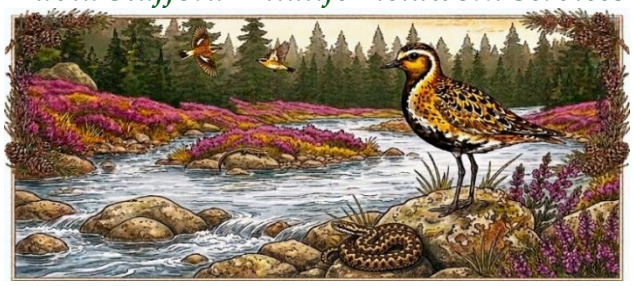
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Preliminary and Interim Breeding Bird Survey Report

Client: Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre (Grow Cook Learn)

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Client Details

Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre is local community and tourist leisure centre which since 2014 has been managed and operated by Grow Cook Learn, who are a registered charity engaging with visitors through educational services and social events on the premises. The centre promotes sustainable horticulture, advocating local food/produce, and promoting outdoor activities in the surrounding AONB landscape together with the wildlife and local history/pre-history of the region.

Project Instructions

Establish the current breeding avifauna from fieldwork surveys, focussing on the assemblage of resident and migratory birds to assist environmental land designation and management policy together with providing data for wider taxa biodiversity projects and educational studies.

The survey is a preliminary ecological appraisal for the purpose of confirming the current avian baseline. The results are principally intended to index future population trends as a percentage of this baseline and provide a reference for evaluating any changes in connection with managing the quality of the natural ecosystems.

Species locations are mapped in conjunction with this report for direct comparison with any periodic or future surveys as and when habitats evolve during the course of ongoing management.

The Surveys were conducted entirely on a voluntary non-fee basis.

Introduction

This report confirms non-species-specific ornithological fieldwork observations and validates and authenticates all species either found or expected, on a presence or absence basis, and which breed, forage, and / or roost, though does not necessarily confirm the full distribution or abundance of any particular species.

The report is a non-scientific narrative account of summary results from the whole site and includes brief comment on phenology and behaviour where applicable to assist with understanding avian habitat requirements. The report should be read in conjunction with the appended mapping.

Since 1970 there has been a long-term decline of once abundant common wild birds originally driven largely by decreasing woodland and farmland species. The decreasing trend still continues, and now also threatens sea birds.

The fortunes of some bird species, known as key' indicator' *'specialist'* species, help to demonstrate this, which are species comprising those either exclusively restricted to a particular habitat or chiefly dependent on it. In woodland for example these include Marsh Tit and Spotted Flycatcher, which have reduced in number by more than half.

Additionally, four particular woodland *'generalist'* species, (those which have evolved to also flourish in more varied habitats) have also experienced a long-term decline in the UK: Bullfinch, Tawny Owl, Song Thrush and Dunnock. Of these, only song thrush appears to have improved somewhat over the most recently measured 5-year short-term period, whilst bullfinch, dunnock, chaffinch, blue tit and great tit are all continuing to decline.

All of these species currently breed at the site.

Site Details (in brief)

The site covers approximately 30 acres, oriented north/south in a valley floor, and lies within a designated AONB national Landscape renowned for ecologically important woodlands and other SSSI biotopes.

The eastern boundary is flanked by the river Onny opposite the main A49 trunk road along the western edge tapering towards the southern corner with a road bridge over the river. The small township of Craven Arms lies directly at the north end. The river follows an original un-diverted paleochannel, at first under a precipitous bluff on the opposite bank around a meandering bend, with the bank then levelling out downstream.

Habitat zones are closely inter-connected alongside a riverine belt of mixed deciduous woodland bordering the river banks lined mainly by mature Alder and Willow trees. The riparian zone blends into adjacent damp grassy meadows with winding visitor pathways, tall, thick hedges, small ponds and scrapes, various boggy thickets and small deciduous woodland spinneys / copses. Beyond the river on the opposite bank, the land is farmed (grazing pasture).

The river flows south (with a source to the northwest) with variable turbulence through shallows and riffles but is slowed by a weir downstream at the furthest southern corner where the river then continues under the road bridge to a confluence with the River Teme, at Bromfield.

