

Kemerton Bird Ringing Report 2022

WMRG

West Midlands Ringing Group

Introduction

This report summarises the first year of structured bird ringing, by members of West Midlands Ringing Group (WMRG), in 2022.

• Project goals and aspirations

- To monitor birds in the area, birds will be ringed and monitored by West Midland Ringing Group (WMRG), to help understand the population fluctuations.
- The project will provide an opportunity for volunteering and training on monitoring and tagging birds through the WMRG group as well as addressing the potential for wildlife connectivity and habitat gains.
- To raise awareness of key bird species in the area.

We approached Kemerton Estate in 2021, for permission to undertake bird ringing activities, across the site, focusing on farmland bird species and species of higher conservation concern (Red and Amber listed species). There was no initial formal plan, but we suggested that we could undertake mist netting activities, nocturnal surveys, using thermal imaging cameras and installing nest boxes for species such as marsh tit *poecile palustris*, common redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, little owl *Athene noctua*, barn owl *Tyto alba* and tawny owl *Strix aluco*.

Nocturnal surveys would focus on areas of the farm where minimal or zero till systems were used. The target species would include woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, common snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, jack snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* and skylark *Alauda arvensis*. These are all species that either forage or roost in open fields at night.

Thermal imaging is a relatively new technique, that has been pioneered by WMRG and is now used widely across the UK, and abroad, to conduct nocturnal farmland surveys.

It was decided that mist netting activities would be conducted at the Reed bed Pool, by the main gravel pit lake. This option was chosen because there was a sufficient mix of habitats, to catch a wider range of bird species, and it would also reduce disturbance to birds on the lake and bird watchers in the hides.

It is important to say at this point, that our first year of ringing at Kemerton has been used to find our feet and to attempt to establish baseline data, particularly down at the lake, where the bulk of our ringing activities take place. As such, no conclusions can be inferred from the ringing data yet, but, hopefully, trends and patterns will begin to emerge in the future.



Bird Ringing Activities



Plate 1: view of the bund looking north-west.

So far, we have mainly been concentrating our efforts at the reedbed, ringing on a weekly basis where possible, and within the critical migratory periods (spring and autumn) to maximise our efforts. We spent the early part of the season observing bird activity at the site to establish the best locations to position our nets as well as preparing the necessary rides. The bund, which separates the Reed bed Pool from the main lake was identified as a good intercept, with plenty of warbler species noted to be making use of and moving between the low scrub and reed bed boundaries on either side. By April we were off to a flying start. Initially, we operated approximately 112 metres of netting, along the bund, an area of bramble near the south-east corner of the lake and a short net on the north side of Reed bed Pool. This allowed us to get a feel for where birds were moving and to ring some of the returning summer migrants.

A brief pause during the breeding season allowed us to concentrate our efforts on putting up a number of new target-species bird boxes (tawny owl, little owl, kestrel, barn owl, and marsh tit), as well as check boxes already in position. At this point we located and ringed a brood of four little owl chicks within one of the long-standing boxes within Lillans Orchard.



Plate 2: little owl chick.



Plate 3: tawny owl box.

Six nest boxes were installed in The Bushes, extending into the east side of Aldwick Wood, to provide nesting opportunities for marsh tit. This bird is on the UK red list of species of conservation concern, primarily through loss of habitat and a reduction in its breeding population of over 50% in the last 25 years. No boxes were used by marsh tits in 2022 but, three boxes were used by blue tits *Cyanistes ceruleus*.

Hampered by the record-breaking temperatures in late June and July, we resumed normal ringing activities from August, and across the 2022 season, we ringed a total of 680 new birds at the reedbed (39% of which were new adult birds, and 61% were new juvenile birds).

