

# Birds of Keele University

Updated 2nd January 2024

David W. Emley



The deciduous woodland at Keele supports a good resident population of the commoner woodland birds such as Nuthatch, Treecreeper and Great Spotted Woodpecker with a few pairs of Stock Doves and Jays. The coniferous plantations hold Goldcrests and Coal Tits as well as an occasional Sparrowhawk nest. Buzzards and Ravens are both seen frequently and now nest on campus.

Summer migrant breeders include Swallow, House Martin, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler and Blackcap. The Alders around the lakes attract small flocks of Lesser Redpoll and Siskin; these now appear regularly at feeders in residents' gardens.

Keele is particularly well endowed with Yews and their berries can attract large numbers of wintering thrushes as well as Greenfinches. In some years the outbreak of spangle gall on the oaks can attract large numbers of thrushes and Wood Pigeons to the floor of the deciduous woodland. Some of the denser woodland can attract sizeable roosts of birds in the winter, generally of thrushes and Wood Pigeons. Of particular note is the large Holly hedge opposite the Lennard-Jones building, once one of the largest of its kind. This regularly houses a roost of finches in the winter.

The lakes on campus have a small breeding population of Mallard and Moorhen. Canada Goose nest on the top lake and Mandarin has bred on Lake 5. Mute Swans used to breed here but no longer do so. Kingfishers occasionally pass through and Grey Wagtails are resident with one or two pairs around the lakes.

The surrounding farmland can hold an occasional flock of Lapwings in the winter with the occasional flock of Golden Plovers too. The large sports fields provide a good feeding area for wagtails and hirundines in the summer while Redwings and Fieldfares feed there in the winter months. Black-headed Gulls with occasional Common Gulls may also roost there in the winter.

The Phase 3 / Home Farm site used to support breeding Lapwings before it was cleared for building. This site is now being built on, but it is still a very important area, not just for birds but for other wildlife too. Because of its elevated position it is also attractive to passing migrants and has hosted local rarities like Ring Ousel and Stonechat. The seeds of the wild flowers, particularly thistles and willowherbs, also attract numbers of Linnets and Goldfinches.

However, things change. The habitat at Keele has matured over the past 40 years and many areas of scrub and low trees have gone, and with them the associated birds. It is interesting to read an earlier publication *The Birdlife of Keele University* (Emley, 1980) and to compare the status of some of the species then with now. For instance, there used to be a rookery of some 30 nests by the Library; that has now gone. There also used to be up to 20 Coots on the top lake but they rarely occur today while

the Willow Warbler, once a common species (24 singing in 1977), is now reduced to just one or two pairs. The University used to have, below Lake 5, its own sewage works with associated filter beds that attracted large numbers of birds, especially in winter months. That too has gone. Conversely, back in the 1970s Buzzard was a rare bird, now they breed on campus and family gatherings of 7/8 in the autumn are not unusual. Ravens too breed on campus now, yet they were unheard of in the area just 15 years ago!

The areas of Larch and Rhododendron towards the M6 have been felled under a *Phytophthora* eradication programme and the area is now quite different with a lot of scrub and regrowth. It will significantly alter the bird population and could generate some interesting sightings – possibly Tree Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler.

The list that follows is a complete record of all the species that have occurred at Keele over the past 40 years. New additions or updated information are always welcome. The sequence is not alphabetical but follows the recognised order used in all field guides.

As well as my own, these records are based on sightings by a number of people; Bill Low *WJL*, Neil Carter *NC*, Nick Pomiankowski *NDP*, Steve Turner *ST*, Joshua Broster *JB*, and Andy Lawrence *JAL*. Particular thanks are due to Mark Sutton *MS* for his detailed survey work, especially in 2020 when access to the campus was limited because of coronavirus restrictions. My thanks to them all.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*: last bred in 1978. Four were introduced in 1980 but they didn't stay. Other sightings include four flying SE over the village and Lymes Lane on 8/1/05, two over Drive Lodge on 14/1/12 *MS*, three over campus 5/02/16 *DWE*, singles over Drive Lodge 3/1/18 and 1/1/19 *MS*.