Compositional heterogeneity is provided through mapping appended with this report showing demarcated zones, as further detailed below in brief, in order to cross-reference species locations with habitat:

1 Horticultural /Vegetable/fruit shrubs/growing allotment.
2 Orchard (Apple trees)
3 Willow Maze / Osiers
4 Meadows (Southern end meadows also with scrapes and shallow ponds)
5 Mixed scrub/fruit tree thicket, mostly comprising Crab Apple, Damson, Wild Cherry, Spindle and Hazel with some young Oak and Ash together with thistle beds
6 Young spinney of mainly Ash and Lime trees with some Field Maple.
7 Shrub herbage, primarily Bramble with Rosebay Willowherb
8 Damp woodland copse of mixed young-semi-mature broadleaf trees.
9 Dense, richly-vegetated boggy ditch and scrub thicket surrounding a rivulet with mainly Alder, Hawthorn/Blackthorn Hazel and coppiced Willow sp. and two small young deciduous spinneys of mainly Ash and Alder.
10 River
11 Two Ponds with Phragmites and some Bullrush

There is both standing and fallen deadwood in all wooded area, and also both natural brash-fall and piled brash. Few evergreens are present, other than Ivy.

Methodology

There are various methods of conducting bird surveys ranging from *CBC* (*Common Bird Census*) methodology, BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) standard *Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)* methodology, and *Brown and Sheppard et al*, which all adopt sampling by transects, in one form or another.

In the main, the surveys were conducted mostly using a transect walked at a slow ambling pace along the same pathway which winds through all of the various habitat zones.

The visits were spread over altogether 5 dates at different times of day, systematically following the same transect, and sometimes in reverse, with the purpose of objectively sampling the whole site. The surveys were non-species specific without selectively either finding or studying any species in particular.

Sighted birds were visually identified at both long range or close quarters. Some birds were also identified simultaneously by sound (calls /song) heard naturally, whereas bio-acoustic technology (computer software App Merlin) was on occasion also usefully employed to aid sound detection especially in windy conditions and in areas with prevalent road noise, but not exclusively.

All sightings are individually marked and labelled with respectively corresponding BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) species codes on the attached Sat-image maps,

The survey mapping shows each bird location marked and labelled with a unique BTO species code (See appendix 2) followed by a sub-script breeding code comprising various acronyms and symbols used sparingly, eg. **M** = Male bird / **S** = Male bird singing **N** = visiting probable nest site etc. whilst any drawn line marks the direction of flight with any landing place marked by an arrow head. The exact grid reference of nests / or sighted location of certain key species ie. Marsh Tit and Spotted Flycatcher, amongst others, are also separately shown with drop-pin locations on an additional separate map.

These codes and symbols are used in accordance with a BTO activity key-code (appendix 1) which helps with analysing and differentiating territories.

Line-of-flight symbols have been used infrequently, when pertinent, as they can often otherwise tend only to indicate where the bird usually flew away from the source of any disturbance, (bird surveyors included), whilst superfluous use can over-congest the mapping data.

The breeding evidence criteria used for the survey is detailed under the later heading of **Findings and Species accounts.**

Visits Dates

21/04/2026	06:40 - 10:00
01/05/2026	06:40 - 10:40
20/05/2026	17:00 - 19:00
15/06/2026	07:00 - 09:00
24/06/2026	19:30 - 23:00

The surveys attempted to cover the whole site, not just samples, and all areas of the site were fully accessible, unimpeded either by difficult terrain or restricted access.

The Surveys were conducted on a non-fee/ voluntary basis and fitted in between a remunerated working week. Wherever possible the surveys were conducted mainly during early mornings, but the weather throughout March was exceptionally wet, and both May and June were very windy, which limited available opportunities. The centre is a popular and busy local meeting hub for various events and activities, and dog walkers, Accordingly, relatively quieter weekday visits were mainly adopted wherever possible mostly during early mornings.

This report does not include domesticated, feral, or commercially reared species ie. Feral Pigeon. Ring Necked Pheasant (PH) or Red Legged Partridge, nor any very rare or vagrant species seldom or never occurring in Shropshire. (None found).

Where appropriate, and other than included for general reference purposes there are no further disclosure details in this report concerning sensitive Schedule 1 legally protected Species (marked in the listings with a blue hash symbol).

There is little value in continuing with a woodland breeding bird survey after July due to the risk of compromised provenance through juvenile birds dispersing from natal breeding areas elsewhere. (Many bird species are capable of significant geographical movement after fledging).

