



# West Midlands Ringing Group

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# Annual Report 2018

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## Foreword

Welcome to our first report! We hope that this first edition provides readers with an understanding of all our ringing activities across the region.

This is an exciting time for us as bird ringers, the formation of a new ringing group with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is something that we are all extremely proud of.



Our first few months have been busy, not only with our own ringing activities but sharing our experiences with ringers across the UK and Europe. Looking to the future we intend to seek funding from National organisations and we are keen to develop community-based projects in the West Midlands area. Watch this space!

Most importantly we want to take the opportunity to thank the landowners, groups and individuals who continue to support our new venture and our ringing activities. Without their continued support we would not be in the position we find ourselves in today. Our utmost thanks go to

Forestry Commission England	Rory Lay	British Telecoms
Severn Trent PLC	Mr G D Bourne	Marsh Lane NR
Packington Estate	Sarah Hollinshead	Dennis Leonard
The Lower Drayton Farm team	Martin George	K. Clowes
Tim Parton	Tom Young	Ray Hurd
Andy Roberts & family	Paul Ashworth	Roy Ingle
Graham Clay	Fergus Henderson	
Richard Tomlinson	TWB Farms, Staffordshire	
British Trust for Ornithology	Vicki Worrall	
Mrs A. Warrington	Beth Jasper	
Mr D. Clifton	Jamie Dunn	

**West Midlands Ringing Group 2019.**

# INTRODUCTION TO WMRG

West Midlands Ringing Group was founded and constituted in 2019 by our founder members, Ben Dolan, James Stewart & Paul Hopwood. We are a group of keen bird ringers operating across the West Midlands, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire. We are supported by several trainees, helpers and ringers from other areas of the Midlands.

The formation of the new ringing group presents exciting opportunities and will allow us to have a more professional approach to our activities and provide greater structure moving forward, with project-based ringing at the forefront of our work. All of our members are committed to this ethos.

We undertake various types of bird ringing throughout the year and across the region.

Our members pioneered the use of thermal technology for ringing which is now being utilised by ringers across the world. This is a key part of our work and one which we are known for across the UK. We have supported several ringing groups in developing their own skills and applications for 'thermal-imaging'.

Together with the thermal aspect of our activities we work closely with farmers across the region to promote farming practices which enhance the environment for birds. This is a key area for our group and one which is developing continuously.



**Woodcock** one of the species we target using thermal imaging

Our ringing is carried out under licence from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

Ringing aims to monitor survival rates of birds and collect information about their movements. This information provides vital support for conservation efforts as it helps to understand how these processes influence population sizes over time; identifying the mechanisms is the first step in reversing declines.

**This report collates the individual ringing totals of our members in 2018, in 2019 the totals will represent West Midlands Ringing Group**



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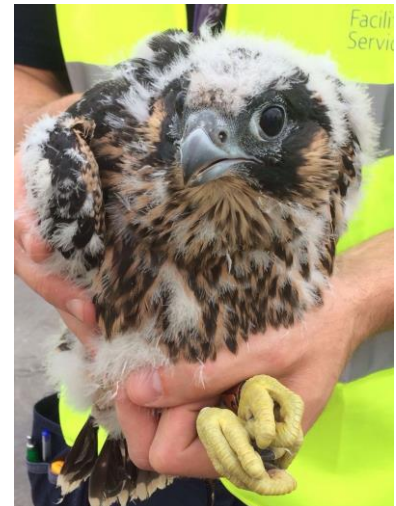
Twitter  
@Ringerswm

# RINGING PROJECTS

## Peregrine Falcons

Our story is a positive one in relation to the success of our breeding Peregrine Falcons.

In November 2013 we made contact with landowners at two sites across Staffordshire after hearing that they had breeding Peregrines, which had been unsuccessful for 2 years. Either the chicks had hatched and perished, or the eggs had never hatched.



Peregrine Falcon



Having attended for a site visit, we were able to see the possible issue and put a plan in place. The roof of the building had an internal gutter around the edge, which ensured any rain that fell was washed off the roof in to the drainage system.

The guttering contained gravel, which is where and why the Peregrines were nesting on it, when it rained the gutters would fill with water, which in turn would perish the eggs or chicks.

We removed the gravel from within the guttering and constructed nest trays which were placed into different areas of the roof to ensure we covered the main look out points they enjoy nesting from.

We didn't have to wait too long for results!





2014 was our first successful breeding season across the two Staffordshire sites with 9 chicks hatched and fledged.

In 2015 we obtained a further site in West Midlands after a female Peregrine had been found poisoned. Having obtained the site, we ensured that they were monitored and protected to prevent further problems.

2015 brought us more success with 7 chicks hatched and fledged across the two Staffordshire sites and 4 hatched and fledged from our West Midlands site.

2016 saw us obtain a further Staffordshire site, and we ringed 9 chicks across the three Staffordshire sites and 4 at our West Midlands site.

2017 saw 8 chicks ringed across the three Staffordshire sites and 4 at our West Midlands site

2018 saw 9 chicks ringed across the three Staffordshire sites with the one site now too dangerous to access and only 2 chicks ringed at the West Midlands site after initially laying 4 eggs.

We look forward to seeing what success 2019 brings us.



Peregrine Falcon

## Black-headed Gulls

During 2016 members of West Midlands Ringing Group, fitted a number of non-fledged Black-headed Gulls at Marsh Lane Nature Reserve with both BTO metal and Darvic colour rings in order to learn more about their post-breeding dispersal. The birds were fitted with a metal ring to their right leg and black Darvic ring with white writing on their left.



Black-headed Gull juv 2CPV  
Carne Beach, Wexford 26 July 2018

Large numbers of Black-headed Gulls breed every year at the reserve, with approximately 700 chicks hatching in 2016 alone!

2017 brought us more ringed chicks and numerous sighting by some very dedicated reporters, which were both exciting and interesting.

We limit our time at the colony, so that disturbance is kept to the minimum.

In 2016 133 were fitted with metal rings only due to age and 184 Fitted with Darvics.

We decided following our 2016 season that 100 birds would be a good sample size for the site and would look to try and colour ring 100 birds each year moving forward.

In 2017 a total of 99 Black-headed Gulls were fitted with Darvics. It was decided that we would only ring birds that were of a suitable size to fit Darvic rings.



In 2018 a total of 99 Black-headed Gull chicks were colour ringed.

Moving forward we intend to limit the sample size for Black-headed Gulls to 100 colour ringed birds per annum.

## Sightings

During 2018 we had 88 sightings reported whereas during 2017 we had 68 new sightings, which is a fantastic increase and promising for the future.

We have had sightings in various countries as follows:

England – 69

France – 1

Ireland – 10

Spain – 1

Wales – 7



Interestingly 46 of our colour ringed birds returned to the reserve during the 2018 breeding season with some breeding together.

### Notable 2018 sightings:

**2AFP** Ringed at Marsh Lane on 06/06/2016 and was reported on 23/10/2018 by E.Del Val in Pinto Landfill, Madrid, which is a distance of 833 Miles

**2AXC** Ringed at Marsh Lane 07/06/2016 and was reported on 12/11/2018 by B O'Mahony at Togher, Cork, Ireland, which is a distance of 292 Miles.



Our 2016, 2017 and 2018 data has shown there is a preference to the West and South West with only one of our birds being reported on the East coast. We are also seeing a good number of birds returning to Marsh Lane Nature Reserve during breeding season.



We would like to thank all of the birders, ringers and members of public who have submitted their sightings to us, without you these amazing results and collection of data for our site would not be possible.

A special thanks to Marsh Lane Nature Reserve who continue to support us in all we do.

## Pied & Grey Wagtails



Grey Wagtail

When the Ringing Scheme began over 100 years ago, the primary aim was to find out more about birds' movements; attaching a uniquely coded metal ring to a bird's leg allows the individual to be identified if encountered at a later date, revealing the distance, direction and duration of travel.

The use of colour-markings improves the chances of identifying birds in the field, as they are easier to read. Using one of a variety of marks, such as lightweight plastic rings, the identity of an individual bird can be established remotely, without the need for recapture.

Colour-marking does require the observer to get a good view of the mark, so it is particularly suited to birds with long legs. It is also well suited to open habitats



A colour marked Grey Wagtail

Experience has shown us that there is a regular through movement of Pied and Grey Wagtails through our sewage works. New birds are caught regularly, but we have few re-trapped birds. The overall aim of this project is to see if Wagtails that have experienced the good food supply at sewage works with filter beds, will tend to seek out these habitats as they disperse throughout the year. This will include birds that use the site to breed, and birds that have bred at the sewage works.

