

The Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group

Annual Report for 2025



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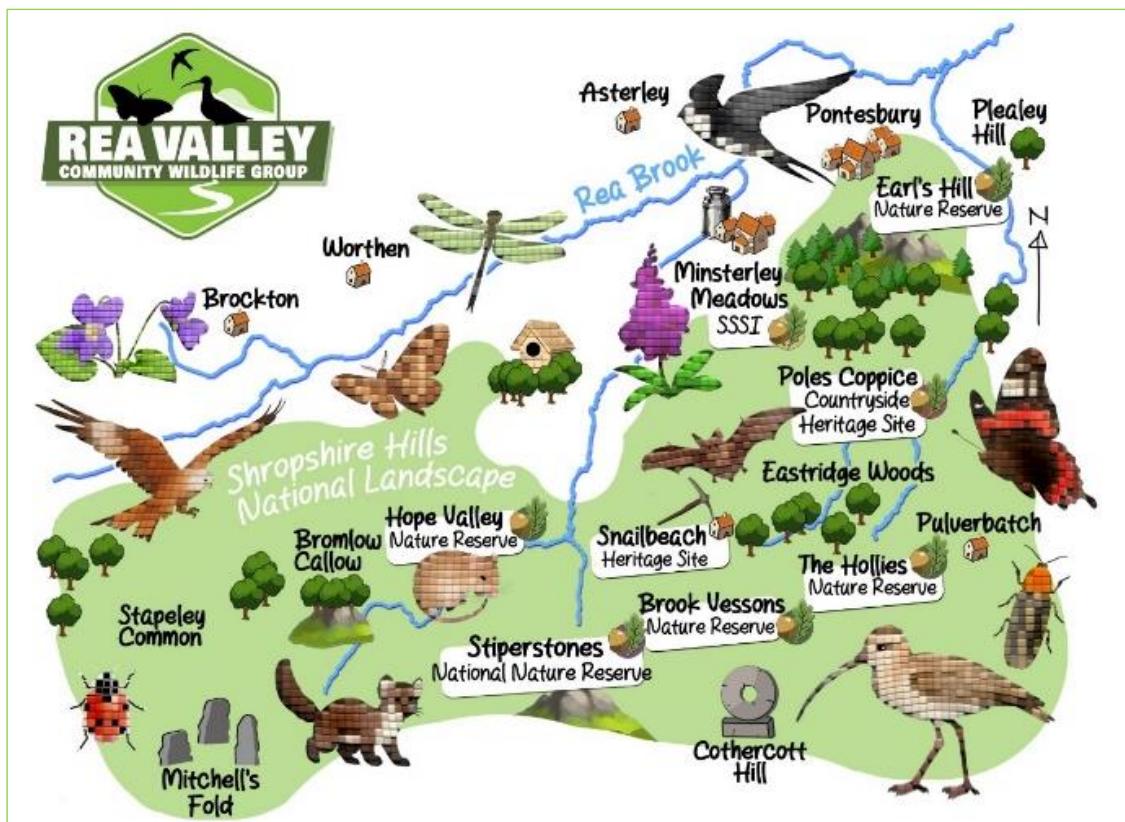
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1. Introduction

The Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group (RVCWG) group was initiated by the Stiperstones - Cordon Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) in 2014. The LPS supported the group from 2014 to 2017, and in 2018 the group was formally established and independently constituted.

The RVCWG covers the area shown in the map below and within this area the group aims to

- Bring together local people interested in wildlife
- Undertake survey work to establish the status of key species and habitats
- Encourage and enhance local interest in wildlife and actively promote conservation



The RVCWG is open to anyone interested in wildlife and membership is free. You can join our email distribution list, our [Facebook Group](#) or/and our WhatsApp group.

Please email reavalleycwq@gmail.com for more information or visit the [RVCWG webpage](#).