Findings and Species accounts

Virtually all UK migratory bird species over-winter in sub-Saharan Africa but in Spring move north into Scandinavia and Europe during March, April and May. Species reliably migrate to the UK in a dependable regular sequence, with the earliest arrivals commencing with, amongst others, Chiffchaff, and lastly amongst others, Nightjar.

Resident populations of various common species, such as Woodpigeon, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Chaffinch, are significantly swelled in winter by short-distance migrant birds from Europe / Scandinavia so simply finding the presence of any migratory species therefore in early Spring does not necessarily mean they actually breed, unless specific evidence of breeding is confirmed (see further comments below under Confirmed Breeding Species).

However, whereas birds may be transitory whilst travelling enroute to other breeding grounds elsewhere, the presence of birds during the breeding season and within breeding habitat none-the-less strongly implies probable breeding especially after the first week of May, though not whether breeding was necessarily successful.

The separate mapping linked to this report marks where the birds were first seen/heard on the site, before they moved elsewhere, but some sightings will invariably include duplicated birds.

A total number of **60** species were found altogether (see total species count and Species Code :- appendix 2) including **33** confirmed breeding species with further species considered probably breeding either within a locally wider radius and normally resident but absent, or evaded detection. The species count can therefore be genuinely treated as conservatively estimated.

Confirmed breeding species.
Species probably breeding either nearby or on site but unfound.
Fly-over/through/ Passage birds.

Many birds such as Starling, Greenfinch and Marsh Tit, amongst others, are either 'Red-listed' global priority species or British BoCC (Birds of Conservation Concern), and are identified as being the most threatened and afforded either national or global conservation action status. These species are labelled with a red hash **#** symbol in the listings below whilst others, of either other scarcity or European conservation concern, are # amber listed. (Some of the species in both of these categories at first glance maybe somewhat surprising). Omnipresent species marked in the listings below with a green hash # symbol have been mostly omitted from the maps to avoid over-cluttering data apart from a few records to show a sense of their distribution (Wren, Robin and Blackbird and Chiffchaff).

Yet other species also have variously graded conservation classifications under the 2019 UK Biodiversity Action Plan and most have hugely declined in recent years combined with threatened habitats.

All birds are legally protected, but any species listed below marked also with a blue hash # have special Schedule 1 legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Labelled species locations are plotted on the satellite image maps marked either in white, yellow or blue, to differentiate separate survey dates. Use of multiple data maps and the habitat zone map on this basis enables clear comparison side-by-side to show the recorded species/territory locations.

Confirmed breeding Species

This section covers observations of breeding evidence ordinarily determined by one or more of the following criteria:

Song and contact/Alarm calls. Territorial defence behaviour. Courtship/Distraction/Display. Carrying nest material or food. Carrying faecal sacs. Fledgling broods. Actual nests found in natural cavities, post-fledged independent broods and /or single juvenile birds.

The mapping data notably shows where the strongest species clusters occur on the site eg. Willow Warbler.

The birds categorised under this section, in the main, consist of multiple nesting pairs. For example, several breeding pairs of all the Warbler species were found including Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. Newly fledged young included Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Nuthatch,

Treecreeper, Robin, Dunnock, Bullfinch, Chiffchaff, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Song Thrush, Long Tailed Tit, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail.

Species are listed in scientific taxonomical sequence and described by their universally used common name only together with their sub-scripted BTO species and breeding code, as catalogued below, comprising:

Mallard (MA) # Several mixed birds were seen frequently on along the river, initially eclipse-plumage winter males and later full breeding-plumage males and drakes. No broods were seen although the species commonly breed along the river.

Moorhen(MH) A single pair nested in Phragmites, in the larger pond, with a brood of (only) 3 x 1-2dyo chicks seen on 1st May (suggesting a part-predated larger clutch). A multi-brooded species with early clutches which are often larger than late season broods, but only one brood confirmed.

Stock Dove (SD) # Calls and song were frequently heard from a nesting pair in a tree hole just over the site boundary in the copse of trees beyond the bend in the river. The pair were also seen on the ground within the site boundary taking grit from the pathways.

Wood Pigeon (WP) # Ubiquitous, and nesting throughout tall woodland edge trees and hedgerows locally.