It is hoped this project will;

- help us understand where wagtails disperse following fledging,
- Increase the numbers of returns for this species
- Understand the site fidelity of Pied Wagtails.

## Future projects



Our Skylark catches have had a significant effect on the ringing totals of fledged birds recorded by the BTO. The use of the thermal camera has revolutionised the way that we catch these birds.

Whilst our farms all have breeding birds, we see an increase in autumn when there appears to be an influx of passage and wintering birds.

We have taken consistent biometric measurements on over 500 Skylarks and an initial assessment tends to indicate that some of these migrants are notably larger than the resident birds. It is hoped that with further funding we will look to DNA test a range of these birds to identify where they have originated.



Skylark chick



Pied Flycatcher

We also will be working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the Forestry Commission to install and monitor boxes specifically for Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts in North Staffordshire. The Pied Flycatcher is in decline and these nest box projects will hopefully understand populations in the county.

# THERMAL TECHNOLOGY & RINGING



Catching Woodcock, a thermal view

It is now just over 2 years since we started to utilise thermal image technology for bird ringing and surveying. During this period we have devoted considerable time and effort into this aspect of our ringing.

The results have been excellent and our work with the thermal image camera is recognised locally, nationally and indeed internationally. We have featured on BBC Midlands today, BBC WinterWatch and more recently we have taken part in filming for a European production in respect of farmland birds, featuring renowned birders; Mya-Rose and Chris Craig.

Whilst the benefits to ringing have been seen across several species, we have had particular success with the following:

Lapwing chicks, which are notoriously difficult to locate. The thermal image camera allowed us to be more productive in locating the chicks and reduced disturbance at known nesting sites.



Filming BBC's WinterWatch with Martin Hughes-Games

The use of thermal image technology to monitor farmland species has been our most productive and informative activity. The thermal camera has opened up a whole new environment and allowed us to observe the activities and numbers of a range of species.

Whilst the primary function for us is to identify and ring birds, we have also been able to inform farmers about other wildlife observed on their land; including predator

numbers, Brown Hare numbers and even locating a Harvest Mouse in South Staffordshire.



Skylark ringed utilising thermal technology

We have spent many hours in the field with the thermal camera, resulting in nationally important numbers of bird being ringed; in particular, significant numbers of Red List species including Skylark and Grey Partridge.

Our relationships with farmers is key, and the use of the thermal camera to inform farmers what nocturnal wildlife activity is taking place has received positive and encouraging feedback.

It is often the case farmers are blamed for the decline in farmland bird species, however there are many reasons for this decline and it is unfair that all farmers are to blame. We have found that our farmers are all keen naturalists and are doing as much as they can to manage their land with birds and other wildlife in mind at the time as running a productive farm.



Grey Partridge



Golden Plover

As well as ringing birds we have also identified species present on farms at night time that farmers did not know were present.

Flocks of Golden plover have been seen across several of our farms, together with sightings of Greenshank, Redshank, owl species and even a Whimbrel!

Furthermore, we identified that winter cereal crops, in particular those farms using a zero till or minimum/strip till strategies are utilised by a number of wading bird species; Woodcock, Common Snipe and Jack Snipe.

We have found large numbers of Common Snipe in winter cereal crops and over-wintered stubbles, with some fields having upwards of 60 birds present at any one time.



Ringling Woodcock in the field



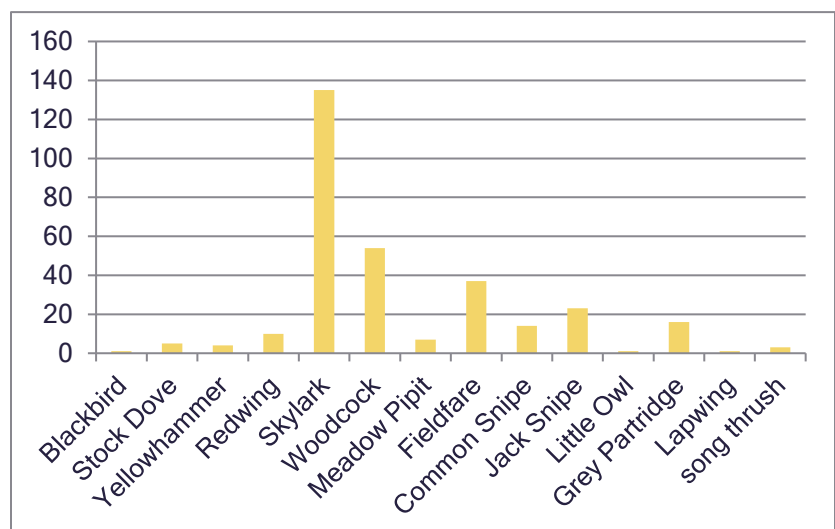
Little Owl caught utilising thermal technology

We are keen to share our knowledge of this technology and the methodology that we adopt to ring the birds. We have worked with other ringers both locally, nationally and internationally to share our learning.

The uptake from other groups has been extremely encouraging and we hope that by sharing our experiences, our understanding and knowledge of bird species will increase.

The tables below show our totals for dazzling species ringed in 2018. We have also included our cumulative totals since we obtained the thermal image camera in 2016.

Species	Totals
Blackbird	1
Stock Dove	5
Yellowhammer	4
Redwing	10
Skylark	135
Woodcock	54
Meadow Pipit	7
Fieldfare	37
Common Snipe	14
Jack Snipe	23
Little Owl	1
Grey Partridge	16
Lapwing	1
Song Thrush	3
<b>2018 total</b>	<b>311</b>





Whilst the numbers of birds we catch are not as great as other groups, we are gathering important data using the thermal camera and have shown that dazzling does not need to be restricted to areas blessed with dark skies.

Other groups in more remote and rural areas have the additional benefit of little light pollution, whereas our activities take place around urban areas where the sodium glow of street lights makes dazzling far more difficult.

Prior to 2016 we had little experience of night time dazzling, however our work and enthusiasm has reaped many rewards.



Processing a Grey Partridge caught using thermal imaging equipment

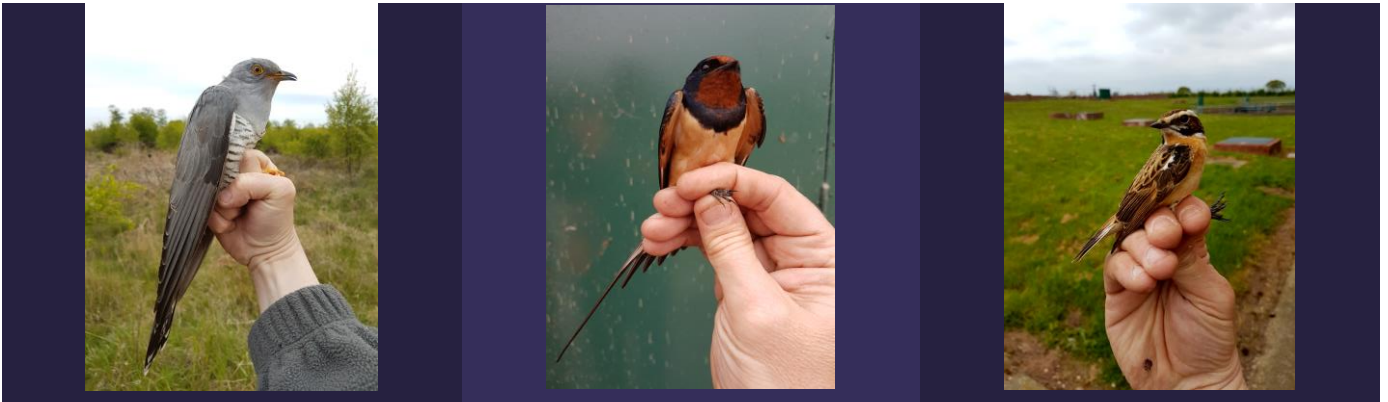
**Our thermal imaging ringing season extends from Late August to March. A further report will be published in May 2019 highlighting our seasonal totals.**

**We always consider new areas to ring and survey birds.  
If you would like to discuss ringing/surveying on your land, please  
do not hesitate to get in touch!**

# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## The Ringing Year

We operate throughout the year and have several areas that we concentrate upon. We have summarised our annual activities to provide an understanding of our work throughout the seasons.



