



Wyre Forest Study Group

BIRD SURVEYS IN WYRE FOREST - 2001-2002

Jim Martin

As described in the Review 2000 (Vol. 1), bird surveys in the forest area were concentrated on two full scale Common Bird Censuses. In these, breeding territories were derived from eight extended visits which mapped singing birds in areas to the north and south of Dowles Brook. Such procedures are not possible every year and this report is of three shorter Breeding Bird Surveys. Each of these involves only two visits, counting every bird seen or heard along two parallel 1 km. transects across specified 1 km squares. These were:

1. SO 7374 covering mainly Doghanging Coppice, a mature deciduous woodland with little understorey, together with some farmland, gardens and a maturing Christmas tree plantation.
2. SO 7674 including areas of Coldharbour and Rock Coppices, deciduous woodland with scrub, a golf course with water bodies and Long Bank, a stretch of road with mature gardens.
3. SO 7778 an area spanning the River Severn and including parts of Eymore and Seckley Woods, as well as Trimpley Reservoir.

All observations were recorded and the total numbers of each species, noted in each square, were tabulated. No effort was made to find every bird present. The results are therefore only indicative of populations but useful comparisons can be made when considering them together with 2000 and 2001 figures. Overall 65 species were found including those flying over - indicated with *.

The most common 10 species were all residents and similar in all squares, as shown by the following, giving typical numbers per square over the 3-year period.

Woodpigeon (25), Blackbird (22), Chaffinch (19), Robin (18), Wren (18), Blue tit (13), Great tit (13), Carrion crow (12), Song thrush (9), Dunnock (7).

Of summer migrants, Blackcap (6), Willow warbler (5), Chiffchaff (4) and Garden warbler (3) were the most frequent, while Cuckoo, Pied and Spotted

flycatcher, Whitethroat, Lesser whitethroat, Wood warbler and Tree pipit typically gave only one registration per square. Swallows and House martins were frequently seen feeding overhead and probably bred in houses and other buildings locally, although none were proven. Maximum counts for Swift (90) and House martin (30) were both over the Severn at Trimpley in June, presumably nesting in Bewdley.

Both Great spotted and Green woodpeckers were in all three squares but Lesser spotted did not show. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were present but scarce. Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Little and Tawny owls were all seen or heard.

There were indications of changes in populations between the years but these cannot be checked for statistical significance due to the small numbers. However four species showed reductions of more than 50% from 2000 to 2002. For Coal tit, Garden and Willow warbler these occurred in all three squares and are probably real as they reflect reported short term losses nationally. A drop in Green woodpecker numbers was only in Seckley and unlikely to be real as it opposed the national trend. Carrion crow and Great spotted woodpecker showed large gains which agree with countrywide figures.

Comparisons between squares show differences which are mainly related to the range of habitat present.

Eymore/Seckley/Trimpley with all woodland types, farmland, river and lake recorded 56 species and was the only site for Great crested grebe, Mute swan, Coot, Sparrowhawk, Red-legged partridge, Feral pigeon, Little owl, Swift, Skylark, Tree pipit, Grey wagtail, Pied flycatcher and Marsh tit.

The Long Bank square with good scrub in Rock Coppice produced both Whitethroats along with Tawny owl and Spotted flycatcher among its 48 species.

Doghanging, with less habitat variety, had only 36 species but was the best place for Treecreepers.

The average numbers of species present in each square, but not discussed above, are listed over.



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	SO 7778	7674	7374		SO 7778	7674	7374
Heron	2	1	0	Jay	5	1	2
Canada goose	0	4	0	Magpie	5	11	7
Mallard	29	10	2*	Jackdaw	6	5	32
Pheasant	9	2	0	Rook	3*	0	0
Moorhen	4	2	0	Starling	2	58	12
Lesser bb gull	8	6*	0	House sparrow	0	7	10
Stock dove	1	5	5	Greenfinch	4	18	14
Collared dove	1	9	2	Goldfinch	0	9	4
Pied wagtail	1	6	3	Linnet	0	4	4
Mistle thrush	2	5	2	Bullfinch	3	3	2
Long-tailed tit	5	1	2	Yellowhammer	2	3	0
Goldcrest	6	4	0				

* - indicates those flying over are included.

Historic references to the Wyre Forest in the New Naturalist book series report high numbers of:

- Coal tit - “dominant species”
- Willow warbler - “four times as abundant as Chaffinch”
- Garden warbler : - “outnumbers Blackcap by seven to one”

This current work does not confirm these statements and possibly illustrates changes in habitat which the proposed Ancient Woodland Project hopes to reverse by restoring native broadleaved trees.

Overall the figures for the commoner species are in line with historic and recently published data but with indications that Blue tit, Treecreeper and Starling in woodland are reduced while Woodpigeon and Carrion crow are increasing.