Being our first year at the site, 2022 was very much the year to establish baseline data. Nevertheless, we are already beginning to build up a picture of site usage by birds across the season. The site is very clearly an important breeding site for reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and sedge warbler *A. schoenobaenus* and is an important refuge for many passing migrants (e.g. blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, chiffchaff *Phylloscopus colybita*, meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*, stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*, and swallow *Hirundo rustica*). It is important to note that 18 of the 37 species ringed across Kemerton Estate in 2022 (approximately 49% of species), are Red or Amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021).



Plate 4: sedge warbler.

Other species of particular note include the likely presence of two breeding pairs of cettis warbler *Cettia cettia* at the reedbed. Having ringed 5 new kingfishers *Alcedo atthis*, it is also likely that the site acts as an important refuge for dispersing juveniles of this species, after the breeding season.

We controlled two birds (birds that have been ringed at another site) on the 1st of May 2022. The first was a sedge warbler, that was originally ringed on the Overbury estate (Daffs Barn), as an adult female, on 7th July 2021. The second bird was a reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, originally ringed at the same site, as a juvenile, on the 15th August 2021. Although these birds didn't travel a great distance, their movement clearly shows an important interaction between the two sites. We did indeed have one first year surprise on 11 September; an adult wryneck *Jynx torquilla* was trapped and ringed at the site.



Plate 5: reed warbler.

This was once a common breeding bird in Britain, classed as a woodpecker, and using old orchards to breed and feeding primarily on ants, its range gradually reduced, and it is now extinct as a UK breeding bird. It is described as a rare passage migrant,

more often encountered on the east and south coasts so catching one in south Worcestershire was a surprise but not totally unexpected, given that on that particular weekend, there were several birds recorded in the country, including a few inland birds. It is only the second bird to be ringed in Worcestershire, the last record being near Worcester in the early 1980s.



Plate 6: adult wryneck trapped and ringed 11 September 2022.

I'm afraid our thermal surveys were less successful than we had hoped in 2022, mainly due to inexperience and cold weather. We did however, ring two skylark in Lakeside field. Woodcock were sited but unfortunately eluded our net. We had expected to see more birds on the nocturnal surveys, but we were disappointed with the apparent lack of activity. Further surveys this winter will hopefully be more successful.



Habitat

There is absolutely no doubt that the current range of habitats present at Kemerton Lake is key to supporting the diversity of species that we have not only caught, but have also seen at the site, to date. The scrubby edge habitat around the lake, and to the north certainly appears to support an array of species and the importance of this habitat should not be overlooked. Indeed, thorny, and berry-bearing scrub is a largely missing component in the modern landscape, despite it being one of the UK's most biodiverse habitats.

It is particularly noted that the area of scrub within Collins's, to the north of Kemerton Lake, would benefit from further growth and establishment. This habitat is already supporting species such as whitethroat, lesser whitethroat, linnets, sedge warbler and reed bunting but allowing an expansion of this habitat could benefit a much wider assemblage of species which we have not yet seen much of at the Lake, e.g. yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, garden warbler *Sylvia borin* and willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* or even rarer breeding species such as nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, a breeding population of which is known to be present not far from the site.

There could also be improvements made for breeding and migrant wader species, of which Kemerton Lake is now sadly lacking. I had the pleasure of being Lake Warden 20 years ago, when lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, redshank *Tringus tetanus*, little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius* and oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* were regular breeders. Sadly, only the latter species is hanging on, despite pressures from avian predators.

Work has already been carried out to reduce and remove larger tree species on the north side of the lake, to minimise the availability of predator posts, but the complete removal of the mature trees along the northern edge of Collins's would negate the need for future management and remove any further opportunities for avian predators.

Creation and maintenance of low, scattered scrub areas would benefit many bird species as well as a myriad of invertebrate species too.

Introducing some wet areas into Collins's, in the form of scrapes and shallow ditches, would increase opportunities for breeding lapwing and potentially redshank too. These wet areas would also be attractive to migrant wader species.

The south-east island is now densely populated by overstood willow trees (*salix* spp). There is a real danger that some of the trees will eventually fall over, taking chunks of the island with them. Clearing the trees and treating the stumps to prevent new growth, would also provide new opportunities for breeding and migrant wader species.



