

The Buzzard

***Shropshire Ornithological
Society's Quarterly Magazine***



Curlew by John Harding

No 282 Spring 2026

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Society Officers and Officials

Vice President	Chris Whittles
Chair	Graham Walker chair@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Honorary Secretary	Mim Elliot-Smith secretary@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Treasurer (acting)	Sue Brealey treasurer@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Membership	Sue Brealey SOSMembership@outlook.com
Website	John Arnfield webmanager@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Management Board	Society Officers, and Claire Mulvey, Helen J Griffiths, Sue Brealey, Tim Devanney
Conservation Chair	Graham Walker conservation@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Conservation Sub-committee	John Tucker, Allan Dawes, Simon Twigger, Leo Smith, Linda Munday, Jon Groom, John Martin
Development/ Publicity	Vacant post. Anyone interested in the role is asked to contact a member of the Management Committee.
Field Trips	Helen J Griffiths fieldtrips@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Indoor Programme	Claire Mulvey programme@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Trip Leaders	See the annual programme
County Bird Recorder	John Martin soscountyrecorder@gmail.com
Buzzard Editor	Tim Devanney buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Social Media Bird Notes	Claire Mulvey programme@shropshirebirds.co.uk Jim Almond shropshirebirder@gmail.com

Notices

Shropshire Ornithological Society

Annual General Meeting 2026

Registered Charity No. 514487

The 70th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Society will be held on Wednesday, 1st April 2026 at Bayston Hill Memorial Hall at 7.15pm. Nominations for Officers and Management Committee Members must be made in writing to the Secretary, by any two Members of the Society, at least 14 days prior to the AGM.

Any items notified to the Secretary for inclusion on the AGM Agenda are to be in accordance with Rule 7 of the Constitution.

Mim Elliot-Smith
Honorary Secretary

Shropshire Ornithological Society

Extraordinary General Meeting

Registered Charity No. 514487

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) will be held on Wednesday 1st April 2026 at Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, immediately following the AGM.

Agenda item: Changes to the Rules and Constitution

The proposed revised version of the Rules and Constitution will be available to Members prior to the EGM.

Mim Elliot-Smith
Honorary Secretary

Shropshire Ornithological Society 2005
Annual General Meeting 2026
Company Limited by Guarantee No. 5322294
Registered Charity No. 1108166

Wednesday 1st April 2026, Bayston Hill Memorial Hall
(immediately following the AGM and EGM of Shropshire Ornithological Society
which is to be held at 7.15pm, and prior to the Indoor Meeting).

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd April 2025
3. Matters Arising
4. Presentation and Approval of the Accounts for the years ending 31st
December 2025.
5. Appointment of Directors
6. Appointment of Independent Examiner
7. Any Other Business

Mim Elliot-Smith
Company Secretary

Shropshire Ornithological Society 2005
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Mim Elliot-Smith
Company Secretary

Membership Corner

Winter Renewal and Membership Cards

As the days grow longer and snowdrops begin to emerge, there is hope that the harshest part of Winter is behind us. With the arrival of lighter evenings, the membership renewal period is drawing to a close. This has been a busy time, with the majority of members having settled their dues, and sincere thanks are extended to all who have paid. It is hoped that everyone who has paid, along with life members and those under 25 or 13, have received their membership cards, which serve as receipts of payment. If you have not received your card, please get in touch, especially if you are a child in a Family or Joint membership living at the same address.

Please remember, the policy is that all payments should be made between 1st and 14th January each year, or by 30th March if an extension is needed. After this period, those who have not paid will be considered to have left the Society. As a result, only paid-up members will be able to use the members' hides at Venus Pool when the codes change in April. This ensures fairness for all. Members who have not yet paid are urged to do so promptly, as there are still 144 outstanding payments at the time of writing.

Payment Checking and Membership Number System

One ongoing challenge has been the references used when payments are made. Many members will be familiar with this, as emails have been sent out providing explanations. Upon taking over as Membership Secretary, it became clear that checking payments was a significant part of the role. This coincided with the Society introducing online applications and banking. To make this process more efficient, it was necessary to address two key issues: Firstly, the wide variety of references used for payments, which were often unhelpful for tracking purposes (e.g. "SOS SUBS"); and secondly, membership numbers had been changed multiple times over the past decade, leading to confusion. The board decided that once allocated, membership numbers would remain unchanged. It was determined that the payment reference should consist of just two elements: the member's surname and their membership number, which is especially useful for common surnames. Membership numbers are allocated after applications are received; until then, postcodes were used temporarily. After an application, a standard email is sent out with the assigned number, and future payments should use this reference, ideally by standing order. For example, "Brealey – 166." Membership cards are then sent out with the number clearly written on them for reference.