## Spring

As spring approaches, we start to see the arrival of migratory birds that breed in the UK. This is an exciting time of the year and one that presents us with a wide range of ringing opportunities.



Cuckoo caught on  
Cannock Chase

Cuckoos tend to be one of our first target species. With the returning birds only being present for a few months we have to maximise our efforts to catch Cuckoos, however they can be notoriously evasive.

Early hirundines; Swallows, Swifts, House and Sand Martins offer some hectic ringing on cool mornings at sewage works with filter beds. Numbers gradually increase through April and it is not unusual to find mixed flocks of several hundred birds over filter beds.



Lesser Whitethroat

This period also sees the return of several warbler species: Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Chiffchaff and Whitethroat being some of the more common species. We also find Grasshopper Warblers and Cetti's Warblers at some of our sites.

Warblers often provide us with recoveries of birds ringed elsewhere, with some birds being caught that have been ringed in Northern France, Spain and Belgium.

Across our farmland Skylarks will be displaying. Farmland species such as Yellowhammer, Linnet and Reed Bunting will disperse from winter feeding flocks that concentrate around our supplementary feeding areas.

At the time that potatoes are planted, we usually find a movement of Wheatear and Whinchat. These birds are often found on freshly planted potato crops along with Yellow Wagtails.



Male Wheatear

We also ring several species in the nest.

We have numerous boxes for breeding birds across the region.

These include boxes for owls, raptors, tits, wagtails, flycatchers and Common Redstarts.

It is hoped that 2019 sees a new project looking at Pied Flycatchers which will be implemented by our trainees.



Kestrel chick from  
Staffordshire

## Summer



Nightjar

Summer sees us target Nightjars. These iconic birds are targeted at dusk and dawn using mist nets.

In the past we have only tended to hear these birds, but with the thermal camera we can now see the behaviour of the birds and how many birds are present.

A highlight of the summer is colour ringing Black-headed Gull and Common Tern chicks at Marsh Lane Nature reserve. We have ringed hundreds of gull chicks and these have presented us with some fantastic data and some interesting movements. Most of the birds from Marsh Lane move west and south west with birds regularly seen in Southern Ireland and France and Spain.



Common Tern chick



Male Blackcap

We continue to ring warbler species; however, this slows down during the period when birds are nesting and feeding young.

As we move to late July and August the offspring of migratory birds are caught more frequently, with younger birds making up most of our catches. Hirrundines return to sewage works in good numbers, especially on cooler mornings.



## Autumn

Autumn sees the departure of many migratory birds, but some still linger and are caught. As birds depart south, other species begin to arrive in the country, thrushes such as Redwing, Fieldfare, Blackbird and Song Thrush. We have success catching these using tape lures.



Autumn Skylarks caught using thermal technology

We also see an influx of Skylark, Reed Bunting and Meadow Pipit, the latter favouring sewage treatment plants. Large catches of Meadow Pipits can be had in September as the birds arrive in good numbers.

Autumn also sees the commencement of our dazzling activities using thermal imaging. Many of the birds caught tend to be Skylarks in September and October, with Snipe and Golden Plover numbers increasing as the year continues.



Evening roost sessions using mist nets take place from October, with our Shifnal site being the most productive. At times this single reed bed can roost in excess of 300 Reed Buntings alone.

As Phragmites reed beds start to die off they become home to roosts of Reed Buntings, Pied Wagtails and Starlings.



Male Reed Bunting



## Winter



Woodcock

The full moon in November sees the arrival of Woodcock, in fact this is known as the 'Woodcock Moon' as it signals the arrival of birds from Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Russia.

This period also sees numbers of Common Snipe returning to arable fields at night time, before moving to marshy ground to roost by day.

We do catch small numbers of Common Snipe by dazzling; however, they are not easy and often fly before we get close.

We also see an influx of Jack Snipe in winter and target these birds on a site near to Uttoxeter by day. At night time, like their relative the Common Snipe, these birds are often seen in winter cereal crops, usually around wet patches and tyre tracks that have filled with water.



Jack Snipe (left) Common Snipe (right)

Jack Snipe head patterns

Processing Jack Snipe

Cannock Chase during winter is a beautiful area. Large flocks of Redpoll and Siskin are present, together with Crossbill and in most years Great Grey Shrike.

Winter has become our busiest season; dark nights provide good conditions for the thermal camera and this aspect of our ringing is now at the fore of our activities.

## Our ringing sites

We have access to several fantastic ringing sites across the region. Our sites are varied and provide a diverse range of habitats, with ringing opportunities being available throughout the year.

Our sites include;

Marsh Lane Nature Reserve

Cannock Chase

Severn Trent Water sewage works across the region



Yellow Wagtail

We also have access to working farms and these are key to our ringing. Britain's farmland birds have been in decline for many years; however, many farms and farmers are working with us to look how we can work together to help reverse this trend. With over 70% of the UK being farmland, this is clearly an area that we need to understand and where possible help to implement strategies to protect bird species. Our farmers are key to this and are working hard to encourage wildlife. Our ethos is simple, '**Promote farming and protect wildlife**'.



Our observations over the last few years suggest that improved soil quality, till strategies, habitat management, supplementary winter feed schemes and the installation of nest boxes are all important factors in protecting and encouraging wildlife.

**We always consider new areas to ring and survey birds.  
If you would like to discuss ringing/surveying on your land, please  
do not hesitate to get in touch!**

## Marsh Lane

Marsh Lane Nature Reserve is 75 acres in size at Berkswell (between Solihull and Coventry). It lies adjacent to and in the flood plain of the River Blythe, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It was opened to permit holders on the 1st of July 2001 after gravel extraction was completed in 1999.



Since the conclusion of quarrying, the land has been reinstated jointly by RMC Aggregates Western and the owners, Packington Estates.

It now consists of three main pools (one of which has a reedbed) together with woodland, grassland, ponds and some agricultural land. Two of the main pools include several islands which, since formation, have attracted a wide range of breeding and passage waders.



Black-headed Gull colony at Marsh Lane.

Large numbers of Black-headed Gulls breed every year and in 2016 approximately 700 chicks hatched; which was a surprisingly high number given the very wet spring. In 2017 similar numbers were seen although the weather was slightly better than in 2016.

Other birds that breed on the islands are Common Tern, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Moorhen, Tufted Duck, Mediterranean Gull and Redshank.



## Cannock Chase

Cannock Chase was designated as an AONB in 1958 because of its beautiful landscape, its wildlife and its history. Cannock Chase is the largest surviving area of lowland heathland in the Midlands covering approximately 26 square miles.

Lowland heath is an internationally scarce and threatened wildlife habitat. The AONB also has extensive areas of forest and woodland along with areas of designed parkland, sand and gravel quarrying and mixed agriculture.



A dramatic skyline over Cannock Chase



Sunset on Cannock Chase

Located between Cannock, Lichfield, Rugeley & Stafford it comprises a mixture of natural deciduous woodland, coniferous plantations, open heathland and the remains of early industry, such as coal mining.

Some of Chase is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Despite being relatively small in area, the Chase provides a remarkable range of landscape and wildlife, including several rare and endangered birds; migrant Nightjar, Cuckoo, Great Grey Shrike, Tree Pipit and Woodlark.



Spot the Nightjars

We ring with the permission of Forestry Commission England and our activities take place on Forestry owned areas of the Chase. We are extremely grateful for the continued support of the Forestry Commission who are a key partner for us.

## Severn Trent Water

With the continued support of Severn Trent, we have been able to conduct bird ringing surveys across Staffordshire and Shropshire for the last 5 years.

The potential of Severn Trent sites has been known for many years, especially those with uncovered filter beds that provide excellent feeding for birds throughout the year.



Filter beds at sewage works provide excellent feeding for a number of bird species

Throughout the year the filter beds are home to large numbers of Pied and Grey Wagtails. Spring and summer see large gatherings of hirundines (Swallows and martins). Autumn and winter months see passage of Meadow Pipits, wagtails and large numbers of gulls, Starlings and corvids, all of which use the works sites to find food.



Phragmites reed bed at a sewage works

Shifnal Sewage treatment works has the additional benefit of a large Phragmites reed bed. This provides excellent nesting and roosting potential for migrant warblers, Reed Buntings, wagtails and wading birds. In our experience Shifnal has one of the largest Reed Bunting roosts in the Midlands with over 300 birds regularly using the reeds as a roosting site.