Plate 7: reedbed pool.



Plate 8: looking north over Collin's with bramble hedge in distance.



Plate 9: the bramble hedge, looking west.



Plate 10: looking south towards the lake.

Conclusion

It has been an amazing first year at Kemerton Estate and we have learned so much from our ringing efforts and observations. Kemerton Lake in particular, has shown itself to be an important site for birds of many species, both breeding and migrating. Hopefully, we have built a good foundation of information to take us forward and we look forward to learning much more about the birds in 2023 and beyond.

All in all, we are extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to ring birds on the Kemerton Estate. None of this would be possible without the support of the estate and especially Matt Derby, Kate Aubrey and Pam Clarke. As we head into our second season of ringing at the site, we hope that we can continue to collate a wealth of information showing not only what species are present, but also how important the site and its habitats are, for supporting a range of different species.

The team members have put in many hours to produce these data and must be thanked for their incredible efforts. It has been so enjoyable and very illuminating!

So, Thank you!

Jess Stuart-Smith

Claire Dovey

Nick Berry

Leigh Yeates

Also, Stormy, Ted and Loki.



Plate 11: spotted flycatcher

A big thank you to Nick Berry for building so many amazing nest boxes.

And thanks also for the support from WMRG.

Fergus Henderson and Jessica Stuart-Smith

Table 1: species ringed across the Kemerton Estate in 2022 and their conservation significance.

Species	WACA 1981 Schedule 1 ¹	NERC S.41 ²	Conservation Status (BoCC5) ³
Blackbird	-	-	Green
Blackcap	-	-	Green
Blue Tit	-	-	Green
Cetti's Warbler	Yes	-	Green
Chaffinch	-	-	Green
Chiffchaff	-	-	Green
Common/Lesser Redpoll	-	Priority Species	Red
Cuckoo	-	Priority Species	Red
Duncock	-	Priority Species	Amber
Goldcrest	-	-	Green
Goldfinch	-	-	Green
Great Tit	-	-	Green
Green Woodpecker	-	-	Green
Jay	-	-	Green
Kingfisher	Yes	-	Green
Lesser Whitethroat	-	-	Red
Linnet	-	Priority Species	Red
Little Owl	-	-	Introduced
Long-tailed Tit	-	-	Green
Meadow Pipit	-	-	Amber
Redwing	Yes	-	Amber
Reed Bunting	-	Priority Species	Amber
Reed Warbler	-	-	Green
Robin	-	-	Green
Sand Martin	-	-	Green
Sedge Warbler	-	-	Amber
Skylark	-	Priority Species	Red
Song Thrush	-	Priority Species	Amber
Spotted Flycatcher	-	Priority Species	Red
Starling	-	Priority Species	Red
Stonechat	-	-	Green
Swallow	-	-	Green
Whitethroat	-	-	Amber

¹ Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

² Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

³ Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021).

Willow Warbler	-	-	Amber
Woodpigeon	-	-	Amber
Wren	-	-	Amber
Wryneck	Yes	Priority Species	Former breeder

Table 2: Species totals ringed across Kemerton Estate in 2022.

**There are three age categories in the following summary table. Pulli are birds ringed in the nest, juveniles are birds in their first calendar year, and adults are birds in their second or any later calendar year. 'full-grown' birds refer to fully-grown flying birds where plumage characters do not allow first calendar year to be excluded. For Record Type, 'N' refers to new birds ringed, whereas 'S' refers to re-trapped birds that we have previously ringed at the site.