2. The Introduction of RVCWG Monthly Walks and Events in 2025

In 2025, the RVCWG embarked upon a programme of events aimed to increase public engagement with the group. As 2025 comes to an end, the RVCWG committee can look back at what has been achieved. The events programme had two elements, monthly walks and organised events: the former taking place through the year, and the latter largely taking place through the summer. A grey Saturday in January started the year of events off, a monthly walk from Snailbeach car park. With unknown expectations, members of the committee present were pleasantly surprised when a group of fourteen assembled ready to head for the hills!



©Laura Edwards-White

Monthly walks took us all around the Rea Valley area and for many of us to new places we had not yet discovered. Sharing local knowledge, wildlife ID skills and getting to know new people all helped make the monthly walks into interesting and positive experiences for all attendees. Some took place in rain, others in higher winds and one or two in welcome sunshine; regardless of the weather or how many people attended the walks took place every month.

Events included winter ducks, bat walks and pond dipping at sites throughout the Rea Valley area. With most events fully booked the organisers were taken by surprise, and in some cases increased the number of spaces to allow more people to attend. At no cost to attendees, the events provided an opportunity to learn more about the wildlife in the Rea Valley and meet like-minded people. Support from the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Conservation Fund enabled the RVCWG events programme to launch armed with equipment and increase the interaction attendees could have with their local environment. Now that the 2025 events programme has ended, the committee are filled with enthusiasm and ideas for 2026, so let's look forward to another year engaging people with the wildlife in their area!



RVCWG events 2025 ©Laura Edwards-White and Ben Holloway

More details about each walk and event can be found in our 'Latest News' blog on the website: <https://www.shropscwgs.org.uk/rea-valley-wildlife-group/>

3. iRecord Summary for 2025

Our 2025 iRecord survey received over 5,000 records for more than 1,250 different species. This data was collected by 91 people over 243 days and covered an area of 81 km².

169 of the species encountered had no historic records in the National Biodiversity Atlas for the Rea Valley. Creatures such as the colourful Ant Beetle, the stripy Spiny Mason Wasp, the impressive Wood Cauliflower fungus, and a pioneering Kentish Snail on the western edge of its territory.

23 of the species recorded were last noted more than 20 years ago, with five magnificent moths reappearing after an apparent absence of 50 years, and a Stinking Hellebore plant near Snailbeach, which was last recorded in the Rea Valley in 1893!



Yellow Mayfly ©Katherine Edwards-White

35 species found are on the UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Priority List as species that are deemed most threatened and in need of conservation - records included the Ghost moth, Soprano Pipistrelle bats and Yellow Mayfly, one of Britain's rarest mayflies.

Our community-wide iRecord survey provides valuable information about local biodiversity - detailed quarterly reports are available on the website - <https://www.shropscwgs.org.uk/rea-valley-wildlife-group/>. By recording common, rare or previously unrecorded species, you can help support conservation efforts. We hope even more people will iRecord the wildlife they see in 2026.

If you need any support on how to add your wildlife sightings onto iRecord, please email reavalleycwq@gmail.com

