

Ravens *Corvus corax* breeding in Worcestershire – 2024 update.

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The total of breeding pairs of Ravens *Corvus corax* in Worcestershire rose from 33 in 2023 to 37 in 2024, despite the abandonment of several well-established sites.

Better reporting to provide more robust data is a big factor and this year I am especially indebted to the Teme Valley Wildlife Group members for filling in some gaps around the Tenbury Wells area.

A national increase in Raven abundance and range is probably contributing to the rise locally and trends from the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) support this. BBS provides long-term population trends based on breeding season counts, provided by thousands of volunteers, and shows an increase of 29% in England over the past 27 years (1995-2022), but a massive 132% increase in the West Midlands for the same period. It is not unreasonable to assume that the Worcestershire population reflects these trends in the neighbouring area.

Over the past nine years of this survey, I have learned of 58 breeding sites within the county and no doubt others are waiting to be discovered. It seems that almost any place with the favoured nesting site of large mature conifers could hold Raven pairs. Human and urban environments are no deterrent, with about one half of the sites matching those descriptions; one nest is even in a railway station. Electricity pylons are still used (two this year), but strangely, I have found only one broadleaved tree nest (in Aston Somerville).

My totally unscientific guess is that the real number of breeding pairs is approaching 50 which would suggest a total Raven population of around 200 birds when the younger non-breeding birds are included.

The findings are detailed in the map and tables below and follow the same criteria as previous years. “Confirmed” breeding sites are where adults and the nest, or with young were observed. “Possible” breeding sites are where adults were displaying territorial behaviours at a suspected nest site or where a family was observed, but the nest was not located. A “confirmed” record does not imply successful breeding, as information on success or failure remains incomplete. The majority are my own observations but some have been reported by others who are mentioned in the acknowledgements section.

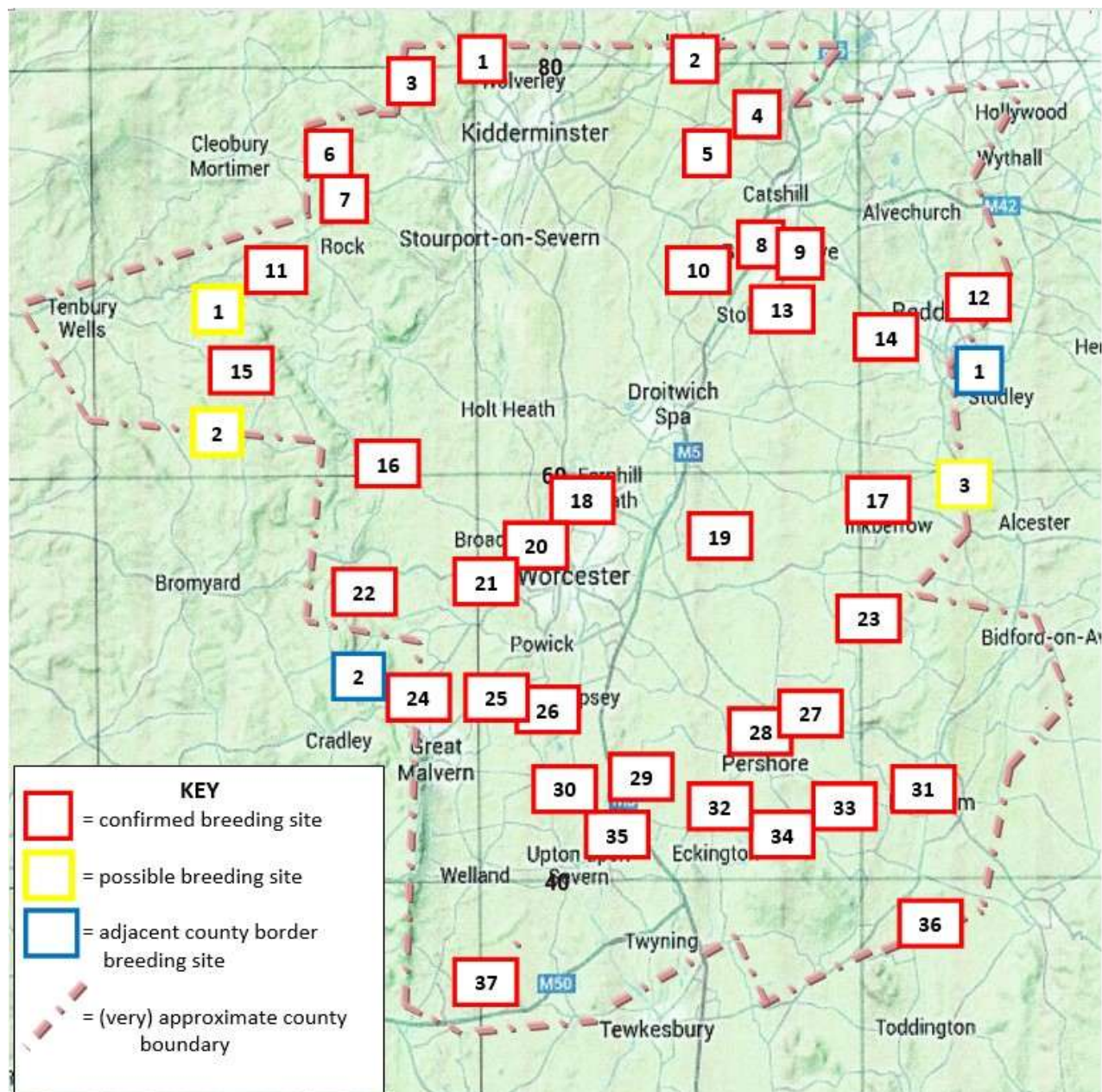
The map shows how the eastern half of the county is now populated as well as the west although a southern bias remains. Another changing feature is the spacing between nests and as the population expands the pairs seem to tolerate other pairs in close proximity. For example, two nests in Bromsgrove are less than 0.5 miles apart and both have successfully raised young.