Location	KE Lillans	Lakeside	Reedbed Pool	Reedbed Pool	Reedbed Pool	Reedbed Pool	Reedbed Pool	Reedbed Pool	Reedbed Pool	Total
Age Class	Pullus	Full Grown	Adult	Adult	Full Grown	Full Grown	Juvenile	Juvenile	Pullus	
Species / Record Type	N	N	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	
Blackbird			6				3			9
Blackcap			41				25			66
Blue Tit			16	1			23	3		43
Cetti's Warbler			4	1			5	1		11
Chaffinch							1			1
Chiffchaff			57	1			45			103
Common/Lesser Redpoll			3				4			7
Cuckoo			1	1						2
Dunnock			6				11			17
Goldcrest			3				6			9
Goldfinch			2				12			14
Great Tit			10	1			3			14
Green Woodpecker			1				1			2
Jay			1							1
Kingfisher			3	1			2			6
Lesser Whitethroat			4				1			5

Linnet							1			1
Little Owl	4									4
Long-tailed Tit			8	4	15	6				33
Meadow Pipit			7				29			36
Redwing			3				26			29
Reed Bunting			28	2			23			53
Reed Warbler			15				42	1	5	63
Robin			10				6	1		17
Sand Martin							2			2
Sedge Warbler			10	1			27			38
Skylark		2								2
Song Thrush			1				2			3
Spotted Flycatcher							1			1
Starling			1				4			5
Stonechat			3				3			6
Swallow			13				75			88
Whitethroat							5			5
Willow Warbler			3				16			19
Woodpigeon			1							1
Wren			3				11			14
Wryneck			1							1
Total	4	2	265	13	15	6	415	6	5	731



Sedge warbler.



Jay.



Kingfisher.



Reed warbler.



Reed bunting (female).



Reed bunting (male).



Skylark.



Starling.



Willow warbler.



Redwing.



Reed warbler chicks in nest.



Cuckoo.



Blackcap (male).



Willow warbler *P. trochilus* (left) and *P. trochilus acredula* (right).

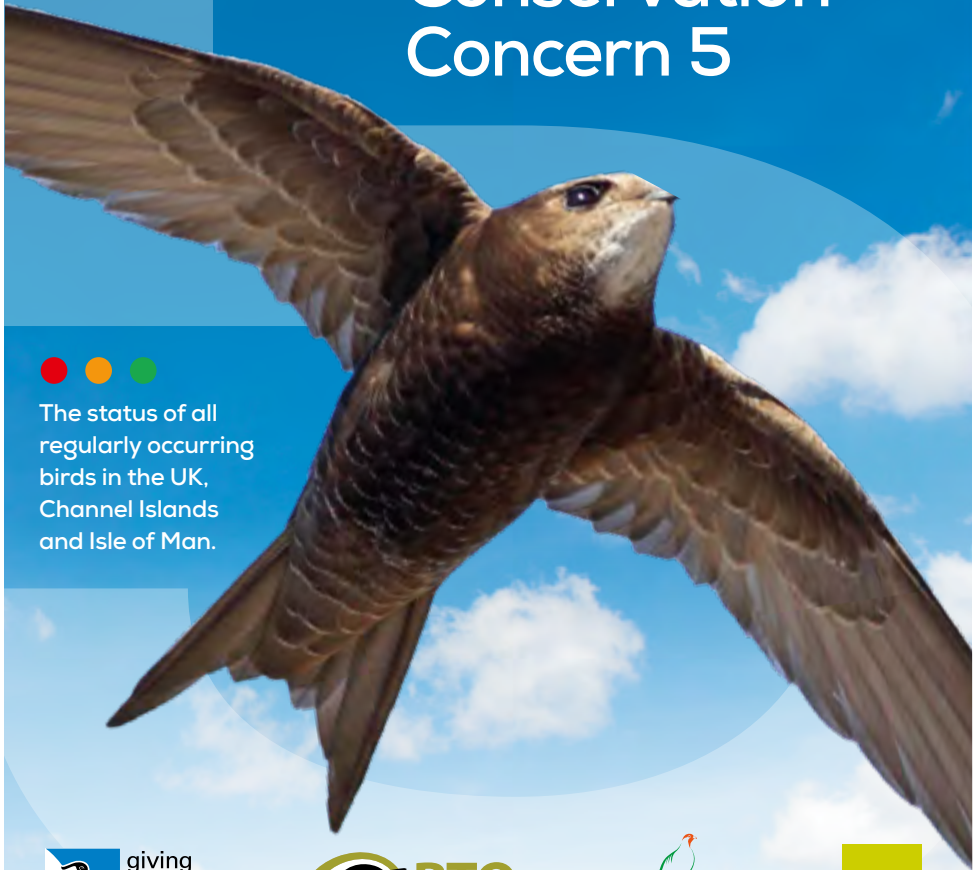


Cettis warbler.



