

## Ravens (*Corvus corax*) breeding in Worcestershire – 2023 update

Mike Metcalf.  
mikebirder@hotmail.

Ravens *Corvus corax* were featured in Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's News late in 2022 when I made an appeal for readers' information and over 60 people responded. The result is a huge leap in the number of confirmed Raven breeding sites in Worcestershire from 15 in 2022 to 33 in 2023 (see table 01).

There were additional reports from marginally outside the county boundaries but all well within a mile, giving enough certainty that these pairs also inhabit Worcestershire. Even with these additions, experienced observers tell me that the true number is likely to be much higher. I agree but this is a good step forward.

The findings are detailed in the map and tables below and follow the same criteria as previous years (e.g. Metcalf 2022). "Confirmed" breeding sites are where adults were observed at the nest, or with young, and "possible" breeding sites are where adults were displaying territorial behaviour near 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 lack of records from the Tenbury Wells area (despite some searching) implies an absence of information and not an absence of Raven pairs or suitable habitats. As always, I would really welcome any observations from Worcestershire Record readers about possible nest sites.



01. Raven by Ray Bishop

### Timings

Ravens have a reputation for early breeding and Derek Ratcliffe confirmed this in his study "The Raven" (Ratcliffe 1997). This was immediately before the accelerated range expansion into lowland Britain: his records were drawn from the upland strongholds, often in Scotland and Wales where Ravens had clung on after their persecution, and associated declines through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My observations in Worcestershire suggest a rather later start and end dates in the breeding calendar. For example, Ratcliffe cites records of pairs at nest sites and nest building from the beginning of January, but my own observations are from early

February into March. Observations of young in the nest are from early March in Ratcliffe, but April in mine. Fledged young in the nest tree/site were recorded from early/mid-April in Ratcliffe, but late April in mine. Is this merely an artefact of my survey timetables, or a genuine shift in breeding behaviours as an adaptation to new habitats and resources? I would welcome any observations from Worcestershire Record readers to help me untangle this.

### Acknowledgements:

There are too many Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WWT) members to mention individually but their help this year has been invaluable. Special thanks go to Wendy Carter of WWT for inviting me to write about ravens and start the process. Jon Lingard provided me with details of several new sites he visited for the BTO's Nest Record Scheme and readers of this journal have again helped my survey. Grateful thanks to all.

Worcestershire Confirmed Sites			
1	Arley Wood	17	Crown East
2	Upper Arley	18	Alfrick
3	Calcot Hill	19	Clevedon
4	Belbroughton	20	Madresfield
5	Dodford	21	Cowleigh, Malvern
6	Bromsgrove	22	Wyre Piddle
7	Timberhonger	23	Pershore Station
8	Redditch	24	Pershore Church
9	Abberley	25	Croome
10	Stoke Prior	26	Evesham
11	Shrawley Wood	27	Crophorne
12	Shelsey Beauchamp	28	Birlingham
13	Fernhill Heath	29	Bricklehampton
14	Holberron Green	30	Hanley Castle
15	Himbleton	31	Bredon Hill
16	Worcester	32	Aston Somerville
		33	Birtsmorton
Out-Of-County Confirmed Sites			
1.	Rubery	3.	Coughton Park
2.	Studley	4.	Storrige

Table 01. Confirmed Raven breeding sites – 2023 – see map below.

1	Rous Lench	Two adults defending traditional site in May. Private grounds.
2	Kersoe	Two adults defending nest site in woodland from previous years in April. No public access.

Table 02. Possible Raven breeding sites – 2023 – see map below.

### References

Metcalf, M. 2022. Ravens *Corvus corax* breeding in Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* 49: pp6-8.  
Ratcliffe, D. 1997. *The Raven*. T. & A.D. Poyser, London.