The checking process is now straightforward: the surname is located on the spreadsheet, matched to the membership number, and the payment details—reference, method, amount, and date—are recorded. This only takes seconds. Currently, there are three payments for which the relevant members could not be identified satisfactorily, so cards have not been sent. While detective work

is sometimes required, time constraints mean not all cases can be resolved immediately. Nevertheless, following these principles has made checking easier and ensures members receive their cards as soon as possible.

Membership Growth and Upcoming Events

Membership numbers continue to grow, though some members have resigned or, regrettably, passed away. At the end of 2024, there were 995 members, including second persons in Family or Joint memberships. By the end of 2025, the total had increased to 1,180. Membership continues to rise, with 14 new applications received in January. It is hoped that last year's new members have enjoyed participating in the Society's programme of events, such as Field Trips, Indoor Meetings, and other activities like "The Guide in the Hide." Feedback from those attending these events would be greatly appreciated by the organisers. Looking ahead, a key event is the Annual General Meeting, which will precede the Indoor Meeting on Wednesday, 1st April 2026. The Society belongs to its members, and attending this meeting offers the chance to learn more about its operations, meet those involved, and connect with fellow members. The meeting will also feature a talk on developing methods for bird study, including thermal imaging, and concludes with a raffle where you may win a prize.



Martin riding at Windsor.

Sue Brealey
Membership Secretary

*In the hide
with ...*

...Martin Edwards

Martin is a regular visitor to Venus Pool and a keen contributor to our Facebook Group. Here he talks to Claire Mulvey about his varied and interesting life and his passion for birds and photography.

So, Martin, tell us a bit about yourself.

In 1976 at the age of 16, I left Gobowen to become an

apprentice jockey, moving to West Sussex to work for Capt. Ryan Price. A year later I had my first ride in a race at Windsor. In the Winter of 1979, I rode on snow in Sweden and Norway, which gave me the travel bug. I then spent the next 15 years working across Europe, then Barbados, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand.



Crested Tit by Martin Edwards.

When I moved back to Jersey, I became interested in photography—taking action shots at local horse and show jumping events, selling some photographs, and having others published in the local paper.

What first sparked your love of birds?

I don't know why, but I started photographing birds and soon realised the beauty of them. Now I'm addicted.

Which bird species has had the biggest impact on you and why?

The Kingfisher—because of its lack of stillness. I found it a real challenge to photograph. One of my favourite photos is of the Crested Tit because they're also fidgety little birds.

What moments in nature keep you returning to birdwatching again and again?

Going to Aberystwyth pier and watching the Starling murmurations always opens my eyes. A place I also enjoy visiting is Leighton Moss—the Bearded Reedling are fascinating and unusual.

What's one unforgettable encounter you've had with a bird?

I dropped lucky once on my way to RSPB Nagshead in the Forest of Dean. I stopped for a coffee by a cricket club and just three metres from my driver's side window was a Hawfinch sifting for food under a tree—feeding on worms uncovered by wild boar. I never even had to get out of my car!

What advice would you give someone who wants to start birdwatching or bird photography?

Go to places away from people, don't dress colourfully, sit still, and let wildlife come to you. You become part of the scenery. I find it very therapeutic. You don't have to spend a fortune—I started with second-hand gear. Find a local camera club and watch YouTube tutorials.

What's the funniest or most ridiculous situation you've found yourself in while trying to get the perfect bird photo?

I was camouflaged and sitting in a hedge by the Shropshire Union Canal when a lady and two dogs came past. She only saw me at the last minute—I thought she was going to fall in the water. Luckily, she didn't!

Where are your favourite places to go birding in or around Shropshire and why?

Some of my favourite places to visit in the County include Ifton Meadows, Wood Lane, Whixall Moss, Bury Ditches, The Stiperstones, Eardington Nature Reserve and of course Venus Pool. In Shropshire I'm always drawn to the water. With canals, rivers, lakes, and meres, we are spoilt for choice. The variety of birds that water attracts never fails to surprise me.