Some interesting Reed buntings have been caught at Shifnal, including birds that were originally ringed in Somerset and Shetland!!

The numbers of wagtails caught and ringed at sewage works is a real plus for our ringing group and we hope that our success can continue. It is significant that Grey Wagtails are a conservation Red List species.



## Staffordshire, Shropshire and West Midlands Farms

We have access to several farms in South Staffordshire, Shropshire and the West Midlands where we conduct ringing activities throughout the year.

Farms are a vastly important to wildlife and for our ringing activities. Approximately 75% of the UK is farmed and this statistic goes to show how important farmland is for our wildlife.



Corn Bunting

UK farmers are often criticised and blamed wholesale for the decline in farmland birds, and often the criticism comes from high profile conservationists and social media, but across our farms we are seeing positive action being taken by farmers who are working tirelessly to reverse declines.

The farmers that we work with are now farming in a nature friendly manner, balancing food production with conservation. Stewardship schemes for supplementary feed for birds in winter, sensitive hedge management, improvement of soil quality utilising minimal till strategies, field margins for nectar and pollen flowers, game cover, wildflowers and wild-bird seed margins all go a long way to encourage and protect farmland bird species.



Farmer Andy Roberts  
with a Corn Bunting  
from his farm

Our farmers have all installed nest boxes for owls, raptors and passerines, a large percentage of which are successfully used.

Our farms are seeing increases in iconic farmland species: Yellowhammer, Linnet, Corn Bunting and Grey Partridge are present on the farms we ring on, with some farms having flocks of many hundred birds. In South Staffordshire last year we noted a flock of 20 Corn Buntings – which is a significant number for the county.

We are extremely proud of our farmers and the work they do for farmland birds

## Stone

The site sits approximately south of Stone, in the Trent Valley.

With the Trent running through the site, some of the land is subject of flooding, this creates excellent habitat for water birds and waders. The arable land to the west of the river is fertile and sightings have shown that the fields are important wintering grounds for birds such as Skylark, Redwing and Fieldfare.



Teal ringed at Stone

Large flocks of Skylark have been seen above the fields, at times over 100 birds were present. Night time surveys have found large numbers of roosting Skylark on the site. Initial visits identified that these areas were frequented by significant numbers of Common Snipe. On a number of visits over 300 birds have been seen, with good numbers of Jack Snipe also being noted.

Large numbers of Wigeon and Teal are also present during winter and it is hoped that we will be able to target these species more frequently.

Other wading birds have been seen albeit in smaller numbers; Green Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Dunlin, Curlew, Whimbrel and Lapwing have all been sighted.



Green Sandpiper

## Pattingham

Sitting on the outskirts of Wolverhampton, this farm is predominantly arable, with a small herd of beef cattle. Andy, the farmer, maintains a tidy efficient farm that supports fantastic numbers of farmland birds.

For the encouragement of farmland bird species, Clive Farm is undoubtedly one of the best managed farms in Staffordshire. The work that Andy undertakes to encourage birds such as placement of nest boxes, planting and management of cover crops and supplementary winter bird feeding (part of the Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Schemes) is clearly working.



Andy Roberts with a Corn Bunting



Large flocks of Yellowhammer, Linnet, Skylark, Chaffinch and Greenfinch are regularly sighted. 2018 also saw a flock of approximately 20 Corn Buntings on the farm. Whilst these birds are known to frequent the area, a flock of this size was very special indeed.

Andy has added numerous nest boxes at the farm using various designs to encourage owls and Kestrels.

For us, Andy's supplementary winter feeding at the farm has produced some excellent ringing sessions this year with the bonus of 2 Corn Buntings being ringed. This really is a special farm and a credit to the Roberts family.

## Lower Drayton Farm

We have now spent 4 years on Lower Drayton Farm and whilst some aspects of our ringing here have changed, we have a more focussed approach, concentrating on using thermal Imaging technology and night time dazzling activities.

The farm continued to produce good numbers of Skylarks in 2018 and we have now started to recapture birds that we have previously ringed.

The farm buildings are home to good numbers of Swallows which were rearing chicks into late September. Developments at the farm may impact on the numbers of accessible nesting birds, however there are still areas which will provide suitable areas for nesting.



Skylark from LDF



Fieldfare

The standout highlight of 2018 was the Skylarks. In November we observed very large flocks of the birds on arable fields. Skylarks are again on the UK conservation Red List due to declines in breeding and winter populations. The numbers at the farm are potentially regionally and nationally significant.

We hope to conduct some minor habitat improvement on the disused golf course in 2019, which hopefully will increase our catches of warblers and winter thrushes.



The disused golf course at LDF

The owners, Ray, Richard and Val have continued with their enthusiasm and support in 2018 allowing us unrestricted access to the farm, it continues to be a successful partnership.



## Flaxley Green

At 150 acres this single field has turned out to be one of the best Woodcock ringing fields that the group visit.

In the middle of the field is a 30 acre patch of deep Gorse which should show some particularly interesting breeding bird records.



Ringing Woodcock at Flaxley



Woodcock

The area is used as a race horse training track and so very little in the way of agricultural interventions happens here; a single cut of hay in late summer and that's it. It is not unusual to see between 20 and 30 Woodcock feeding here on a winter thermal imaging session!

## Trent Valley Meadows

We have had access to a series of meadows adjacent to the south western bank of the river Trent. 330 acres of grazing pasture that runs between Shugborough estate and the outskirts of Rugeley town.

This stretch of land is divided between 3 different land owners but is managed almost the same throughout, light grazing and a single cut of hay or silage.



Common Snipe



The Trent is very prone to flooding through autumn and winter so stock is generally removed in early autumn.

A project by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust several years ago created a system of water courses and ponds across a single 60 acre field which has created fantastic habitat for waders; Snipe, Jack Snipe and Green Sandpiper are often seen along these wet areas through winter.



Green Sandpiper

Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper and Llapwing all frequent the site during the spring and summer months.

The whole Trent Valley Meadows site offers fantastic ringing using thermal imaging technology with good numbers of Woodcock, Jack Snipe and the occasional Common snipe caught. Fieldfare, Redwing and Skylark are often observed during these ringing sessions but are seldom targeted for ringing as the waders are the object of the exercise.

## Beamhurst Flood Meadow



A 10 acre traditional flood meadow near Uttoxeter. Over the years the drainage has failed and the site has become very wet, a 4 acre patch of soft rush has formed and provided excellent habitat for Common and Jack Snipe.

It is quite common to see up to 150 Common Snipe and 20-30 Jack Snipe here in the winter months.



Masters of camouflage: The Jack Snipe

A concerted effort to ring Jack Snipe since 2016 on this site has produced 47 of these elusive little waders.

Many of these birds have been retrapped in subsequent years. Considering they travel into Scandinavia to breed this is proving to be a very significant site for this species.

## TWB Farms

TWB Farms is a new site for us, having obtained ringing and surveying permission in early 2019. TWB Farm, Staffordshire is arable farmland with a zero till farming strategy. We have visited several times since permission was granted, using thermal imaging technology we have seen some really positive results with good numbers of Golden Plover, Skylark, Woodcock, Grey Partridge, Common Snipe and more being seen, counted and ringed. We look forward to continuing to monitor the site through 2019.

### North Shropshire

We have access to two farms in North Shropshire which are fairly new to our site portfolio. We hope to visit these farms more regularly with Martin George. Both sites have been visited with the thermal image camera and we have caught a wide range of species across the farms. More detail will be provided in our Thermal Report which will be available soon!

# RINGING RECOVERIES

The following are some of the ringing recoveries we had in 2018. Our sites are highlighted in blue.