Green woodpecker.

Birds of Conservation Concern 5



The status of all regularly occurring birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.



● ● ● Birds of Conservation Concern 5

***Birds of Conservation Concern* is compiled by a coalition of the UK's leading bird conservation and monitoring organisations and reviews the status of all regularly occurring birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.**

This is the 5th Birds of Conservation Concern review, with the first published in 1996. The bird species that breed or overwinter here have been assessed against a set of objective criteria and placed on the Green, Amber or Red lists to indicate an increasing level of conservation concern. Data delays prevented an assessment of breeding seabirds (apart from Leach's storm-petrel), so their status was carried over from *Birds of Conservation Concern 4*.

The quantitative criteria assessed the historical decline, recent trends in population and range, population size, localisation and international importance of each species, as well as its global and European threat status.

The assessments show that the status of UK bird populations continues to decline. Since the last review in 2015, the golden oriole has been lost as a breeding species. In addition, the length of the Red list has grown by three; 11 species have been added, but six have moved to Amber and two are now no longer assessed as they have either ceased breeding in the UK or were excluded from the process for other reasons. The length of the Amber list has also grown by seven species.

● The Birds of Conservation Concern 5 Red list

Grey partridge	Lapwing	Grasshopper warbler
Ptarmigan ^a	Whimbrel	House martin ^a
Capercaillie	Curlew	Wood warbler
Black grouse	Black-tailed godwit	Starling
Bewick's swan ^a	Ruff	Mistle thrush
White-fronted goose	Dunlin ^a	Fieldfare
Long-tailed duck	Purple sandpiper ^a	Ring ouzel
Velvet scoter	Woodcock	Spotted flycatcher
Common scoter	Red-necked phalarope	Nightingale
Goldeneye ^a	Kittiwake	Whinchat
Smew ^a	Herring gull	House sparrow
Pochard	Roseate tern	Tree sparrow
Scaup	Arctic skua	Tree pipit
Red-necked grebe	Puffin	Yellow wagtail
Slavonian grebe	Hen harrier	Hawfinch
Turtle dove	Montagu's harrier ^a	Greenfinch ^a
Swift ^a	Lesser spotted woodpecker	Twite
Cuckoo	Merlin	Linnet
Corncrake	Red-backed shrike	Redpoll
Leach's storm-petrel ^a	Marsh tit	Corn bunting
Balearic shearwater	Willow tit	Cirl bunting
Shag	Skylark	Yellowhammer
Dotterel	Marsh warbler	
Ringed plover	Savi's warbler	

a - species on the Amber list previously, g - species on the Green list previously