Tawny Owl (TO) # Tending to be strictly nocturnal or late crepuscular, a fledged brood of 3 were seen flitting between trees and a telegraph wire with vociferous begging calls at dusk on 24th June, being fed by parents. The site has nest boxes for the species close by, which were examined earlier in the season for any tell-tale scratch marks below the entrance holes but none were found. However, this does not mean they did not use the boxes although there are also various alternative natural tree hole cavities on the site also close by to where the fledglings were found.

Greater Spotted Woodpecker (GS). Seen and heard drumming (sound carries far); a pair nested in a freshly excavated hole in an Alder tree in a copse of trees near the ponds.

Grey Wagtail (GL) # A Male bird was regularly seen both on and around the river and the small ponds and scrapes at the western end of the site where a BTO ringed bird was also believed to be probably a first summer male bird. The female was seen only once with absence indicating a brood and they will have bred if not within the site, close by, though no fledged brood seen.

Wren (WR) # Ubiquitous. Song and alarm calls were heard constantly throughout the site.

Dunnock (D.) # Heard and seen throughout the survey areas in limited numbers but is often a skulking unobtrusive bird and widely distributed.

Robin (R.) # Mainly seen around the visitor centre and car park but also in the copses and hedgerow near the northern edge of the site near the main road where juvenile birds seen

Song Thrush (ST) # Common and scattered and multi-brooded with breeding pairs estimated at 3-4. The song carries far and birds are mobile, so determining exact numbers is difficult when the same bird is likely heard several times. None-the-less birds were commonly seen simultaneously. A freshly fledged early brood attended by parent birds was seen on 21st April.

Blackbird (B.) # Generally common. Song and alarm calls were heard constantly throughout the site and adult birds carrying food back to nests.

Garden Warbler (GW) Commonly associates with Blackcap, sharing similar song and occurring in the same habitats but generally less numerous and more skulking and unobtrusive. Several were seen with successful breeding confirmed by fledgling birds, with an estimated ±3 nesting pairs.

Blackcap (BC) As Garden warbler, but more numerous throughout the whole site. The species breed in significant numbers with ±4 confirmed territories nesting primarily around the fringes of the site near the river but also the thick hedging below the road at the western edge.

Whitethroat (WH) Two pairs bred on the site, both low in Bramble, amongst typically preferred mixed low herbage but parent birds and newly fledged young subsequently both used the adjacent thick tall hedgerow (bisecting the tapered southern end of the site), and fringe scrub/shrub areas for refuge and feeding. Exact nest sites are shown with drop-pin locations marked on the appended satellite image maps which are provided to assist with habitat enhancement management.

Reed Warbler(RW) A singing and territorially active bird was repeatedly seen in the phragmites dominating the smaller pond which is unlikely to support more than one pair. However, the adjacent larger pond, with extensive reedy edges likely also harbours another pair.

Willow Warbler (WW) # Declining ground nesting species linked to adverse impact of climate change. **(**Numbers across UK fell sharply by 41% between 1994 and 2018). The species is thinly distributed on the site with ±2 nesting pairs, both in close proximity to the river, representing the current baseline.

Chiffchaff (CC) # Omnipresent. Closely related and very similar to Willow Warbler, and commonly confused, the Chiffchaff population in the UK is growing. The species are one of the first UK migrant arrivals in March by when numerous birds were evident in song throughout the whole site.

Goldcrest (GC) Two sightings with a single singing bird found but elusive due to road noise and visitor disturbance. At least one, possibly 2 breeding pairs likely.

Spotted Flycatcher (SF) # The species has declined immensely, by over 85% since the 1970's which could account for local populations becoming increasingly scattered and favouring core traditional regions, but the bird was once common in Wales and England, favouring mature /semi-mature deciduous and broad-leaved woodlands, woodland edges, and clearings often with scant under-storey.

One territory was found, but only on 15th June, with the bird seen and heard frequently then but not thereafter and with no juvenile / brood or any other specific breeding evidence so it is not possible to confirm breeding albeit probable, hence included in this category.

Future monitoring of this particular species, whilst prospectively woodland management, is strongly encouraged.

Great Tit (GT) # Common but thinly distributed and actually tends to favour artificial nestboxes over natural cavities. Parent birds were observed carrying food and removing faecal sacs from nest sites in various locations but primarily around the allotment/vegetable growing areas.