Date Ringed	Species	Location Ringed	Date recovered	Location Recovered	Reason	Distance	Days
16/02/2018	Lesser Redpoll	Wicken Fen, Cambs	27/12/2018	Cannock Chase	Captured by ringer	163km	314 days
13/08/2018	Reed Bunting	Oakley, Worcs	22/12/2018	Shifnal, Shrops	Captured by ringer	549km	131 days
08/10/2017	Lesser Redpoll	New Mills, Derbys	25/11/2018	Cannock Chase	Captured by ringer	69km	413 days
23/05/2017	Peregrine	Staffordshire	27/09/2018	Stone, Staffs	Found dead		
01/08/2018	Reed Warbler	Marsh Lane NR	08/09/2018	Titchfield Haven, Hants	Captured by ringer	183km	38 days
25/10/2016	Lesser Redpoll	Cannock Chase	26/04/2018	New Mills, Derbys	Captured by ringer	67km	548 days
16/08/2017	Reed Warbler	Sutton Sewage Works	02/06/2018	Tewinbury Farm, Herts	Captured by ringer	138km	290 days
04/11/2015	Cetti's Warbler	Marsh Lane NR	20/05/2018	Stortons Gravel Pits, Northants	Captured by ringer	55km	928 days
02/08/2017	Sedge Warbler	Mandesir, Charente-Maritime, France	03/05/2018	Marsh Lane NR	Captured by ringer	775km	274 days
09/07/2017	Reed Warbler	Stanwick, Northants	12/01/2018	Marsh Lane NR	Captured by ringer	75km	298 days
15/03/2017	Goldfinch	Earlwood, Warks	12/01/2018	Church Farm, Leigh, Dorset	Captured by ringer	173km	303 days
21/01/2017	Siskin	Colton Staffs	05/04/2018	Maybole, South Ayrshire	Found dead	334km	493 days
01/07/2016	Siskin	Cannock Chase	15/04/2018	Cnoc, Argyll & Bute	Captured by ringer	420km	653 days
21/10/2016	Lesser Redpoll	Cannock Chase	23/04/218	Cnoc, Argyll & Bute	Captured by ringer	420km	549 days
04/05/2017	Reed Warbler	Marsh Lane NR	21/04/2018	Offenham, Worcs	Found dead	40km	352 days
09/10/2016	Lesser Redpoll	Cannock Chase	04/04/2018	Crawley, West Sussex	Found dead	225km	542 days
12/10/2017	Lesser Redpoll	Cannock Chase	03/03/2018	Bishops Lydeard, Somerset	Ring found	207km	142 days
13/05/2017	Sand Martin	Bagworth Heath, Leics	10/07/2018	Marsh Lane NR	Captured by ringer	35 km	423 days

# RINGING TOTALS

The following pages show the total number of birds ringed by individual ringers during the period between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 and the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

Whilst not all of our ringing sites have been individually detailed in this report, our individual totals collated into can be found on page 46.



Barn Owl

There are several reasons for not reporting all of the species to specific locations, but this is predominantly due to the sensitivity of the species and the areas where they are ringed. For this reason, not all of our sites are listed to protect the birds and areas where they are resident or breed.

Sensitive species include those protected by Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and include Peregrine Falcon, Goshawk, Woodlark, Barn Owl, Kingfisher and Crossbill. Some of these species can be targeted by criminals and for this reason locations are kept confidential.



Ringling Goshawk chicks under licence from the BTO and in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981



# PENKRIDGE SEWAGE WORKS

Species name	Ringed 2018
Carrion Crow	1
Goldfinch	1
Grey Wagtail	11
House Martin	29
Meadow Pipit	158
Pied/White Wagtail	13
Robin	1
Sparrowhawk	1
Swallow	21
Yellow Wagtail	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>256</b>

Works at the sewage treatment site during 2018 made ringing difficult and opportunities to exploit the large numbers of hirundines were limited.

Towards the end of the summer work ceased and we were able to access the site and ringing was recommenced. Whilst we missed the best of the hirundines we did catch a small number.

Wagtails and Meadow Pipits fared well and we caught good numbers of the latter in September and October. Yellow Wagtails breed in the locality and it was good to catch 20 of these stunning birds. Over 30 were seen on some days in the summer.

We are really looking forward to getting back to Penkridge in the spring once the Swallows and House Martins return. Notable sightings this year have included Little Egret, Green Sandpiper, 2 Ospreys and a Short-eared Owl. A Blue-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava flava*) was seen in May/June.

Species name	Total Count of Species
Blackbird	8
Blackcap	7
Blue Tit	11
Carrion Crow	1
Chaffinch	12
Chiffchaff	15
Dunnock	3
Goldcrest	5
Goldfinch	29
Great Tit	3
Grey Wagtail	53
House Martin	539
House Sparrow	1
Jackdaw	2
Lapwing	3
Linnet	2
Long-tailed Tit	10
Meadow Pipit	477
Pied Wagtail	185
Redwing	8
Reed Bunting	3
Robin	19
Sand Martin	3
Sparrowhawk	3
Starling	89
Swallow	217
Water Pipit	1
Whinchat	1
Wren	6
Yellow Wagtail	44
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1760</b>

# SHIFNAL SEWAGE WORKS

Species Name	Ringed 2018
Blackbird	2
Blackcap	1
Blue Tit	1
Grey Wagtail	5
Marsh Tit	1
Moorhen	1
Reed Bunting	177
Robin	3
Song Thrush	1
Wren	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>193</b>

Opportunities to target hirundines at Shifnal were limited in 2018 and unfortunately the Phragmites growth in the reed bed made ringing in spring and summer impossible.

A trim of the reeds later in the year allowed us to concentrate on the Reed Bunting roost. Year after year this provides an excellent opportunity to target these birds, with estimates of 300+ birds using the site to roost. The site has seen us control birds ringed elsewhere in the UK, and birds originally ringed at Shifnal have been ringed at other sites.

2019 will see us increase efforts during warbler season, as well as targeting Grey Wagtails which are abundant at the site. The Reed Buntings continued to roost into early 2019 and with the improved reed bed access this is likely to see an increased catch in the future.

Reports of Cetti's Warblers being heard at the site were encouraging, however none have been caught to date. The reed bed is sizeable enough to sustain Bearded Tits and Bittern, and it is possible that these will be encountered in the future.

Species Name	Total Count of Species
Blackbird	10
Blackcap	15
Blue Tit	4
Chaffinch	1
Chiffchaff	27
Dunnock	3
Garden Warbler	1
Goldcrest	13
Great Tit	1
Grey Wagtail	54
House Martin	2
Long-tailed Tit	10
Marsh Tit	1
Moorhen	2
Pied/White Wagtail	16
Redstart	2
Reed Bunting	880
Reed Warbler	40
Robin	18
Sedge Warbler	5
Song Thrush	5
Starling	50
Swallow	71
Swift	1
Tawny Owl	1
Water Rail	3
Whitethroat	2
Willow Warbler	1
Wren	22
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1261</b>

# PATTINGHAM

Species Name	Ringed 2018
Blackbird	4
Blue Tit	6
Chaffinch	4
Corn Bunting	2
Dunnock	18
Fieldfare	1
Goldcrest	2
Golden Plover	3
Great Tit	3
Grey Partridge	4
House Sparrow	2
Kestrel	4
Linnet	52
Little Owl	1
Long-tailed Tit	2
Redwing	1
Reed Bunting	32
Robin	4
Skylark	26
Wheatear	1
Woodcock	3
Wren	1
Yellowhammer	41
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>217</b>

The farm still continues to see a year on year increase in a number of indicator species; Yellowhammer, Linnet, Corn Bunting and Skylark are all present in good numbers. There has been a visible increase of Corn Buntings with a flock of 15 birds being seen throughout the winter.

Species Name	Total Count of Species
Blackbird	6
Blue Tit	44
Brambling	11
Chaffinch	69
Corn Bunting	2
Dunnock	62
Fieldfare	9
Goldcrest	3
Golden Plover	3
Goldfinch	2
Great Tit	25
Greenfinch	6
Grey Partridge	20
House Sparrow	6
Jay	2
Kestrel	18
Lapwing	4
Linnet	120
Little Owl	1
Long-tailed Tit	4
Meadow Pipit	6
Redwing	67
Reed Bunting	62
Robin	23
Skylark	147
Snipe	1
Song Thrush	1
Stock Dove	6
Wheatear	4
Woodcock	7
Wren	2
Yellowhammer	207
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>950</b>

The bird numbers are testament to the Roberts family and their farming methods. The supplementary winter feed encourages large numbers of birds during the winter hunger gap. At the time of writing, the Yellowhammer numbers using the winter feed were in excess of 200. Skylark are still present in good numbers, however a mild winter appeared to have an impact on our catch rate.



Corn Bunting

There were a number of highlights in 2018, but in first place was the capture of two Corn Buntings on the farm. The birds are present in the area, but the supplementary feeding attracted a small flock and two of these were caught.