Kingfisher by Martin Edwards

Shropshire Rookeries RO25+1



Last year the Shropshire Rookeries survey (RO25) checked most of the 1,100 or so rookeries recorded in the county – of which around 500 are known or thought to be alive still. In 2025 we also identified at least 105 new sites which had never been recorded before – another major success.

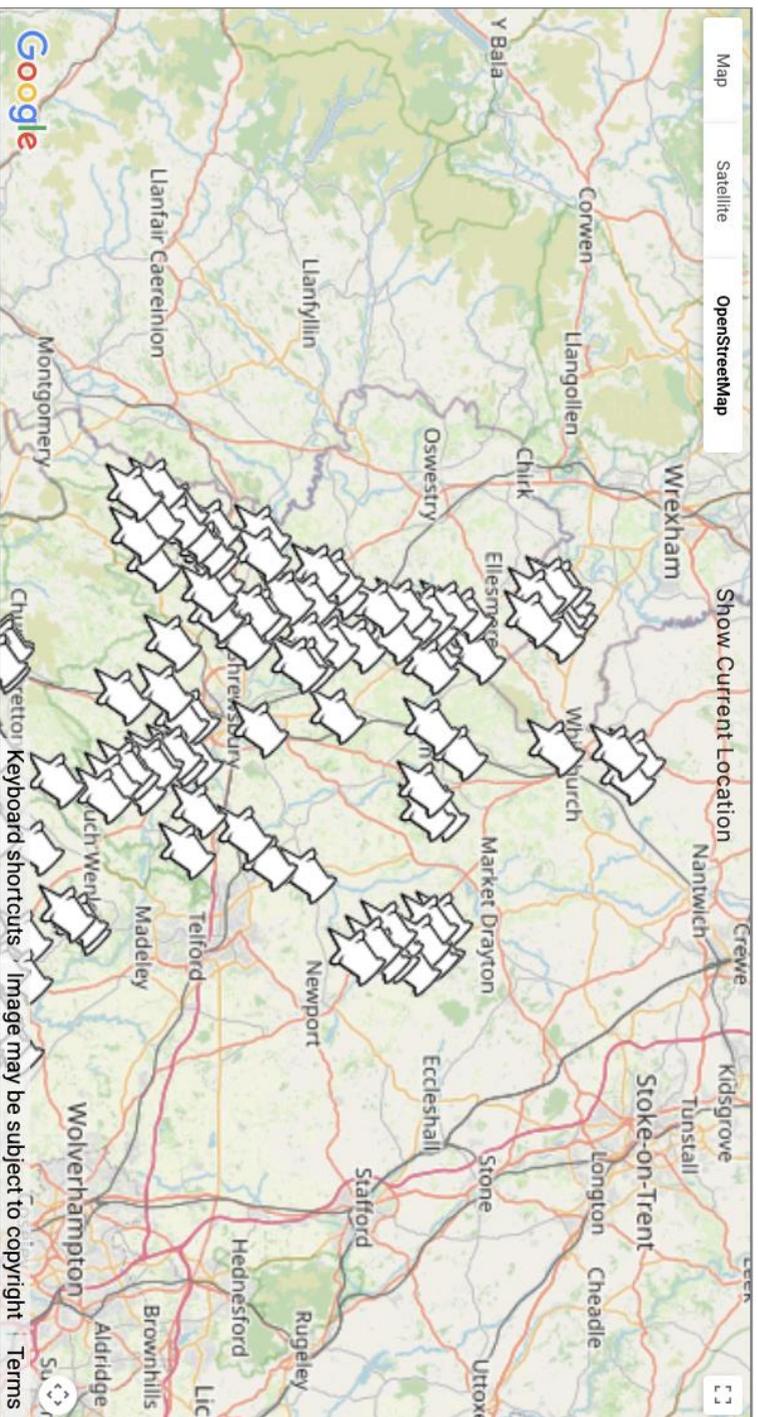
However, there are still around 90 sites which need visiting and recording, in April, between Sat.11 and Sun.19. We are appealing for your help to complete the suite of records for the four surveys begun half a century ago in 1975

On the map opposite – and here www.lanius.org.uk/rookeries are the 90 White Pin, unrecorded sites which need examination this year. One visit to each site - is it active and if so how many nests does it have, or is it inactive and Dead?