Blue Tit (BT) # Generally omnipresent and broadly dispersed often co-inhabiting the same areas as Great Tit and using nest boxes along the garden/allotment fence-line bordering the river.

Long Tailed Tit (LT) # A very common (resident) but solitary species during the nesting season in woodland thickets and hedgerows. Several territories were found widely distributed with adults exhibiting territorial behaviour, courtship, carrying food, and sightings of family groups with fledglings first seen on 14th June. 4 Estimated pairs.

Nuthatch (NH) Common, and often seen with feeding flocks of Tit's. Conspicuously territorial and active around nest holes in trees. Several pairs found visiting nest holes, with a newly fledged brood being fed by parents during the survey on 15th June. Number of breeding pairs estimated at ±2

Treecreeper(TC) Monogamous, generally solitary and sedentary, and fiercely territorial; one pair nested at the furthest west corner of the site with others seen elsewhere as plotted on the mapping. Estimated ±2 breeding pairs.

Magpie (MG) Solitary when breeding and tending to prefer less dense woodland and more open country but prospers in the wider area and is likely breeding around and near the edges of the woodland. Occasional views and calls.

Jackdaw (JD) # Nesting just over the site boundary beyond the bend in the river amongst trees with some standing deadwood in natural holes and cavities and in close proximity to nesting Stock Doves.

Rook(RO) # A communal nester/Rookery: 11 nests were found in a small spinney of mainly Lime trees at the northern edge of the site beside the main road. It is understood that this is the first year they have bred at the site.

Carrion Crow(C.) # 2 nests were found in the tree canopies of 2 copses, one near the ponds and the other in the copse at the furthest western corner of the site

House Sparrow(HS) # Breeding in both the tended hedge-line close to the main footpaths near the visitor centre and also likely various nest boxes in the neighbouring gardens. (Estimated numbers are difficult to confirm without a species-specific survey).

Goldfinch (GO) Solitary to social and seen and heard frequently and repeatedly during concurrent surveys in prospectively good breeding habitat especially along the mature tall hedgerows bordering neighbouring gardens near the gardens/allotment and orchard area behind. The Species are Estimated nesting pairs >3

Greenfinch (GR) # Early nests of this species tend to be in evergreens but otherwise tall Bramble and commonly in hedgerows of managed Hawthorn combined with optimal woodland edges. Successful breeding was accordingly almost certain in the vicinity of where locations are marked on the maps. Nesting pair numbers low at ±2.

Bullfinch (BF) # A non-migratory resident species with territories found typically in vicinity of dense bushes, brambles and thickets, and riverside hedgerows. Nesting pairs estimated at three, with two in the Bramble thickets along the river bank (one less than 3 metres away from a riverside bench) and the other nearer the road.

Species probably breeding either nearby or on site but unfound.

The species in this category comprise birds seen within their typical breeding season habitat with strong plausibility of breeding nearby but where no specific evidence was observed.

Canada Goose (CG) # Canada geese are a non-native species introduced from North America from arctic, sub-arctic and temperate regions and have established breeding colonies now adapted to urban and cultivated habitats in the UK . Riverside nesting locally. A pair flew over, north, up-valley on 1st June.

Mandarin Duck A non-native tree-hole nesting species which occurs along the river with a single male fly-through bird seen on 15th June.

Goosander (GD) Gregarious and regularly seen on south Shropshire rivers especially in winter but with prospectively breeding paired birds also recorded in previous years on the Onny nearby, in

spring. A group of 3 were seen flying through, north, on 1st June. Shy nesting species so probably nests elsewhere locally along the river.

Common Buzzard (BZ) Frequently seen, as Red Kite, in active flight or soaring over the site with 'crying' and mewing. The constant presence of birds almost certainly confirms the proximity of a nest in suitably tall copses of trees nearby.

Sparrowhawk (SH) # A late nesting species which is principally resident and often with strong site fidelity, remaining in the vicinity of breeding territory throughout the year. Optimal breeding habitat of mature woodland mixed with conifers is optimal nearby but overly disturbed by anthropogenic pressure at the site itself. A female was seen in flight close to the site.