● The Birds of Conservation Concern 5 Amber list

Quail	Stone-curlew	Tawny owl
Whooper swan	Oystercatcher	Osprey
Brent goose	Avocet	Honey-buzzard
Barnacle goose	Black-winged stilt ^{na}	Marsh harrier
Greylag goose	Grey plover	Sparrowhawk ^g
Bean goose	Bar-tailed godwit	White-tailed eagle ^r
Pink-footed goose	Turnstone	Kestrel
Eider	Knot	Rook ^g
Red-breasted merganser ^g	Curlew sandpiper	Shorelark
Shelduck	Sanderling	Sedge warbler ^g
Garganey	Snipe	Yellow-browed warbler ^{na}
Shoveler	Common sandpiper	Willow warbler
Gadwall	Green sandpiper	Common whitethroat ^g
Wigeon	Spotted redshank	Dartford warbler
Mallard	Greenshank	Short-toed treecreeper
Pintail	Redshank	Wren ^g
Teal	Wood sandpiper	Dipper
Black-necked grebe	Black-headed gull	Song thrush ^r
Stock dove	Mediterranean gull	Redwing ^r
Woodpigeon ^g	Common gull	Pied flycatcher ^r
Nightjar	Lesser black-backed gull	Black redstart ^r
Spotted crake	Yellow-legged gull	Common redstart
Moorhen ^g	Caspian gull	Wheatear ^g
Crane	Iceland gull	Dunnock
Black-throated diver	Glaucous gull	Meadow pipit
Great northern diver	Great black-backed gull	Water pipit
European storm-petrel	Little tern	Grey wagtail ^r
Northern fulmar	Common tern	Bullfinch
Manx shearwater	Arctic tern	Parrot crossbill
Spoonbill	Sandwich tern	Scottish crossbill
Bittern	Great skua	Lapland bunting
Little bittern ^{na}	Black guillemot	Snow bunting
Cattle egret ^{na}	Razorbill	Reed bunting
Great white egret ^{na}	Guillemot	
Gannet	Short-eared owl	

r - species on the Red list previously, g - species on the Green list previously, na - not assessed previously

● Birds of Conservation Concern 5 Former breeding species

Great bustard	Black tern	Wryneck
Kentish plover	Great auk	Golden oriole ^r
Temminck's stint	Snowy owl	Serin

r - species on the Red list previously

Themes from Birds of Conservation Concern 5

This assessment adds to a wealth of existing evidence that shows many of our bird populations are in trouble. At 70 species, the Red list is now longer than ever before, and is almost double the length of that in the first review in 1996. New Red-listed species include swift, house martin, ptarmigan, purple sandpiper, Montagu’s harrier and greenfinch.

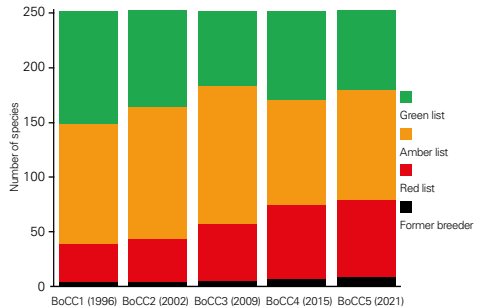
Previous reviews have highlighted the worrying plight of farmland, woodland and upland birds. There has been no improvement in the overall status of species associated with farmland and upland; indeed, more species have been Red-listed.

The status of long-distance Afro-Palaearctic migrants that spend the non-breeding season in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the humid tropics, continues to decline.

We also raise concerns over the status of our wintering wildfowl and wader populations, with Bewick’s swan, goldeneye, smew and dunlin also joining the Red list. Pressures are wide-ranging and are complicated by ‘short-stopping’, whereby species have shifted their wintering grounds north-eastwards in response to increased temperatures caused by climate change.

There is also a worrying trend towards more of the UK’s regularly occurring species being classed as threatened with global extinction; with the addition of Leach’s storm-petrel and kittiwake, this increases the list to nine bird species.

It is not all bad news. Thanks to successful reintroduction projects, the white-tailed eagle