I have allocated 20 sites to myself (dangerous or administratively awkward ones) – so around 70 seek the name of one volunteer to check them. Allocation will be easily arranged via the website and shown on the live map to eliminate double-visiting – see the link above. I look forward to your email. Thank you.

John, and for Peter & Ashley

The website's map showing the 90 or so sites needing a check this year, Sat.11 - Sun. 19 April for conversion to Green (live and active) or Black (Dead).





Wildlife

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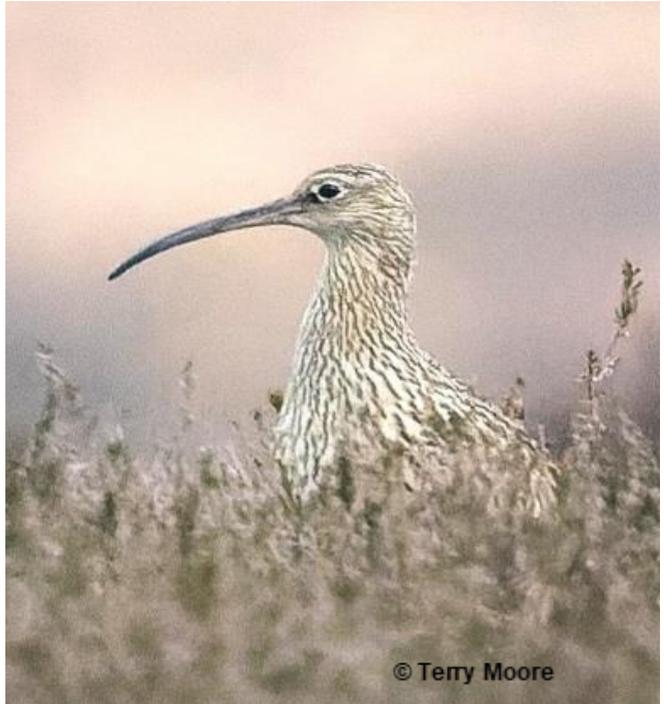


*Code cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Discount code expires 11/04/25, 31.12.2025. Excludes 50% members discount only.

SOS Save our Curlews Campaign

The last couple of issues of the *Buzzard* summarised the results of project work in 2025. The Tanat to Perry, Three Parishes and Strettons Area Community Wildlife Groups worked with the SOS *Save our Curlews* campaign, to find nests, protect them with electric fences, and radio-tag and track chicks, to find out what happens to them. Failure of chicks to fledge is a major cause of the decline, and we need a better understanding of the reasons so we can develop effective conservation measures.

We have analysed the results of the Campaign and project work since it started in 2018. In summary, fencing nests is effective, saving 74% of all fenced nests from predation in the years 2018-22, but predation rates have been higher in the different areas where we have worked since 2023, so the overall nest success rate (eggs hatching) since 2018 is now 56%. However, once chicks leave the protection of the fence, within 36 hours of hatching, they are vulnerable to predation, and most last for less than eight days.



A report of the Campaign 2018-22, and the results of project work in the last three years, can be found on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

Plans for 2026

We need to continue with the nest-finding project work in the same two areas around Oswestry that we covered in 2025, to obtain representative results over three years. It can be financed partly by the balance of the Appeal in hand at the current time, and SOS will underwrite the remaining costs. We will not continue the work in the Strettons area, where no chicks have fledged from fenced nests in any year since we started working there in 2021.

Also, we will not continue with the Appeal. Thanks a lot, to everyone who contributed since 2020.

Further information can be found about the work of the Campaign, current plans and reasons for the decline, on the SOS website.

Community Wildlife Group Surveys

There are 10 Community Wildlife Groups altogether, including the three that were directly involved in the SOS Campaign last year. They all monitor their local Curlew populations (totaling around 100 pairs each year) and have done so since before the SOS Campaign started. Between them they cover more than three-quarters of the County population.

Results since the population estimate of 160 breeding pairs in 2010 in *Birds of Shropshire* (2019) suggest that the population fell below 100 pairs in 2024, and the remaining population will halve in 11 years, and disappear altogether in 22 years, in 2047.

More information about each CWG, a map showing the area covered by each of them, and the results of their individual bird surveys, can be found on the CWGs website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk These surveys provide evidence of the lack of breeding success across the rest of the County, and contribute to a whole County population estimate, so they are vitally important. A map showing the areas covered by each group, overlain on the Curlew breeding distribution map from the 2008-13 Bird Atlas, can be found on the SOS website.