4. Resting Hill Nest Box Summary for 2025

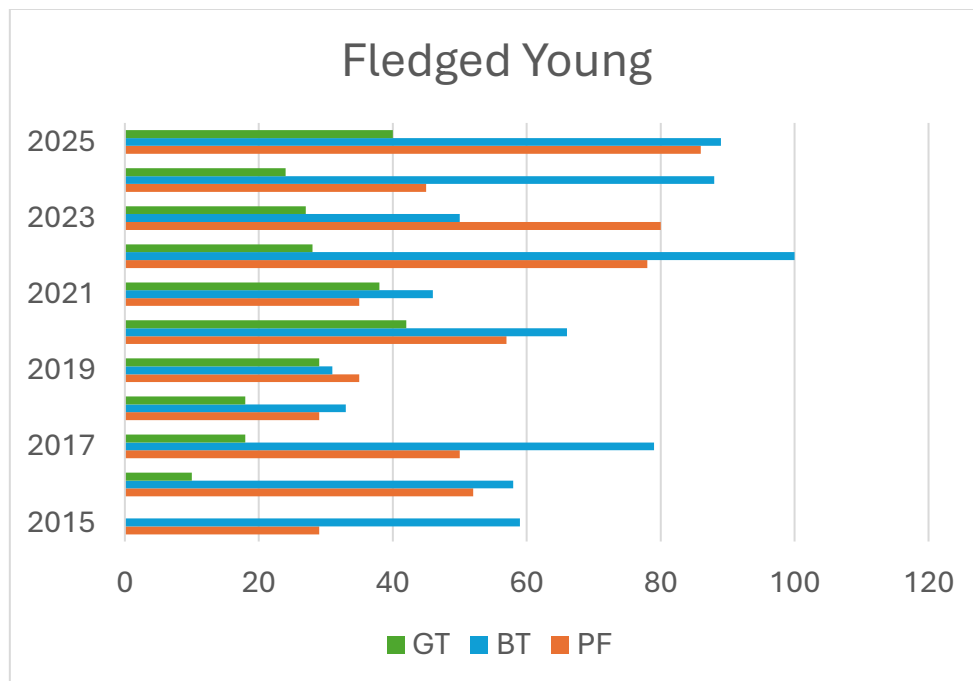
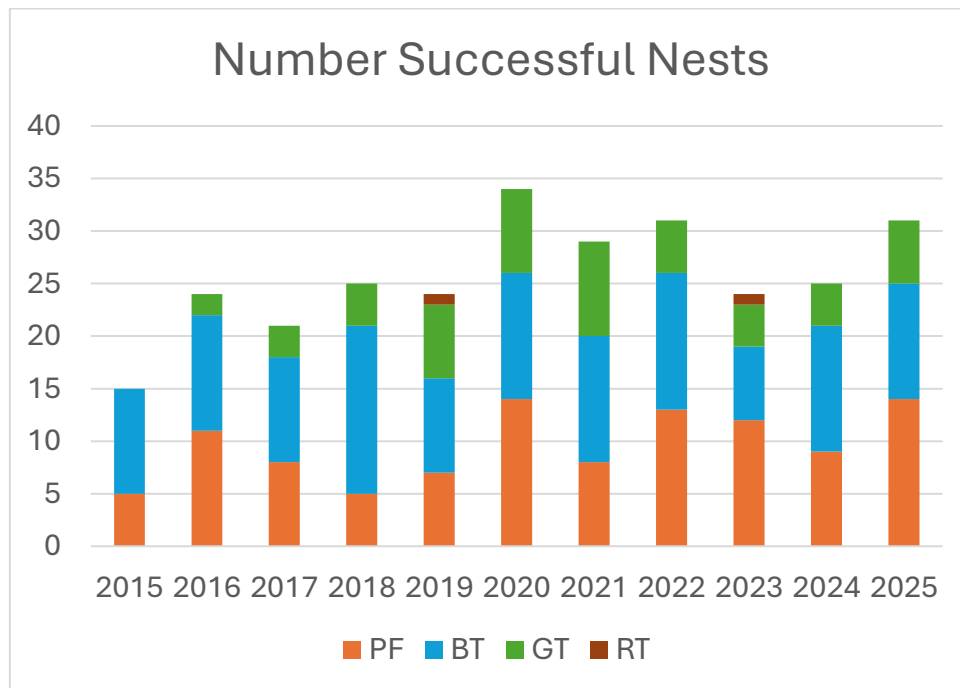


2025 saw the eleventh year of recording of nest box use at Resting Hill, Snailbeach. The scheme commenced with 54 boxes to target Pied Flycatcher (PF), which is amber listed in the UK birds of conservation concern. Ten further boxes were added in 2018, primarily to target Redstart (RT). The boxes are sited in sessile oak woodland within the Stiperstones landscape NNR.

PF chicks in the nest, and occasional sitting females, have been ringed since 2016. In 2025 recaptures were reported by BTO on a 4-year-old female at Gatten and a 4-year old male in a wood near Leominster.