Early spring saw the arrival of Wheatear and Whinchat. These birds appear when the fields are worked for potatoes, and 2018 saw a good number of birds arrive, however the catch was limited to 1 bird, which was disappointing as it did not reflect the number of birds present. This was down to the ringer's skill, rather than the birds!



Male Wheatear

Summer of 2018 saw a huge number of butterflies utilising a field margin specifically planted for pollen and nectar. The margin was alive with Marbled White Butterflies, with many hundreds being seen, together with Small Skipper, Essex Skipper and Small Coppers.

In October 50+ Golden Plover arrived at the farm. Flocks of these birds had been seen on a neighbouring farm in 2017 and it was great news when we were informed that they had returned.

A mist netting session on the 18<sup>th</sup> October targeting these birds saw us catch 3 Golden Plover and a surprise Woodcock. Whilst this was perhaps 5% of the flock, it was an excellent result to catch these birds in Staffordshire. A few tweaks in technique and set up in 2019 should see an increased catch if the birds return. Whilst there were historic records of these birds being seen, it was our surveys with Thermal technology which identified the flocks using the fields at night.

As the winter arrived, the wintering flocks of Yellowhammer, Linnet, Chaffinch, Brambling, Reed Bunting and Corn Bunting were building in numbers. Look out for our 2019 report for further information!



# LOWER DRAYTON FARM

Lower Drayton Farm continues to be one of our main farms for surveying using thermal image technology.

The Skylark numbers in winter are often exceptional with hundreds of birds using the fields to roost. We have found that winter cereal crops and over winter stubbles provide the most birds at roost. A change of crop to grasses in 2018 had the potential of increasing roosting bird numbers and early indications were positive. However, as the grass reached 3' tall the birds seemed to move onto a neighbouring over wintered stubble field. Why this happened is a mystery, one thought is that the long grass became damp at night and the Skylarks didn't like this. We see the same when oilseed rape reaches a certain height. Whilst this should provide the birds with cover and protection from predation, they don't seem to like it.

Species Name	Count of species
Brambling	1
Chaffinch	1
Dunnock	1
Fieldfare	11
Great Tit	1
Grey Partridge	1
Jack Snipe	5
Meadow Pipit	3
Redwing	3
Robin	1
Skylark	50
Snipe	1
Song Thrush	2
Stock Dove	1
Swallow	12
Woodcock	5
Yellowhammer	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100</b>

In November we were joined by Chris Craig, Mya-Rose Craig and an International film crew who wanted to see our thermal work with Skylarks. This was great success and we managed to catch a few Skylarks and Mya-Rose caught her first one! It is vitally important for us to share our work with other ringing groups and young people and how our work with farmers is having a positive impact.

Jack Snipe were again present on the river meadows and we caught 5 new birds. We also managed to catch a few Woodcock.

# MARSH LANE NATURE RESERVE

2018 has been a difficult year in terms of ringing as the weather has been particularly difficult, cold weather at the beginning of the year, followed by an extremely hot summer then came the wind and the rain. Due to these difficulties we have seen a reduced number of birds ringed at the site this year.

As usual we started in early April to pick up early warblers but found that it was quite a slow start in comparison to other years, however in mid-May whilst having a ringing session in the reed bed we were surprised by the catch of a Grasshopper Warbler, which had not been heard previously. Another positive for the site was ringing a female Cetti's Warbler, which had a full brood patch and thus confirmed breeding.

Next to the reserve there is a small field, which has produced good numbers of Lapwing chicks for the last two years, so we were really looking forward to introducing our colour ringing project for these birds to learn more about our population however the beginning of 2018 had been very wet and for reasons unknown the Lapwings although arriving, did not attend in good numbers and did not breed here. We are hoping that 2019 sees the return of these birds.

During late 2017 we had done extensive work on the car park islands, where we had re-gravelled a portion of one of the islands and had built 12 tern houses of two designs, one shaped like the roof of a house and another, which was a box with an open-door way. This was in order to encourage terns to this area and enable them to remain in a safe place until they were big enough to have a better chance of survival.

Species Name	Ringed 2018
Blackbird	3
Blackcap	142
Black-headed Gull	97
Blue Tit	4
Bullfinch	3
Cetti's Warbler	1
Chaffinch	1
Chiffchaff	11
Common Sandpiper	1
Common Tern	18
Dunnock	3
Garden Warbler	9
Goldcrest	2
Goldfinch	6
Grasshopper Warbler	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	2
Great Tit	5
Greenfinch	2
Lesser Whitethroat	1
Linnet	1
Little Owl	1
Long-tailed Tit	5
Meadow Pipit	3
Oystercatcher	1
Redwing	1
Reed Bunting	18
Reed Warbler	18
Robin	12
Sedge Warbler	10
Siskin	1
Skylark	4
Song Thrush	4
Whitethroat	2
Willow Warbler	3
Woodcock	1
Wren	3
Yellowhammer	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>402</b>

Black-headed Gulls and Common Terns arrived, and we were pleased to see the Black-headed Gulls choosing to nest away from this particular island and moved over to other islands where more vegetation was available.

The terns took well to the gravelled island and quickly set up territory although they appeared to enjoy nesting on the matting along the edge of the gravel more than on the gravel. Hopefully with confidence they will move to the gravel over time. The great news was that once the chicks hatched they moved in to what are now known as the tern bungalows, which are the square boxes with an open doorway, seeing 4 or 5 chicks sharing one box as they got older.



Common Tern chick

In total we colour ringed 18 Common Terns out of approximately 30+ chicks, which was a good increase in fledgling terns. It was a great sight and everyone felt a great sense of achievement. We hope to increase the gravel area at the beginning of 2019 and the number of tern bungalows.

An interesting thing was that Moorhen also set up nests within the tern bungalows so without knowing we have created a Moorhen nest box.

Following our gull and tern colour ringing we returned back to our autumn warbler ringing, when we could around the weather. In total we ringed 142 Blackcap in comparison with 223 in 2017 and 9 Garden Warbler in comparison to 12 in 2017.

Towards the end of 2018 it was agreed that we could build a duck trap in order to learn more about the wildfowl from Marsh Lane as we had received positive feedback from other reserves, which were ringing wildfowl and having a number of controls, allowing them to improve their knowledge around their site's movements. We are looking forward to ringing early 2019.

Finishing 2018 we had a couple of trips with our thermal imaging camera to survey the fields and ring the birds we encountered. Thermal imaging has really opened up new ways of surveying wildlife and has enabled us to record not only species but also enables us to count the number of birds present. We have seen good numbers of Common Snipe, Woodcock, Skylark, Meadow Pipit as well as Fieldfare and Redwing. We have ringed 1 Woodcock, 3 Skylark and a Meadow Pipit but have seen good numbers of other species including Foxes, Badgers, deer, Hares, mice and more.

## Total species ringed by WMRG at Marsh Lane NR.

Species Name	Totals Ringed	Species Name	Total Ringed
Blackbird	30	Linnet	2
Blackcap	580	Meadow Pipit	14
Black-headed Gull	511	Mistle Thrush	1
Blue Tit	168	Moorhen	2
Bullfinch	26	Oystercatcher	4
Cetti's Warbler	6	Pied/White Wagtail	4
Chaffinch	8	Redwing	74
Chiffchaff	160	Reed Bunting	186
Coal Tit	1	Reed Warbler	189
Common Sandpiper	1	Robin	83
Common Tern	42	Sand Martin	142
Dunnoek	27	Sedge Warbler	92
Fieldfare	3	Siskin	2
Garden Warbler	27	Skylark	9
Goldcrest	64	Snipe	3
Goldfinch	7	Song Thrush	14
Grasshopper Warbler	2	Sparrowhawk	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	Starling	139
Great Tit	90	Stock Dove	1
Green Woodpecker	2	Swallow	788
Greenfinch	6	Tree Pipit	1
Kestrel	1	Whitethroat	24
Lapwing	139	Willow Warbler	33
Lesser Redpoll	24	Woodcock	5
Lesser Whitethroat	12	Wren	56
Little Owl	1	Yellowhammer	2
Long-tailed Tit	43		
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3855</b>	



# BREWOD PARK

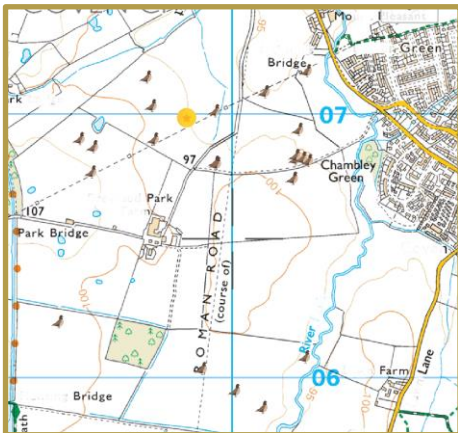
Farmer Tim Parton from Brewood, South Staffordshire introduced us to a new concept in farming; zero till.