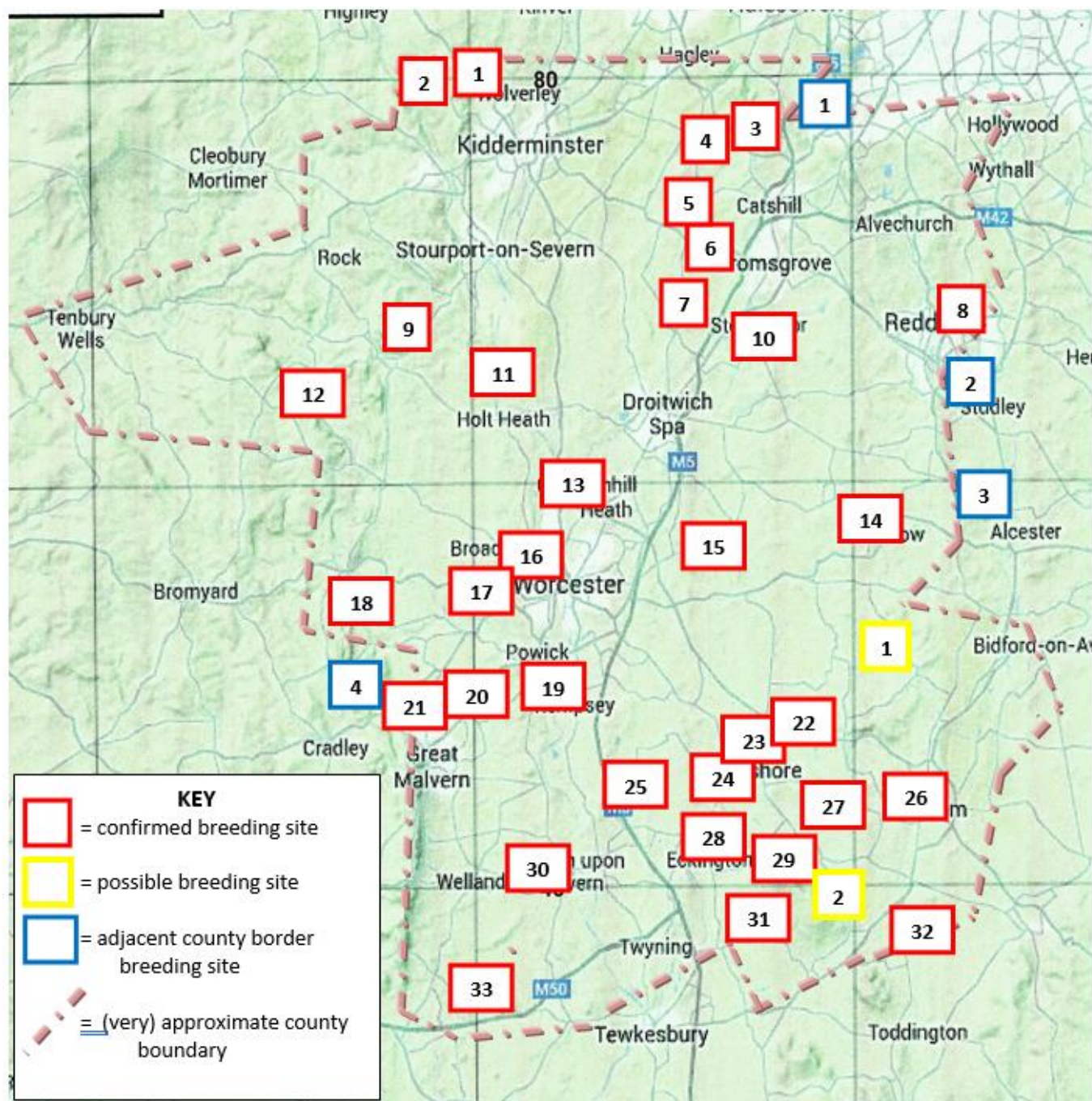
### Figures

Image 01. Raven by Ray Bishop.  
Table 01. Confirmed Raven Breeding Sites – 2023.  
Table 02. Possible Raven breeding sites – 2023.  
Map 01. Confirmed and possible breeding Raven sites in Worcestershire – 2023

**Confirmed and possible breeding Raven sites in Worcestershire – 2023.** See table 01 and 02 above.

Confirmed breeding - adults observed at the nest, or adults seen with young,

Possible breeding sites - adults seen displaying territorial behaviour near a suspected nest site or where a family was observed but the nest was not located.



Map 01. Confirmed and possible breeding Raven sites in Worcestershire – 2023