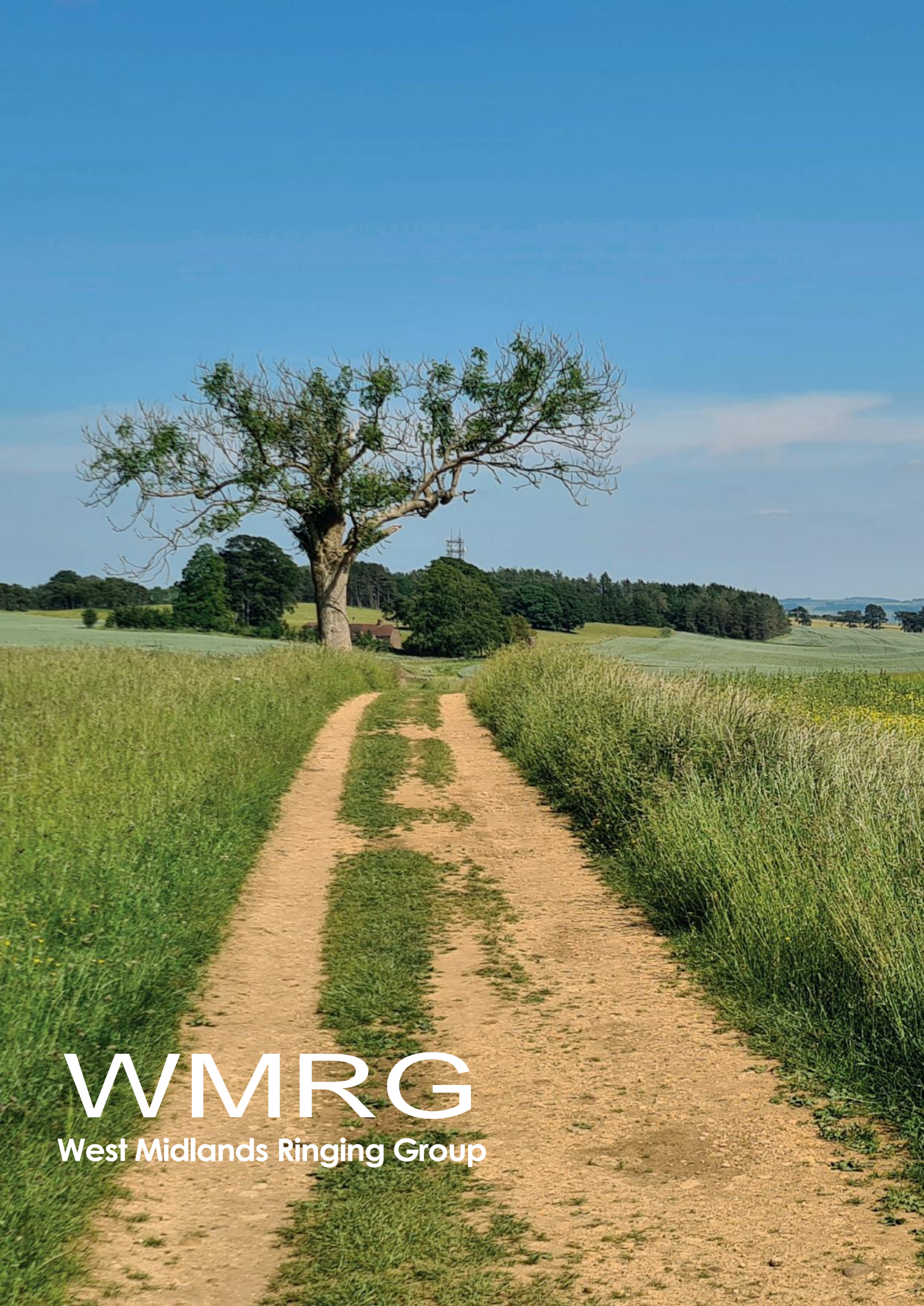
moves from the Red to Amber list. Song thrush, pied flycatcher, grey wagtail, redwing and black redstart also moved off the Red list to Amber, but the first three species remain close to the Red list threshold.

The UK has seen continued colonisation by new bird species, and we added four new breeding species (great white egret, cattle egret, little bittern and black-winged stilt) and one non-breeding species (yellow-browed warbler) to this review. While we welcome these additions to our wildlife, we should simultaneously recognise that the arrival of new species here owes much to man-induced climate change.

The full details of this assessment, including the Green list, can be found at Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win I. 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds 114: 723-747. Available online at <https://britishbirds.co.uk/content/status-our-bird-populations>.

Endorsed by:





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