This type of farming is a way of growing crops or pasture from year to year without disturbing the soil through tillage. This technique increases the amount of water that infiltrates the soil, the soil's retention of organic matter and its cycling of nutrients. This leads to exceptional soil quality which is high in food for birds, worms and invertebrates. The farm has opened our eyes to this type of farming, and our observations indicate that farmland birds favour this type of farm, and those with minimal till strategies.



Golden Plover from Brewood, a species that appears to benefit from minimal till strategies.

We have seen large numbers of birds on Tim's fields during our night time surveys, with Common Snipe, Fieldfare, Grey Partridge, Woodcock, Jack Snipe and Golden Plover all present in good numbers. Nocturnal netting has seen us catch Common Snipe, Woodcock and a Golden Plover, one of the first fledged birds caught in Staffordshire.



Catches at the farm using the thermal camera have been excellent, with numerous Woodcock caught. Of interest we have found that Woodcock are often found below electricity pylons and cameras at the farm. We are unsure as to why this is seen, one possibility is the electricity affects their internal compass? We have recorded all of the Woodcock caught at the farm on GPS software, providing an accurate record of where each bird was captured. This hopefully will indicate how site faithful the species are.

A highlight for 2018 was the capture of a Harvest Mouse, a record that is really important for the area.

We conducted a large amount of our dazzling activity at Brewood in 2018 and had nearly 100 new birds, but importantly a number of re-trapped birds including Skylark and Grey Partridge, both of which are doing well on the farm.



The autumn lamping season saw us visit weekly and on each visit we ringed birds. It was of note that one of the fields that has proved most successful in 2017 and 2018 had a steep decline in roosting and feeding birds. We ascertained that there had been an application of potash to the field.

Observationally this had a significant impact of bird numbers. Whilst a number of birds would have moved to other areas of the farm this did have a detrimental impact on our catches. On a positive note, following our observations farmer Tim reviewed his use of potash which may not be used on the farm again.

Our thanks go to Mrs Kirk and Tim for allowing us access to this fantastic farm.

Species Name	Total 2018
Fieldfare	12
Golden Plover	1
Grey Partridge	9
Jack Snipe	5
Kestrel	2
Lapwing	1
Meadow Pipit	1
Redwing	3
Skylark	38
Snipe	7
Stock Dove	3
Woodcock	13
Yellowhammer	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>97</b>

Species Name	Total Species Ringed
Fieldfare	19
Golden Plover	1
Grey Partridge	42
Jack Snipe	9
Kestrel	2
Lapwing	1
Meadow Pipit	4
Redwing	5
Skylark	109
Snipe	8
Stock Dove	4
Swallow	4
Tawny Owl	1
Wheatear	1
Woodcock	24
Yellowhammer	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>239</b>

# STONE

Sadly we didn't get to ring at Stone as much as we would have liked. Wet and Windy weather had an impact on our mist netting activities, followed by the Beast from the East! We are also still learning the best way to survey the site to increase catches and to keep disturbance to a minimum.

2019 will see far more effort at Stone and we hope that improvements to one of the larger ponds and a drop in water level will improve the species present and our catches.

However, when we have visited, we have still been extremely impressed by the number of Common and Jack Snipe that are present in the day time, together with Wigeon and Teal that visit the wetlands at night. Over 250 Common Snipe were recorded on one day in late 2018, this truly is an incredible number.

At least 5 Green Sandpiper were present at the site in 2018. Other notable sightings included Barn Owl, Little Owl, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Greenshank, Mandarin Duck, Goosander, Stonechat and Dipper!



Green Sandpiper a regular visitor to Stone

The highlight came in summer when a Spotted Crake was heard at the site. The bird was not seen despite efforts using the thermal camera but was heard on 2 separate occasions.

Thanks to Graham for his continued support and for allowing access to this fantastic location.

Species Name	Ringed 2018
Blackbird	1
Jack Snipe	2
Skylark	3
Snipe	13
Starling	1
Teal	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>22</b>

Species Name	Species Ringed
Barn Owl	1
Blackbird	2
Fieldfare	2
Green Sandpiper	1
Jack Snipe	10
Mallard	1
Redwing	2
Reed Bunting	2
Skylark	6
Snipe	88
Starling	4
Teal	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>121</b>

# CANNOCK CHASE

Cannock Chase is a fantastic location, not only for ringing but for spending time enjoying wildlife and there is perhaps no better location to spend a summer evening in the county.

The continued support of the Forestry Commission is something that we are extremely grateful for.

2018 was a good year for Nightjar, and we saw good numbers of birds throughout the summer. One area of clear-fell produced 9 new birds, including a new chick.

The thermal imaging camera also allowed us to film Nightjars on the chase for the first time; the footage can be found on our You Tube channel. Whilst we often hear churring males in summer months, it is difficult to know how many birds are present. However, the thermal image camera has revealed that more birds are present than can be heard.

Two birds that were ringed on the Chase in 2017 as chicks were both recaptured in different parts of the Chase in 2018 having returned as adults.

Whilst we actively target Nightjar and Cuckoo on the Chase, we do sometimes have incidental catches in the nets, and in 2018 this included Woodcock which breed in the area.

Cuckoos were present from April, with 5 birds seen together in one location. A rufous Cuckoo was also seen for the second year running.

Redpoll and Redwing numbers in late autumn were of note, with over 200 Redpoll in one roosting flock.

Species Name	Ringed 2018
Crossbill	1
Cuckoo	2
Fieldfare	1
Goldcrest	1
Great Grey Shrike	1
Lesser Redpoll	6
Linnet	1
Long-tailed Tit	8
Nightjar	22
Redpoll (Common/Lesser)	104
Redwing	58
Song Thrush	1
Tree Pipit	2
Whitethroat	1
Woodcock	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>211</b>





In autumn a Great Grey Shrike was sighted in one of our regular ringing areas. The bird caused quite a stir in birding and photography circles and was regularly watched. Great Grey Shrike often visit Cannock Chase, and whilst they are not recorded by birders every year, it does not necessarily follow they are not present. We ringed the Shrike in December and monitored it for 10 days post ringing. It did not leave the area where it was captured, and its behaviour did not change. As of March 2019, the shrike was still present!

It is hoped that this bird returns in late 2019 as this would help us to understand how site faithful these birds are.

Known as the butcher bird – Shrike often impale their food on thorns, known as their larder. Food sources include, insects, small mammals, small birds and reptiles.

The excellent work carried out by the Forestry Commission's rangers, foresters and ecologists make Cannock Chase a true haven for wildlife, balanced against the needs of working forest.

## 2018 Totals

Species name	New	Subsequent Capture
Barn Owl	1	1
Blackbird	18	
Blackcap	143	
Black-headed Gull	97	
Blue Tit	81	6
Brambling	1	
Bullfinch	4	
Carrion Crow	1	
Cetti's Warbler	1	
Chaffinch	9	
Chiffchaff	12	
Coal Tit	11	
Common Crossbill	1	
Common Sandpiper	1	
Common Tern	18	
Corn Bunting	2	
Cuckoo	2	
Dunnock	22	3
Fieldfare	41	
Garden Warbler	9	
Goldcrest	6	
Golden Plover	4	
Goldfinch	18	
Goshawk	3	
Grasshopper Warbler	1	
Great Grey Shrike	1	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	1
Great Tit	50	2
Greenfinch	2	
Grey Partridge	11	3
Grey Wagtail	16	
Hobby	3	
House Martin	29	
House Sparrow	2	
Jack Snipe	23	2
Kestrel	6	
Lapwing	1	
Lesser Redpoll	21	4
Lesser Whitethroat	1	
Linnet	60	2
Little Owl	4	1
Long-tailed Tit	16	1
Mallard	1	
Marsh Tit	1	

Meadow Pipit	166	2
Moorhen	1	
Nightjar	22	4
Nuthatch	2	
Oystercatcher	1	
Peregrine	11	
Pied/White Wagtail	13	
Redpoll (Common/Lesser)	105	
Redwing	70	
Reed Bunting	215	9
Reed Warbler	16	2
Robin	31	
Sand Martin	76	8
Sedge Warbler	9	1
Siskin	83	1
Skylark	129	14
Snipe	31	1
Song Thrush	9	
Sparrowhawk	1	
Spotted Flycatcher	4	
Starling	1	
Stock Dove	5	
Swallow	33	
Teal	2	
Tree Pipit	2	
Wheatear	1	
Whitethroat	3	
Willow Warbler	3	
Woodcock	73	
Wren	5	
Yellow Wagtail	20	
Yellowhammer	50	1
Total	2014	69

## 2018 – Marsh Lane Black-headed Gull Sightings

The Total flight miles for 2018 is 5,621!