The Groups, in order of their date of formation, are

- 1 Upper Onny
- 2 Upper Clun
- 3 Clee Hill
- 4 Rea Valley
- 5 Camlad Valley
- 6 Strettons Area
- 7 Three Parishes (Weston Rhyn, St. Martin's and Gobowen)
- 8 Tanat to Perry
- 9 Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence

Participants in previous years will be contacted by email. Anyone else interested in participating in 2026, or who wants further information, should email Leo Smith (leo@leosmith.org.uk) for a project briefing and agree an area to cover. We want to ensure that most survey effort is concentrated in areas where Curlew might be found.

**All the Groups need more helpers, please.
We are particularly keen to recruit helpers around Oswestry,
to locate territories for the nest-finding project.**

**The only area where we are planning to hold a well-publicised public meeting
to recruit new helpers is for the Tanat to Perry (Oswestry South) area,
on 7.30pm Tuesday, 17th March, 2026, at Morda Social Club
(Pleasant View, SY10 9NS)**

This Group covers 43 tetrads, bounded by the Welsh border in the west to the north of Llanymynech, across through Oswestry to just east of Baggy Moor, and south along the Perry to Ryton-XI-Towns.

If you can display a poster for this meeting, or forward it to a Community Group mailing list or community newsletter, please email me for a copy.

Leo Smith, leo@leosmith.org.uk

GETTING INVOLVED

SOS members, and other keen birders, are invited to help with several projects and surveys in the 2026 field season. Everyone welcome!!! If you want to help with any of them, look on the appropriate website, or contact Leo Smith: leo@leosmith.org.uk

Community Wildlife Group Curlew Surveys

The foundation of the Save our Curlews campaign see page 13 is the location of territories by Community Wildlife Group (CWG) surveyors. The survey involves three visits of about three hours each, around 1 April, 1 May and mid-June. See www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

**All the groups need more helpers,
and SOS members will be especially welcome.**

Red Grouse Survey

Counts will take place on the Long Mynd every Thursday evening between 2nd April and 14th May, from 90 minutes before sunset until 15 minutes after it. Please volunteer even if Thursdays are difficult, as counts are often cancelled because of forecast bad weather, and re-arranged for a Monday or Tuesday.

Results in 2023 and 2024 suggest the population has declined by half since 2018, and the species has been added to the Red List of the Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire. The estimated population increased by three territories in 2025, but recording was helped by the warm and calm conditions during the Spring drought. There are several possible reasons for the decline, and we need to know if it has continued, or recovery is underway, so this year's survey is especially important.

Most territories are within sight and hearing distance of the road along the top, between the Gliding Station and the Shooting Box car park. The display flight is noisy, conspicuous and unmistakable, and can be observed over long distances, so this is a suitable project for anyone interested in birds or conservation. No special knowledge or skills are needed. A Project Briefing meeting will be held for new participants on Thursday, 26th March, at 7.30pm at the National Trust Tearoom in Cardingmill Valley, and there will be a practical on-the-job training session, explaining how to go about the survey, and record what you see, on the first date, 2nd April.

If you've done it before, you will be contacted directly. If not, and you're interested in helping, get further Information (and a participants' form) from shropscwgs.org.uk/strettons-area-wildlife-group/long-mynd-red-grouse-project/ or Joe Gomme (joegommegrouse@gmail.com)

Long Mynd Breeding Bird Survey

Long Mynd is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These are sites of high conservation value, notified and designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are managed to achieve and maintain "Favourable Condition".

Its current status is “Unfavourable, Recovering”, but a new condition assessment is going to be carried out this year. The site no longer qualifies as an SSSI on the Moorland Bird Assemblage criteria, so good information about bird populations and trends will be important in the assessment. Interim assessments by Natural England at various times since the last full assessment about 2010 suggest that current levels of grazing are too high for the site to reach “Favourable” condition.

Habitat changes are having an important effect, as bracken and gorse are both increasing and moving up the valley sides and onto the heathland plateau, probably driven by climate change, and sheep grazing also appears to be having an impact on the heather-bilberry mosaic which is important for several species, including Grouse and Whinchats. Sheep numbers are limited by an agri-environment agreement, which expires in August 2028. Negotiations are going to start shortly on a new agreement to start when the current one expires. The number of sheep (and ponies) allowed for the following five years will be a key outcome.