Pied flycatcher nest ©Julian Bromhead

2025 had a 52% box occupancy rate and 31 fledged nests comprising: 14 PF, 11 Blue Tit (BT) and 6 Great Tit (GT). A summary of data trends is provided below. Data is reported to the BTO and Shropshire Ornithological Society.



Recording typically takes place on a weekly basis (normally Saturday mornings) between mid-April and the end of June. More volunteers are needed for 2026! Training can be provided. Please contact Julian Bromhead at restinghillnestbox@gmail.com to get involved or find out more.

5. Habberley Area Nest Box Scheme Results for 2025

The Habberley Area Nest Box Scheme has gone from strength to strength since its inception in 2020 when the first boxes were erected at Pollardine Farm.

In 2021 four new sites joined the scheme, two more were added in 2022 and a further two in 2024.

The objective of the scheme is to increase the breeding numbers of Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts, the target species.

Since the start of the scheme Andy Spencer, who is an experienced bird ringer, has annually ringed the Pied Flycatcher and Redstart adults and chicks occupying the boxes.

From 2021 to 2025 a total of 162 boxes were occupied by the target species. 35 boxes were occupied by Redstarts and 127 occupied by Pied Flycatchers.

The total number of ringed birds to date is:

Pied Flycatcher adults 85
Pied Flycatcher chicks 483
Redstart adults 9
Redstart chicks 118



Redstart nest ©Julie Lloyd

6. Rea Valley Curlew and Lapwing Summary for 2025

The Group has been surveying Curlew, Lapwing, and other bird species since 2014.

The area is divided up into 26 survey squares, each 2x2 kilometres (known as "tetrads"), and ideally each square is surveyed for about 3 hours, around 1 April, 1 May, and mid-June.

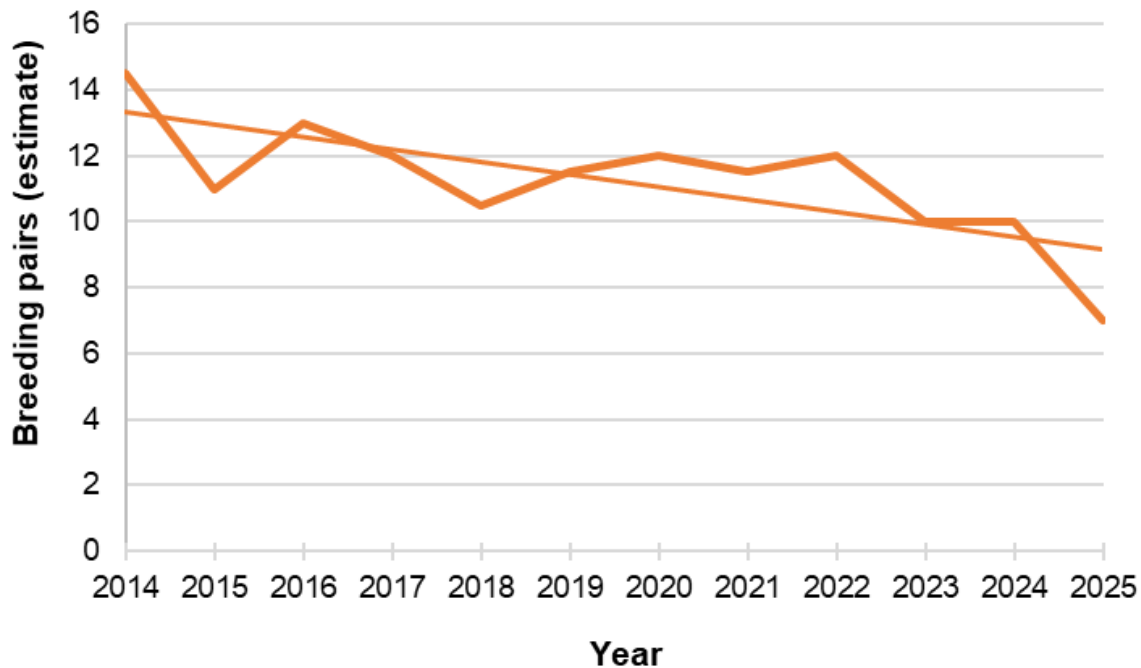
In 2025, an estimated 7 pairs of Curlew, no Lapwing, 1 pair of Kestrel and at least 5 territorial male Cuckoos were found in the breeding season. Distribution maps can be found on the website

The Curlew population has declined by about half since 2014, although the population may have been abnormally low in 2025 because of drought conditions at the start of the breeding season, which inhibited grass growth, resulting in no cover for nests, and some adults may not have reached breeding condition.



