

Birds of Ashton Court Estate – 2019

Introduction

A survey of birds in and around Ashton Court Estate was carried out in 2019 by observers from Bristol Naturalist Society, the Bristol Ornithological Club and the British Trust for Ornithology.

Altogether they recorded 56 bird species of which some were frequently seen whilst others were glimpsed only once or twice. The observers made 41 visits to Ashton Court, some of these being 'official' outings with other observations more accurately described as 'incidental whilst walking'. This document provides a summary of their observations.

Crows

Crows are quite large birds which makes them easy to spot. Six of the UK's seven crows were seen. **Carion crows**, **magpies** and **jackdaws** were the most numerous, but there was quite a good showing of jays, ravens and rooks too.

Gulls

Also among the bigger birds were three species of gull. **Herring gulls** and **lesser black-backed gulls** were seen on several occasions, but **black-headed gulls** were present on one visit only.

Finches

Finches of one sort or another were also around. **Goldfinches** and **chaffinches** topped the poll with **bullfinches** in third place. One **greenfinch** and two **siskins** and two **yellowhammers** were also seen.

Water and Game Birds

You would not expect to find many water birds at Ashton Court and you would be right. Nevertheless, two **mallards** were seen on 24 April. Three **pheasants** were identified on two dates in April and May.



Ashton Court Mansion



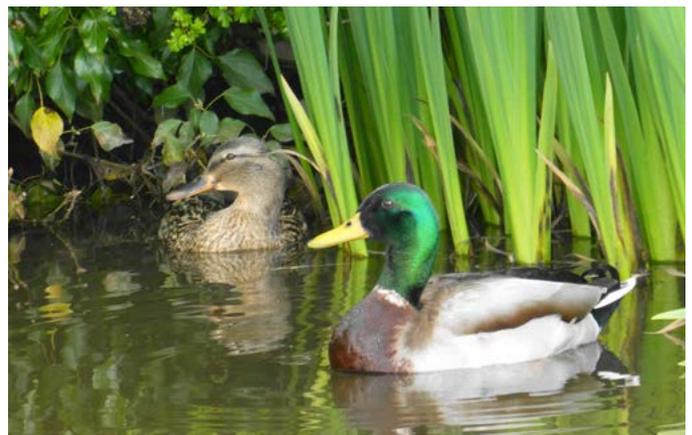
Magpie

CR



Goldfinches

CR



Mallards

CR

Birds of Prey

There were three sightings of a single **kestrel** on dates in February, May and November, one barn owl in June and a tawny owl in August. Also, there was one sighting each of an **osprey** (September) and a **red kite** (November). **Sparrowhawks** were spotted in February.

Surprisingly perhaps, there were fourteen days on which **buzzards**, sometimes a pair, were seen spiralling over the estate.



Kestrel

CR

Woodpeckers

Greater-spotted woodpeckers were seen or heard on six occasions in January and December 2019. **Green woodpeckers** were more frequent and more evenly spread throughout the year.

Swifts, House Martins and Swallows

Swifts were reported only once (9 June), but there were eight of them. **Swallows** were identified twice with nine birds on April 20 and three on 19 May. Ten **house martins** were recorded on three occasions.



Sparrowhawk

JG

Pigeons

Woodpigeons were common throughout the year and there was one sighting of a **stock dove** in November. Surprisingly, there were no feral **pigeons** or **collared doves** reported despite them often being seen in nearby urban Bedminster.



Juvenile Green Woodpecker

CR



Woodpigeon

JG



Great Woodpecker

JG

Small and 'Garden' Birds

Observations included many examples of species within these categories. Five species of tit were identified: **blue, coal, greater, long-tailed** and **marsh**. The most frequently reported were blue and great tits. All were sometimes in small groups. The **marsh tit** observation was of two birds on 11 February.

Warblers were represented by **blackcaps** (seven dates) and **chiffchaff** (eight dates) which, like tits, were sometimes in small groups. One **willow warbler** was seen on April 18.

A **pied wagtail** was reported on two separate visits. There were 13 observations of the UK's smallest bird, the **goldcrest**, on five occasions between 20 April and 23 May. Other frequently noted small birds were **wrens** and **robins**, usually with several sightings on each visit – most notably a 2019 record of 16 robins being seen on 18 April.

The **skylark** is an important bird for Ashton Court as this is one of the few places locally where they still nest. 32 were recorded on six occasions and, less common, at least at Ashton Court, there were two **dunnocks** on days in May and June and two small groups of **house sparrows** in April and June.

Ten **nuthatch** were spotted on five occasions and the observers claimed three visits when they saw **treecreepers**, with seven sightings on 23 May.

One male **lesser whitethroat** was reported towards the end of June. Two **spotted flycatchers** were seen on July 28, one of the UK's three **flycatcher** species. **Blackbirds** were, of course, often seen with seventeen individuals recorded on 18 April.

Song thrushes seem quite common too with sightings on ten occasions, often of more than one bird. Less frequently seen were **mistle thrushes**, with only 13 birds reported from four dates.

One **redwing** was noted on February 11 and a **wheatear** on 26 August, whilst only one **starling** was spotted during the year, this being in April.



Wren

JG



BlueTit

CR



Robin

CR



Songthrush

CR

2019 Sighting Distribution

For those species that were observed on at least five dates the diagram below shows the spread of months between the first and last sighting.

The column headed 'NS' indicates **the number of dates upon which the species was sighted**. This table contains **no information about the actual number of birds** observed.

The table is presented only as a summary and it is important to bear in mind that the dates upon which observers recorded their findings were not evenly spread throughout the year.

	NS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Blackbird	11												
Blackcap	7												
Blue Tit	9												
Buzzard	14												
Carrion Crow	16												
Chaffinch	5												
Chiffchaff	8												
Coal Tit	5												
Goldcrest	5												
Goldfinch	9												
Gtr. Sp. W pecker	6												
Great Tit	7												
Green W pecker	11												
Jackdaw	12												
Jay	7												
Magpie	11												
Nuthatch	5												
Raven	5												
Robin	10												
Skylark	6												
Song Thrush	10												
Woodpigeon	15												
Wren	8												

The species recorded on fewer than five dates were as follows:

4: Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Long-tailed Tit, Mistle Thrush

3: House Martin, Kestrel, Tree Creeper

2: Bullfinch, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Rook, Swallow

1: Barn Owl, Black-headed Gull, Greenfinch, Lesser Whitethroat, Mallard, Marsh Tit, Osprey, Red Kite, Redwing, Siskin, Sparrowhawk, Spotted Flycatcher, Starling, Stock Dove, Swift, Tawny Owl, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, Yellowhammer

This report has been compiled by Ben Barker in September 2020 and original version laid out by Glenn Taylor on behalf of the **Friends of Ashton Court Estate (FACE)** and the **BS3 Wildlife Group**.

Special thanks are owed to **Caroline Rigg** and **June Goulding** who provided the original photographs used, and which have been labelled **CR** and **JG** respectively.

FACE was established in 2020 as part of the BS3 Wildlife Group's **My Wild Bedminster** and **My Wild South Bristol** projects and is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the historic and natural heritage of the Ashton Court Estate, Bristol.

Membership of each of these groups is free and for more information about them you can send an email to: **MyWildBedminster@virginmedia.com**

Alternatively you can visit the FACE Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/groups/3436241153156298

Or the BS3 Wildlife Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/groups/437023800042314

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Ashton Court Estate