Previous bird surveys have been carried out in 1994-98, 2006-09, and 2021-23. Surveys were also attempted in 2024 and 2025. But coverage was inadequate to get good results from all valleys. More surveyors are needed for 2026 and 2027.

Surveyors attempt to record all of the main upland species (including Snipe, Curlew, Grey Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Whinchat, Stonechat, Wheatear and Reed Bunting). Maps are provided, and surveyors mark on them the location of each of the target species seen, and a code (similar to Bird Atlas codes) indicating the activity and level of breeding evidence observed.

Surveyors take on all or part of one of the main valleys and the immediately adjacent plateau, and cover it thoroughly at least three, preferably five, times between the very beginning of May and the end of June. It involves walking on sheep tracks on the valley sides, as well as footpaths, so a good level of fitness is needed.

The survey complements a separate Whinchat conservation project, which involves finding nests, recording habitat in detail, and colour-ringing adults and chicks.

People interested in helping should contact me.

Red Kite

The Raptor Group is still trying to find all Kite nests, partly to look for wing-tags on breeding birds, and also to monitor the size of the growing population. In 2023, 60 nests were monitored, and 6 additional pairs were found; At least 39 were successful, producing 73 fledged young, the highest annual total yet. A smaller number of nests were found in 2024 and 2025, but this is probably due to changes in monitoring effort. It is unlikely that the breeding population declined.

Several breeding Kites had wing-tags, which were read. Each tag is unique, and the colours and letters or numbers tell us the bird's age, and its natal site.

Reports are wanted, please, of a pair together in Spring, or displaying, or one carrying sticks, or seen several times in the same place, or going into a wood, any time between February and June. Reports of wing-tagged birds at any time are wanted too, please. Photographers are requested to check their Kite photos for wing-tags. All reports will be treated in absolute confidence. Kites are very shy, and they are legally protected. It is an offence to disturb them, but this monitoring is carried out under licence.

A report covering the years 2023-25 will be posted on the SOS website shortly.

Other Raptors

The Shropshire Raptor Group wants to recruit experienced bird watchers who have the necessary identification skills to find Goshawk, Hobby and Kestrel, as well as Red Kite, and who have the commitment and time to be able to search for nest sites, monitor them and record the outcomes. If you're interested, please ask for details of how to apply.

Stepping Stones Project Species Action Plans

Stepping Stones is a nature conservation programme covering over 200km² in the Shropshire Hills including Long Mynd and Stiperstones. It is creating more bigger and better spaces for wildlife and linking them with wildlife 'corridors'. This means working with farmers, landowners, community groups and volunteers to create and connect heathland, flower-rich grassland, woodland and wetland. The project is led by the National Trust but involves a number of partners, including The Wildlife Trusts, Natural England and Shropshire Hills National Landscape.

Stepping Stones is working on a Landscape Connections bid covering the whole of the National Landscape area, two years development phase, and 8 years delivery phase, to be submitted shortly. There are three themes:

1. Climate Resilience
2. Farming & Nature
3. Equal Access to Nature

Stepping Stones has produced 12 species Action Plans, including four bird species – Dipper, Snipe, Tree Pipit and Willow Tit.

- If you see a colour-ringed Dipper any time or hear a drumming or chipping Snipe in May or June, please report it to me.
- Simon Cooter (until recently the Stiperstones NNR manager) is planning to repeat a targeted Tree Pipit survey (including other Ffrydd species such as Stonechat and Cuckoo), including a training half-day on Monday 4th May 9.00am- 12 noon. For more information, or to book, contact simon.cooter.97@gmail.com.
- Jonathan Groom is continuing with a Willow Tit survey. For more info, please email bto.shropshire@gmail.com

New Swift Champion

Hayley Garrod is taking over as SOS Swift Champion from Julie Cowley.

Hayley runs Chirk Swifts and House Martins. Her love of Swifts originated at Chirk Aqueduct. Since 2021 she and her partner Dan have made hundreds of boxes and callers for local homes and churches. She has also done lots of talks and stalls raising awareness.