Curlews are monitored across Shropshire by 10 Community Wildlife Groups, including Rea Valley. The county population has recently fallen below 100 pairs, and, at the current rate of decline, the population will halve in 11 years, and disappear altogether in only 22 years, unless effective conservation measures are introduced.

Rea Valley area estimated Curlew population 2014 - 2025



At least 26 Red Kites were recorded in 9 survey squares, a big increase compared to previous years, since the first recorded breeding in the area in 2011. A regular flock going to roost near Marton has grown from a few, 20 years ago, to over 50 on 23rd November. Several nests in the area were found by the Shropshire Raptor Group in 2025.

The survey will be repeated in 2026, and more helpers are needed, please. A meeting will be held at Minsterley Parish Hall in March 2026, to consider the 2025 results in more detail, and make plans for 2026. Anyone who wants to help and attend the meeting should email Leo Smith (leo@leosmith.org.uk) for more details.

Thanks to Rod Bacon, Evelyn Boyd, Julian Bromhead, Sarah Clough, Gill Glover, Adam Gornall, Alison & Paul Holmes, Jenny & Paul Kirby, Tony Legg, Steve Oates, Siobhan Reedy, Clive Sinclair, Nikki Smart, Helen & Vic Trigg, Wendy-Jane Walton and Anne Yeeles for carrying out the survey, and Phil Goddard for reporting the large Red Kite gathering at Marton.

7. Rea Valley Willow Tit Group Summary 2025

Willow tit surveys have been taking place in Shropshire using the recommended playback methodology since 2016, coordinated by Jonathan Groom (BTO Regional Representative for Shropshire). These surveys have previously identified around 10 willow tit territories in the Rea Valley area. The willow tit is regarded as the fastest declining UK resident bird, and the Rea Valley remains an important area for this red listed species.

Some of our RVCWG members took part in the Stepping Stones Willow Tit Project in 2024 and with a few volunteers wanting to continue with surveys in 2025, we formed the Rea Valley Willow Tit Group. In 2025, a total of 300 playback survey points were recorded, and willow tits territories were found at 3 sites, Eastridge Woods, Black Marsh and the edge of Oak Wood bordering Pontesford Hill. Another willow tit territory was also recorded just outside the Rea Valley at The Bog.

Excitingly, a willow tit nest was found by one of the volunteers which became only the third nest to be monitored in Shropshire since Jonathan Groom found his first back in 2016. A full account of the nest monitoring can be found in Jonathan's Shropshire Willow Tit Report for 2025. Please email reavalleycwq@gmail.com for a copy of the report. Thanks to Jonathan for providing expertise and supporting with the endoscope nest monitoring following the British Trust of Ornithology Nest Recording Scheme protocol and code of conduct throughout. This provides evidence that this elusive and threatened species is still successfully breeding in the Rea Valley area.



Screenshots of the willow tit nest endoscope footage ©Jonathan Groom

Thank you to all the volunteers who took part in the willow tit playback surveys in 2025 and for the continued support from Jonathan.

The Rea Valley Willow Tit Group is looking for more volunteers to survey more sites in 2026. Surveys typically take place in the morning a minimum of two times between February and March. Training can be provided. Please contact Kat Edwards-White and Laura Edwards-White at reavalleycwq@gmail.com to get involved or find out more.

8. Rea Valley Swift Group Summary for 2025

This year the Rea Valley Swift Group has concentrated on utilising the conservation data app – ‘Swift Mapper’.

What is ‘Swift Mapper’?