Red Kite (KT) # # Fly-over birds were frequently seen. (A pair nested to the south < 1 mile away, whilst others doubtlessly nested also in the surrounding areas)

Hobby (HY) # A female bird was seen early morning on 15th June, with relatively calm and sunny warm weather and before any visitors arrived, flying in from the north high over the site and swooping lower over the grassy meadows almost certainly hunting dragonflies or hirundines which were also present. The species freely breed in south Shropshire within a few miles of the site which therefore will be an increasingly important feeding ground.

Water Rail (WA) It is believed that the quiet undisturbed ditch through the Bog and muddy vegetated margins could potentially hold Water Rail although none were heard or seen. The Species have been found previously on the site both by staff and others (author included in Winter) but none were seen or heard on the survey dates / times.

Collared Dove (CD) Fly over birds seen in distance over edge of township beyond carpark often nesting in urban/suburban gardens.

Kingfisher (KF) # # Heard only once beside the river upstream on 20th May. The species have a long nesting season and the bird was either actively prospecting, or already nesting probably downstream.

Green Woodpecker (G.) Fiercely territorial, counter-reacting aggressively to a call lure but otherwise not heard or seen. The species rarely drum, unlike Greater Spotted Woodpecker, and hole chipping and tapping sounds are often imperceptibly quiet but the species breed widely, locally.

Mistle Thrush (M.) # Solitary, tending to prefer evergreens for nesting, especially early nests before deciduous trees sprout leaves, and usually scoldingly protective of the nest site, a bird was seen at distance perched near a tree top. A late-winter/early spring nesting species, but no Juvenile birds were encountered during the surveys. Further early surveys preferably in late February or March are recommended to confirm breeding however the absence of finding any fledged young implies none nested.

Lesser Whitethroat (LW) A migrant bird in song was heard several times concurrently for 5 minutes at the location marked on the appendix 1 drop-pin map and is a notoriously unobtrusive species when breeding, skulking in deep shrubbery, and occurring uncommonly in Shropshire. No further song/calls were heard or any evidence of attempted breeding and it is deduced that the bird, on passage, moved on elsewhere. The breeding habitat however is, in places, close to optimal, albeit small but disturbance is likely to deter breeding.

Marsh Tit (MT) # For such a small bird, Marsh Tits have unusually large territories averaging between 4 and 6 hectares. A single bird was heard singing on 15th June. Marsh Tit do not favour over-managed habitats / woodland and is notably a key species widely regarded as a peak measure of fully naturalised habitats.

Starling (SG) # Woodland edges with farmsteads, adaptable to anthropogenic pressures, and almost certainly breed in and around the housing areas close to the site. Not found breeding but seen flying over the visitor centre occasionally.

Swift (SI) # Feeding flocks with other Hirundines over-head and likely breeding in the close vicinity.

Sand Martin (SM) Colonial nester, often in river banks but none found other than feeding with other Hirundines overhead. The species will be probably breeding in the locality and possibly further along the river downstream.

Swallow (SL) # Plentiful, with mainly Housemartins frequently feeding over the meadows with the proximity of favoured agricultural buildings nearby strongly implies successful breeding.

House Martin (HM) # As Swallow, with nests under roof eaves

Pied Wagtail (PW) Seen twice but only during the first two surveys after when muddy scrapes had dried up, but nesting almost certainly nearby and very adaptable, choosing a wide range of nest sites in any suitable crevice.

Dipper (DI) # The River course will almost certainly accommodate a pair locally and a male bird was seen fleetingly on 20th May. Dippers freely breed along woodland edge rivers but breeding habitat further downstream is probably more desirable so breeding close by is therefore reasonably assumed.

Chaffinch(CH) # The survey surprisingly did not find any confirmed breeding Chaffinch even though the species commonly associates with parks and gardens. A singing male bird was seen near small mixed orchard trees near the on elevated ground near the visitor centre beside the road which implies probable breeding albeit unconfirmed.

Siskin (SK) Preferring the proximity of conifers but scattered throughout the locality in small numbers. A bird was seen and heard only once during the first survey, but once leaves sprout and nesting starts are quiet and hard to locate. Tending to prefer Spruce larch or Fir which are absent.

Fly through/Passage

Little Egret (ET) A fly-though bird was seen on 21st April low upstream over the tree canopy following the course of the river. Scarce non-breeding passage migrant and Winter visitor species.