Darvic	Date sighted	Location	Finder
<b>2AHL</b>	06/01/2018	Pope's Quay, Cork City, Ireland	B. Power G. Thomas
<b>2BKN</b>	08/01/2018	Nevern Estuary, Newport, Wales	S. Baxter
<b>2AHL</b>	21/01/2018	River Lee, Cork, Ireland	B. Bromkamp
<b>2BAJ</b>	02/02/2018	Nevern Estuary, Newport, Wales	S. Baxter
<b>2AFP</b>	10/02/2018	Pinto Landfill, Madrid, Spain	E .Del Val
<b>2AKA</b>	25/02/2018	Arklow, Co. Wicklow, Ireland	G. O Se
<b>2BFH</b>	15/02/2018	Gillan Creek, Cornwall	M. Grantham
<b>2BXX</b>	05/03/2018	Sonzay, Indre-et-Loire, France	P. Derrien
<b>2AFA</b>	10/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	J. Rankin
<b>2ATV</b>	10/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	J. Rankin
<b>2BCV</b>	10/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	J. Rankin
<b>EZ64230</b>	27/02/2018	River Weaver, Winsford, Cheshire	
<b>EZ64047</b>	16/01/2018	Bownes, Cumbria	S. Christmas
<b>2AAV</b>	13/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AFA</b>	13/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AXN</b>	13/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BAK</b>	13/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ACT</b>	16/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AJN</b>	16/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AKA</b>	16/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ANL</b>	16/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ACX</b>	25/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AVL</b>	26/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BTJ</b>	27/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BJC</b>	01/04/2018	RSPB Old Moor, Barnsley	D.Bamforth
<b>2BFH</b>	28/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AKH</b>	30/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ALC</b>	30/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ALX</b>	30/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ANC</b>	30/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2APA</b>	30/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BNF</b>	31/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling

<b>2AVK</b>	31/03/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BAJ</b>	02/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AAJ</b>	04/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AAC</b>	04/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BNF</b>	04/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AKX</b>	07/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ANP</b>	07/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ATC</b>	07/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AVT</b>	07/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BFH</b>	07/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BPH</b>	11/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AVP</b>	18/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AXV</b>	11/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ACC</b>	01/05/2018	RSPB Rye Meads, Hertfordshire	P. Roper
<b>2ACP</b>	25/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BLJ</b>	11/04/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BKP</b>	06/05/2018	Earlwood Lakes, Solihull	M. Griffiths
<b>2BVK</b>	02/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BTP</b>	02/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ALN</b>	02/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BPX</b>	02/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BKP</b>	06/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ANF</b>	07/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2BNV</b>	09/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2CCX</b>	12/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2CFJ</b>	16/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2AFX</b>	16/05/2018	Marsh Lane, Meriden	G. Rowling
<b>2ALX</b>	17/06/2018	Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire	Fred
<b>2BKF</b>	21/06/2018	RSPB Nene Washes, Cambs	M. Whiffin
<b>2CVV</b>	27/06/2018	Braunton, North Devon	R. Jutsum
<b>2BKV</b>	28/06/2018	Kingsbury Water Park, Warks	S.Pick
<b>2CXH</b>	28/06/2018	Kingsbury Water Park, Warks	S.Pick
<b>2CTF</b>	10/07/2018	Earlwood Lakes, Solihull	M. Griffiths
<b>2AVV</b>	10/07/2018	Earlwood Lakes, Solihull	M. Griffiths
<b>2ALT</b>	10/07/2018	Earlwood Lakes, Solihull	M. Griffiths
<b>2BAK</b>	10/07/2018	Earlwood Lakes, Solihull	M. Griffiths
<b>2ENT</b>	13/07/2018	Olton Mere, Solihull	A. Dean
<b>2AVV</b>	24/07/2018	RSPB Conwy, Wales	R. Sandham



<b>2CVF</b>	25/07/2018	Harpers Island Wetland Centre, Cork	B. Power
<b>2BLN</b>	28/07/2018	Penclawdd, Wales	L. Ryan
<b>2BFF</b>	10/08/2018	RSPB Conwy, Wales	R. Sandham
<b>2AJN</b>	15/08/2018	Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire	F. Stokes
<b>2CTP</b>	20/08/2018	Sean Walsh Park, Dublin, Ireland	G. Prole
<b>2CPV</b>	26/07/2018	Carne Beach, CO Wexford, Ireland	K. Mullarney
<b>2ALV</b>	28/09/2018	Bull Island, Dublin, Ireland	B. Burke
<b>2BKP</b>	05/10/2018	Olton Mere, Solihull	A. Dean
<b>2BXT</b>	04/10/2018	Strangford Lough, Northern Ireland	J. Rod
<b>2AXV</b>	14/10/2018	Ballymena, Northern Ireland	D. Platt
<b>EZ64230</b>	07/11/2018	Bottom Flash, Winsford, Cheshire	BTO
<b>2BTP</b>	11/11/2018	Gann Estuary, Dale, Pembrokeshire	P. Jenks
<b>2AXC</b>	12/11/2018	Togher, Cork, Ireland	B. OMahony
<b>2AHL</b>	23/11/2018	Swanshurst Pool, Moseley	D. Jennings
<b>2BLN</b>	19/11/2018	Penclawdd, Wales	P. Larkin
<b>2ENH</b>	05/12/2018	Bownes-on-Windermere, Cumbria	K. Brides
<b>2AJN</b>	10/12/2018	Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire	F. Stokes

## Forward look

2019 promises to be a great year! We are currently busy with our thermal image Surveys and ringing at farms that supply supplementary winter feed.

We have some really exciting plans and hopefully over the next few years this will see us working with partners on a number of projects. A key area will be working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to conduct surveys across a number of their sites including Tuckleshome Quarry, Cotton Dell, Black Brook and Gentleshaw Common. A number of projects are being planned with Dipper and Pied Flycatcher boxes being progressed at the time of writing.

Tuckleshome Quarry will be one of the biggest reed beds in the region and we hope to be a big part of the surveys conducted at the reserve as it develops! Watch this space.

Further nest box projects are underway with the Forestry Commission in North Staffordshire, these will be for Pied Flycatcher and Redstart. We have also installed nest boxes at Severn Trent Water sites in Shropshire and Staffordshire where we hope to attract breeding wagtails.

Funding applications have been submitted and we are currently awaiting approval. The applications will allow us to continue our work and hopefully share some of our work with the visually impaired community.



Dennis Leonard 90 years young and still making us beautiful bird boxes!!

We are active on social media and if you are interested in up to date news and reports please follow us on Twitter or Facebook!

@RingersWM

Facebook: West Midlands Ringing Group.

We hope you have enjoyed this inaugural report! Keep your eyes peeled for our Thermal Imaging report which will be available shortly!

West Midlands Ringing Group.

## **Are you interested in joining West Midlands Ringing Group?**

If you are interested in being a ringer or helping us with our work, please do not hesitate to get in touch via email or our website.

Email: [wmrg.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wmrug.contact@gmail.com)

Website [www.westmidlandsringinggroup.co.uk](http://www.westmidlandsringinggroup.co.uk)

If you are a local ringer and would like to be part of WMRG then please contact us!

Further information about bird ringing can be found at:

[www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

## **Are you interested in ringing taking place on your land?**

We currently have access to a number of sites where we conduct surveys, however if you would like to discuss ringing on your land then please contact us at

Email: [wmrg.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wmrug.contact@gmail.com)