Swift Mapper is a conservation mapping tool – easy and free to use where anyone can submit records of breeding swifts, building a picture of where they are nesting around the UK. As swifts are such an important and declining species, The Rea Valley Swift Group have visited known swift locations both inside and outside of the Rea Valley area to establish where active colonies are located and highlight nesting areas and potential nesting sites that are deemed vulnerable. This enables local conservation action for swifts to be focussed on the right places. Mapping breeding swifts helps determine where active nest sites need to be protected, and where new nesting opportunities for swifts would be best provided - the closer new potential nest sites are to existing swift colonies, the greater the chance they will be occupied.

‘Swift Mapper’ records where swifts are nesting. It collects four different types of records:

1. **Occupied Nest:** where swifts are observed using a nest site cavity.
2. **Previously Occupied:** where swifts were known to nest previously but no longer do so.
3. **Nest Box:** nesting sites deliberately provided for swifts - nest boxes, nest bricks, etc.
4. **Screaming Party:** records of swifts flying at around roof height, often flying fast in groups, and often giving loud screaming calls.



Our swift walks have included Brockton, Worthen, Westbury, Hanwood, Ford and Minsterley, with considerable colonies in all areas. Information is submitted to ‘Swift Mapper’ and the group is working with the Shropshire Swift Species Champion to highlight any vulnerable nest sites and act where possible.

Swift ©Sam Mytton

Our aims in 2026 are to continue with educational swift walks and encouraging people to submit their sightings to ‘Swift Mapper’. Julie Cowley – SOS Swift Species Champion is speaking at the APM and will be teaching us all what we can do in the Rea Valley to support swift conservation.

More information on ‘Swift Mapper’ can be found on their website: [Swift Mapper](https://www.swiftmapper.org.uk/)
<https://www.swiftmapper.org.uk/>



9. RVCWG Treasurer's Report for January - December 2025

I was appointed as the new treasurer at the annual meeting in January 2025. The old group paper-based account with HSBC has been closed and a new 'free' on-line clubs and societies account established with Virgin Money (VM). This allows for BACS payments both into and out of the account. Payments are subject to a second on-line approver/verifier.

The balance in the HSBC account in January 2025 was £677.61 and the closing balance in September 2025 was £722.57 which has been transferred into the VM account.

The secretary submitted an interim claim of £1,473.34 to Shropshire Hills conservation fund (SHCF) and this was paid into the VM account in September. This off-set £1001.34 of costs, mainly purchasing materials and equipment, outlined in the grant application. The residue of £472, to cover professional time, has been donated to the group. There is a final claim of £525 to submit to SHCF before the financial year end.

The VM current account balance on 4 December 2025 is £1,258.17. Other income during 2025 has been donations received at events organised by the group. Other expenditure includes meeting room hire, including the Jan 2026 public meeting.

Future expenditure will include the group public liability insurance renewal. This is due in January 2026. We ought to consider what we monies we might choose to ringfence for other projects and if there are any other potential sources of funding available.

Treasurer, Julian Bromhead

10. Thank you

Thanks to all our RVCWG members for coming to our monthly walks in 2025, sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for wildlife, learning about local wildlife at our events, recording your wildlife sightings on iRecord, taking part in species specific surveys or supporting wildlife conservation by volunteering with other wildlife groups in the Rea Valley area. Thank you to those that lead the species-specific surveys in the Rea Valley area and also to all the committee members for their contributing to help steer this fantastic community wildlife group. Thank you also to the Shropshire Hills Conservation Fund which in 2025 has provided the group with funding for specialised event equipment as well as enabling the widespread advertising of our 2025 events programme.

If you would like to become a member or get more information about anything in this report, please email reavalleycwq@gmail.com

Photographs on front page: ©Laura Edwards-White; Michael Howard, Julian Livsey, Ben Holloway, Anne Yeeles, Liz Probert, Gill Whittall



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More Information

www.shropscwgs.org.uk/rea-valley-wildlife-group/



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Active and vibrant Whatsapp group also available