**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus*: often recorded passing over North Staffordshire in the winter months. Such movements are often in response to cold and freezing conditions on the coast. Here records include a flock of 60 flying over on 3/1/01 *NC*; 115 heading NW on 4/1/03 *MS* and 100 on 29/12/03 *NC*. One was seen feeding on the field in front of Keele Hall on 12/2/04 *MS*. In 2005 a skein of 250 headed NW on 22nd January and a total of 280 on the 23rd *MS*. Up to 1150 flew over in five skeins on 6/2/10, a skein of 100 passed over on 17/1/11 *DWE*, c.500 over Drive Lodge 6/1/18 *MS* and 120+ flew north-west 28/9/18 *JB*. Thirty flew over campus on 24/12/20 *MS*. A skein of 300 flew over campus on 2/1/21 *Andy Mason*. Around 100 flew over Drive Lodge on 4/11/22 *MS*.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*: A pair by Drive Lodge 3/4/18 and five over the Hall *MS*, two over the Clock House 29/4/19 *MS*, three by top lake 7/3/20 *MS*, 2 over Lymes Road 18/1/21 *MS*. An increasing species locally, with occasional records now annually, either around lake 1 or the local farmland as well as flying over

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*: a pair was seen on several dates from 19th March to April 2003, around the pool opposite Drive Lodge *MS*. A pair bred on Lake 1 in 2010 – the first breeding record for 30 years and they have since bred each year and two pairs bred in 2015. Flock of 10 was seen on the sports field 1/3/16 *J. Barker*. In 2016 a pair bred on the pond by the Medical School, with at least two pairs below Keele Hall. A record 11 were by the top lake on 7/3/20 *MS*.

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*: three flew over Clock House Drive on 22/4/12 *MS*.

**Mandarin** *Aix galericulata*: a small colony on the nearby Mainwaring estate is probably the source of birds visiting Keele. Records include: two females/immatures which flew from Lake 5 towards Clayton on 26/5/04; a pair on Lake 3 on 27/5/05; a pair on 25/03/06 and two pairs on Lake 1 on 27/3/07. A pair bred in 2007, probably close to Lake 5 while a pair displayed on Lake 1 on 26/3/10. A pair circled the Clock House on 23/3/11 *DWE*. A pair flew over Drive Lodge 27/4/15 *MS*, a pair was seen along Lymes Road on 13/4/16 *MS*, two pairs on 28/3/18 *MS*, two on 22/4/20 *MS*.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*: a female was seen on Lake 1 on 18/11/03 *MS*.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*: three were seen on the pool opposite Drive Lodge on 25/8/01 and a pair stayed on Lake 2 from February to March 2006 and another on 27/3/07 MS. One was found on Lake 7 on 9/01/10 MS and two pairs on a pool opposite Drive Lodge on 5/3/11 MS. Occasional records annually in last few years with a max of six on 6/3/21. Can appear on any of the pools on campus and adjoining farmland

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*: resident with four or five pairs breeding. A total of 38 was seen on Lake 1 on 24/11/03.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*: three birds (one female and two males) circled low over Drive Lodge on 19/3/2000. MS

**Pochard** *Aythya farina*: a rare winter visitor. There are only one or two old records from the 1970s.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*: one or two pairs used to be found regularly on Lakes 1, 2 and 5. More recently one was seen on Lake 1 on 15/7/10 NDP, one on 26/3/11 MS and a pair there on 2/5/12 Stu McBain.

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*: a female was seen on Lake 1 on 14/10/89 NC.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*: a male flew low over the Phase 3 site on 13/02/10 MS. One on Lake 5 19/12/17 Pauline Weston, one overhead on 24/1/21. There were up to seven birds daily on Lake 1 from 31/12/23 to 6/1/24 MS

**Quail** *Cortunix cortunix*: one was flushed from a cereal field along Lymes Road on 21/7/05 MS.

**Red-legged Partridge** *Alectoris rufa*: Occasionally recorded in fields between the University and the motorway. Latest record here 29/3/2019. A pair was seen regularly on the Science Park and adjacent fields from 7/4/20 to mid-May 2020 and again in March/April 2021 MS.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*: a once common breeder on adjacent farmland but the last record is for 25/4/86 NC.

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*: a common breeder in surrounding woodland and fields. Two males were seen in the Walled Garden on 11/10/13 DWE.

