire: At Ripple one on 24 October.

At Ashleworth Ham singles on 4 October and 1 November, two on 22 December. At Leigh Meadows two flew over on 9 December. At Walmore two on 19 November. At Wilmer four on 29 December. Along the Avon at Twynning two on 1 October.

Starling: At Coombe Hill 15 flew southwest on 10 October; flock of 40 in trees on 28 October; 20 feeding on grass with Fieldfares and Redwings on 15 December, four feeding on grass with Fieldfares on 30 December. At Cobney Meadows flock of 200 on flooded grassland on 30 December.

Hawfinch: BirdTrack notes a 'record influx' of Hawfinches into Britain in October 2017, twelve times higher than the historical average, though the origin is difficult to pinpoint. Both in Worcestershire and in Gloucestershire, there were many more records than usual in October and early November, generally of passing migrants.

Greenfinch: At Haw Bridge a flock of 50 in a maize field on 15 October.

Chaffinch: At Ashleworth three caught (two adults) on 1 November; flock of 100 on 9 December, only 20 in snowy conditions on 12 December.

Brambling: At Ashleworth three on 20 November, nine on 30 November; five on 2 December, three in flock of Chaffinches on 9 December, but none in snowy conditions on 12 December. At Walmore two flew north-east on 19 November.

Goldfinch: At Ashleworth Ham ten immatures (some still in post-juvenile body moult, hence very recently fledged) caught on 4 October; nine (mainly immatures, including one still in post-juvenile body moult) caught on 1 November; a single immature caught on 8 November. At Coombe Hill 20 on 6 October, flock of 80 on 10 October. At Cowfield Marsh 20 along Carrant Brook on 25 October.

Siskin: At Hasfield Ham nine on 15 October.

Linnet: At Coombe Hill 25 on 6 October. At Cobney Meadows four on 7 October. At Horsbere 30 on 15 November.

Bullfinch: At Ashleworth one juvenile caught on 1 November

Reed Bunting: Worcestershire: At Ryall Pits at least 20 on 19 November.

At Ashleworth Ham five immatures caught on 4 October, four seen on 15 October; only two (one adult) caught on 1 November, none seen, heard or caught on 8 November, suggesting that the vast majority had moved out of the lowest-lying parts of the Vales; none on 9 December, nor in snowy conditions on 12 December. At Coombe Hill two on 10 October, only one other record until the end of the year (a single bird on 26 November), despite regular observations. At Horsbere three on 11 November, four on 12 December, two on 15, 19 and 29 December. At Port Ham, however, there was clearly a night roost from late November: 12 roosting by pool on 13 November, 50 coming in to roost on 26 November, as many as 82 on 19 December. At Cowfield Marsh one in reed bed on 25 October.

The above are unconfirmed records, compiled by M. Smart from his own observations and those of Les Brown, with additional records from David Anderson, Gordon Avery, Andrew Godden, Mervyn Greening, Steve Heaven, Richard Humphrey, Andy Jayne, Julia Newth, Rob Prudden, Graham Smith, Andy Warr, 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.