Acknowledgements

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Worcestershire Confirmed Sites			
1.	Arley Wood	19.	Himbleton
2.	Hagley	20.	Worcester
3.	Upper Arley	21.	Crown East
4.	Romsley	22.	Alfrick
5.	Belbroughton	23.	Rous Lench
6.	Wyre Forest 1	24.	Cowleigh, Malvern
7.	Wyre Forest 2	25.	Madresfield
8.	Bromsgrove 1	26.	Clevedon
9.	Bromsgrove 2	27.	Wyre Piddle
10.	Timberhonger	28.	Pershore
11.	Frith Common	29.	Croome
12.	Redditch	30.	Rhydd
13.	Stoke Prior	31.	Evesham
14.	Webheath	32.	Birlingham
15.	Hanley William	33.	Crophorne
16.	Shelsey Beauchamp	34.	Bricklehampton
17.	Holberrow Green	35.	Hanley Castle
18.	Fernhill Heath	36.	Aston Somerville
		37.	Birtsmorton
Out-County Confirmed Sites			
1.	Studley	2.	Storrridge
Possible/Probable Sites			
1.	Eastham – a nesting site for many years. Adults present early in breeding season, but no confirmation seen.		
2.	Stoke Bliss – Fractionally in Herefordshire. Nest not located but adults seen and juvenile heard in woodland.		
3.	Coughton Park – Marginally in Warwickshire. Adults seen in last year’s nest site area but nest and juveniles not located.		

Table 01. Confirmed and possible Raven breeding sites – 2024. Refer to Map 01 below.



Map 01. 'Confirmed' and 'Possible' breeding Raven sites in Worcestershire – 2024
Details of the sites are shown in Table 01 above.

References

Heywood, J.J.N., Massimino, D., Balmer, D.E., Kelly, L., Marion, S., Noble, D.G., Pearce-Higgins, J.W., White, D.M., Woodcock, P., Wotton, S. & Gillings, S. 2024. *The Breeding Bird Survey 2023*. BTO Research Report 765. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford. Published by the British Trust for Ornithology, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, May 2024. Also available at: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/breeding-bird-survey-report/breeding-bird-survey-2023>)
Metcalf, M. Ravens *Corvus corax* breeding in Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* editions 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52.