She will continue to raise awareness, encourage the installation of boxes and callers, surveying and monitoring, and implementing the SOS Swift Species Action Plan

Hayley spoke to the last SOS Indoor Meeting at Bayston Hill on Wednesday, 4 February 2026 about her work on the Chirk project See www.chirkswiftsandhousemartins.com

See the SOS website <https://www.shropshirebirds.com/index/species-recovery/> Contact Hayley at Swift@shropshirebirds.co.uk

Julie will continue to run the Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group, working with other Community Wildlife Groups in South Shropshire on developing their local Swift monitoring groups, and working on building relations with Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils and West Mercia Police Wildlife Crime Officers (WCOs).

Leo Smith

Bird Notes

October to December 2025

Regular readers of bird notes will notice that the format is rather different from usual. Long term compiler Jim Almond had to step down a few issues ago and I took over on what I hoped was a temporary basis. **Despite requests in previous issues, we haven't had a volunteer to take over so this might be the last Bird Notes for a while.** If you are wavering but think you won't be able to do it then please feel free to contact me and I can explain what is involved – it's really not that difficult. I don't have time to do it now, with Bird Recorder and now Bird Report Editor roles, as well as being joint Vice County Plant Recorder and, well, life!

October is the month when binoculars must not be forgotten (well, all months are really!), and it got off to a flying start with a **Yellow-browed Warbler** found in Oswestry by Anthony Griffiths on the first day of the month. This Siberian *Phylloscopus* has increased enormously in Britain since I started birding over 50 years ago. The breeding range has expanded westwards in Siberia with climate change and habitat modification being possible drivers. The classic wintering area is in SE Asia but a proportion of the population now winters in Western Europe. As would be expected the best areas to see this species in Britain are the Northern Isles, the East coast and Scilly, but it is now an expected scarce migrant in Autumn at almost any coastal migration hotspot. Numbers vary greatly from year to year depending on the prevailing weather

systems in late Autumn. Shropshire is, as readers might have noticed, not a migration hotspot, yet even here the species is on the radar for birders. Many observers now have experience of the species and are now familiar with its call, which is often the first clue to its presence. The first county record was on 12 Oct 2008 in Telford. The second was not until 2015 but the decade to 2024 then produced another 11 with three in each of 2019 and 2020. However, the Oswestry bird was the first since 2022. It stayed until the next day but was not reported thereafter.

Water levels were nice and low at Venus Pool (VP) after a very dry Summer, presenting plenty of mud for passage waders but there were seemingly few to take advantage. Single juveniles of both **Ruff** and **Knot** on 5 Oct were an exception. A 1w **Arctic Tern** dropped in briefly to feed on the fishing pool there on 14th, a species that had a blank year in the county in 2024. A **Jack Snipe** was a popular find at VP the same day allowing rare on-the-deck views of this superbly camouflaged wader, on and off, over the next few days. They are usually only seen when accidentally flushed from underfoot, but thermal imaging equipment has meant they can now be found without disturbing them. Indeed, ringers are now finding them with regularity on favoured sites and hopefully will soon be discovering more about these rather mysterious and under-recorded Winter visitors.

For students of visible migration, the late Autumn movements of **Wood pigeons** can sometimes be a spectacular highlight. The peak count I know of this year was 18800 heading S/SW over Cantlopgrove on 2 Nov. These birds appear to be from Northern England and Scotland heading to more southern wintering areas (not Scandinavian birds, which migrate through mainland Europe). Some years see big flocks heading out to sea from the Dorset and Devon coasts (I have watched in awe myself as 35000 headed out from Portland Bill one early November morning) so at least some of our birds are heading to the continent. Some of the biggest counts are from Alpine passes and at many funnels through the Western Pyrenees heading to Spain where *dehesa* (open oak woodland of Cork and other oaks) is a favoured habitat with an abundance of acorns.

The best area to see wild swans in the county is usually Molverley Floods or the Vyrnwy Confluence. When conditions are right (i.e. suitably flooded fields) the area can attract big numbers of wildfowl but sometimes the roads then become unpassable, so seeing the birds can be a challenge. This year about 15 **Whoopers** were noisily scouting out the area on 22 Oct, the first of the Autumn as far as I know. Later their numbers built up with an impressive 57 on 19 Dec. A single **Bewick's** was reported here on 16 Dec, now a very rare visitor to the county so if you have details of this sighting, please submit photos or notes in support of the record.