(Great White Egret also now more frequently occur in the County)

Grey Heron (H.) The species typically breed after their second year, with the nesting period peaking in late March. Two birds were seen including a resident non-breeding sub-adult bird very much less timid and sedentary than the other seen only once.

Black Headed Gull (BH) A single bird flew north up the valley over the river on 1st May. A few pairs breed in South Shropshire.

Lesser Black Backed Gull (LB) Fly-over high birds following the river course. A few breed in South Shropshire. A Priority Species (or Section 41 Species of Principal Importance) covered by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) / formerly BAPS / local Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Raven (RN) Seen passing over, high.

Reed Bunting (RB) # Not seen, although calls heard but only during the first survey on 21st April and likely will have been either an over-wintering bird or on passage to upland breeding grounds.

Summary/ Concluding comments.

The site provides not just breeding habitat for some species, but also valuable feeding grounds for (non-breeding) others, together with an over-wintering habitat for yet different species, resident or migratory.

Wildlife connectivity, integrated through cross-landscape habitat improvement schemes elsewhere, in turn, will almost certainly also mutually benefit biodiversity on the site, which at present is otherwise partially isolated, surrounded at the north end by a small township. However, the lowland grazing pasture either side of the river valley and the river course itself to the south provide valuable corridor and buffer zones and help dispel fragmentation.

Other birds which should be present, and were expected, but were absent or otherwise evaded detection, or could be prospectively enticed, are simply listed below, non-exhaustively, with brief comment, and in no particular order.

The habitats on the site could prospectively attract other species not detected during the surveys including for example **Pied Flycatcher (PF)** # whilst **Cuckoo (CK)** # not seen or heard within the survey areas (unexpectedly) reliably breeds locally but very sparsely. **Stonechat (SC)** may occur as a non-breeding over-wintering species.(The UK has a dual resident and migratory population). **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (LS):** # a call lure was used to try and determine if present but there were no reactions or responses. The species is solitary, and tends to prefer more open mature woodland in general with plentiful standing deadwood and rotting branches vitally supporting this species feeding requirements. Nationally, their fate, like many once quite common birds, has dwindled by more than 80% since the 1970's but they have been seen, rarely, further upstream. **Yellow Wagtail (YW)** # favours damp meadows and wetland often with proximity of cattle and could therefore be found within the surrounding habitats and **Tree Sparrow (TS):** # albeit more usually associated with open country and mixed arable farming.

The various habitats explored during the survey clearly support a wide range of birdlife typically associated with them. Most species found were principally those generally regarded as common and widespread, both locally and nationally and there were no significant populations of interest.

The Survey identified thriving ditches and scrapes, riparian/riverside meadow habitats, semi-mature hedgerows, scrubland under-storey thickets, mixed broadleaf and semi-mature deciduous woodland trees, and surrounding rough and semi-improved grassland and meadow habitats.

Scrapes attenuate the risk of over-dry conditions in summer and help maintain feeding conditions favoured by eg. Song Thrush. Providing scrapes and ponds of alternating depth with widened banks is increasingly important especially with the increasing prospects of more fluctuating extreme weather induced by climate change, to enable amphibians to move more freely between them especially during summer dispersal of young.

Dead and decaying standing and fallen wood crucially provides invaluable insectivorous feeding and niche nesting sites essential for some species, not least, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker which co-incidentally also tend to favour riparian / riverside habitats. The site commendably provides standing and fallen dead-wood.

The river banks should ideally be periodically inspected for any invasive non-native riverine flora listed under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which will threaten bio-diversity, eg. Himalayan Balsam which is moderately present on the site along the riverside whereas any alien Crayfish species, which are notoriously long-lived, should be treated in accordance with respective legislation.

The survey findings currently evaluate avian biodiversity at a locally important level especially combined with the abundance of diverse invertebrates /Odonata.

Additional Work required

Due to time constraints, further surveys in March (eg. for Mistle Thrush) and June are recommended in 2027. A supplementary report will be submitted accordingly during the summer 2027.

Enclosures and appendices

2 x Data maps

Appendix 1 BTO Breeding activity Codes

Appendix 2 BTO Breeding bird Count and Species Codes

Appendix 3 Sat. image nest location / key indicator species map Marsh Tit, Spotted Flycatcher and Whitethroat territory / Nest locations.

Appendix 4 1:25,000 scale site boundary map

Credits and Acknowledgements

Google Satellite Maps.

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