Further good wildfowl records followed in December with the county's second ever **Lesser Scaup** identified at Ellesmere by John Reeves on 28th although possibly present earlier in the month. It was a female and it remained on site into the New Year enabling many to catch up with it. While the smaller size, closer to Tufted, and head shape (with a bump on the rear but definitely not a tuft) differ from Greater Scaup (the real confusion is with *Aythya* hybrids or female Tufteds with white blazes, some of which can closely resemble Lesser Scaup. Detailed scrutiny of bill pattern (black generally confined to the nail on Lesser Scaup) and wing pattern (the white wing bar on the secondaries being cleanly divided from the grey wing bar across the base of the primaries in Lesser Scaup). So, well done to JR for sticking with the bird and confirming his initial thoughts about its identity, and also to Anthony Griffiths for capturing the first photos of the spread wing. The only previous record was of a male at Monkmoor Pool from 6-26 June 2005.

The year ended with an influx of **White-fronted Geese** into England after severe weather in Scandinavia. We finally had our share right at the end of the year with nine at VP early on 30th, which departed after roosting at 0800, moments before I arrived. The next morning Dave Chapman and I watched a *hutchinsii* **Cackling Goose** in the VP roost, which left to the N at 0840 and was relocated at nearby Atcham by Tom Lowe. Here it remained all day with the mixed goose flock, which also included at least three White-fronts. In mid-afternoon four White-fronts made another tantalisingly brief visit to VP before departing. The Cackling Goose, a half-sized Canada goose, is an Arctic breeding goose, which occurs as a Winter vagrant with other flocks of Arctic geese, notably Barnacles, Pink-feet and Greenland White-fronts. It is a BBRC species, which is also kept in collections, so escapes are also possible, indeed quite likely. The origins of our un-ringed Cackling Goose are unknown, but it is unlikely to be accepted as a wild bird by BBRC as they deem individuals that didn't arrive with suitable Arctic carrier species to be likely escapes.

I would just like to end by thanking Jim Almond for doing these notes for so long before handing over to my brief tenure and to wish him well.

John Martin
February 2026

Indoor Meetings

Wednesday, 1 April 2026

**Annual General Meeting followed by:
'Birds in a New Light: Thermal Imaging and Modern Ornithology'
with Paul Hopwood *Co-Founder & Secretary of West Midlands
Ringing Group.***

Discover the fascinating journey of the West Midlands Ringing Group—an award-winning team renowned for their pioneering work with thermal technology in ornithology. This talk explores the group's history, how they revolutionised bird study with thermal imaging, their current innovative practices, and their vision for the future. Whether you're passionate about night-time birding, farmland birds, cutting-edge technology, or wildlife surveys, this session offers unique insights into the remarkable birds of Shropshire and the West Midlands. A must-attend for anyone eager to learn more about the intersection of technology and bird conservation!

Wednesday, 7 October 2026 7:15 pm – (approx.) 9:15

**'Bird and Wildlife Adventures in Costa Rica'
with Steve Dawes - well-known local wildlife enthusiast and
photographer**

Experience an evening with the ever-popular wildlife photographer Steve Dawes, as he shares stories and images from his recent adventure in Costa Rica — a country bursting with extraordinary wildlife and vibrant birdlife.

Field Trips - See website for full details

Sunday 15 March, (half day) Bury Ditches, South Shropshire, Leader: Dave Pearce (07791 180488)

- A well-preserved Iron Age hill fort with spectacular views.
- Access is via the B4368 or via the B4385.
- Meet at 10am in Bury Ditches car park:
- Grid Ref: SO333839 w3w: fantastic.voted.drummers
- Postcode for SatNav: SY7 8BD

Sunday, 26 April 2026 (half day) Minsterley Meadows & Poles Coppice, Shropshire Leader: Peter Carty (07824 514564)

- "Orchids & Bird Song": A visit to two nationally important flower-rich meadows,
- Meet at 10am in Minsterley Parish Hall car park, in Minsterley village, next to the A488:
- Grid Ref: SJ375048 w3w: marketing.eggshell.opposites
Postcode: SY5 0EH

Sunday, 10 May 2026 (full day) Marteg Valley/Gilfach Farm, Radnorshire Leader: Helen J Griffiths (07800 880445)

- Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
- Turn off the A470 at the large bend at Pont Marteg (Marteg Bridge) and cross the cattle grid into the reserve.
- Meet at 10am in the reserve car park
- Grid Ref: SN952715 w3w: exclusive.aspect.science
Post code: LD6 5LF

Please send contributions for *The Buzzard* to buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk
Copy deadline for the Summer 2026 issue is: 1 May 2026

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