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*: occasional but annual with a max of seven on 10/1/22 MS.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*: one flew over Larchwood on 17/4/15 G. Hazleton.

**Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* One on Lake 5 on 2/11/20 G. Hazleton.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: occasionally seen flying over but they also visit the lakes for fish.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: two or three pairs used to be found on Lakes 1, 2 and 6 then, after an absence of five or six years, one was seen on Lake 1 on 15/4/10. They have since bred. Subsequently three overwintered in 2010/11 and there were five on 14/01/13. One or two were present in 2015 but they have not been seen since work was carried out to drain and de-silt the lake until one from 14/1/21 to 12/2/21 MS.

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*: one flew over the Phase 3 site on 2/5/18 JAL.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*: one flew over Drive Lodge on 6/6/04. It had a red tag on the left wing MS. One was seen by Home Farm 25/4/07 JAL, one flew over the campus entrance on 27/9/08 (Pat Callaghan) and one flew over Keele Hall on 2/6/10 DWE. One was seen off Highway Lane in Keele Village on 16/6/15 K. Haxton. One over Drive Lodge on 11/8/22 and another on 19/10/22 MS.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*: one was flushed from a tree at the bottom of Clock House Drive on 16/3/03 NC.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*: breeds on campus and is frequently seen flying over.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*: once a rare bird in Staffordshire (first Keele record 4/5/75 *Mike Paffard*), it now breeds here (up to two pairs) and nearby. Wandering birds are often seen flying over and a group of seven circled over the top lakes in spring 2004 and eight were seen over Springpool Wood on 1/3/12.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*: one flew over campus on 9/9/97 *NC* and one over Church Plantation on 6/4/18 *MS*.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*: a common visitor to the campus, especially to the areas of rough grassland around Phase 3 and towards the motorway. A pair was seen feeding two young on 28/6/22 *MS*.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*: there is a record of a bird flying over the sports field in the 1970s and a male was seen on 12/3/82 *DWE*. One was seen from Clock House Drive on 13/11/06 *MS* and a male was pursuing Linnets over the Phase 3 site on 22/3/09 *NDP*. A female was seen by the Sustainability Hub 26/3/18 *JAL*.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*: a summer visitor. Records include single birds flying over Drive Lodge 31/5/00 and 23/5/03 *MS*, one in a tree on Lymes Road 2/8/03, one over Keele Hall on 22/7/04 *NC*, one over IC2 on 19/5/06 *ST*, one over campus on 3/6/10 *ST*, one over the Terrace on 5/8/10 *DWE*, one over Drive Lodge on 22/7/12 *MS*, one over Drive Lodge 2/5/20 *MS*.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*: a probable female was hunting over the fields between the Campus and M6 on 23/02/05 at around 7.30. It was perching in trees along Lymes Road / Clock House Drive *MS*. One was seen over Home Farm on 7/8/07, one flew over Clock House Drive on 3/9/08 *MS*, one on 6/10/08 *JAL*, one flew over Drive Lodge on 28/4/12 *MS*, one over Phase 3 on 15/10/14 *JAL*, one over Drive Lodge on 29/3/16 *MS*, one over the sports field 15/8/18 *JAL*, one below Lake 5 on 4/8/20 and one on pylon below old sewage works 29/1/21 and one on 16/11/23 *MS*.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*: singles were seen in 1972, on 6/12/73, 21/3/74 and another on 22/2/96; all at the base of the waterfall between Lakes 1 and 2 *DWE*.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*: At least eight pairs were counted in 2020 *MS*. Winter gatherings by Lake 1 have comprised up to 17 (26/12/23) birds.

**Coot** *Fulica atra*: a once common breeder and absent for many years until two appeared on the top lake on 04/10/09. There have been occasional records since but no breeding. The last sighting was 2/2/13 *MS*.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*: one in a field by the M6 19/5/03 *NC*, one flew over campus on 11/5/05 *DWE*, two were on the sports field on 8/6/08 *Pauline Weston*, one flew over on 23/5/14 *DWE* and one over campus on 29/6/21 *MS*. They have bred at nearby Cudmore Fisheries which may account for some of our records.

**European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*: there are occasional records of birds flying over in winter, usually with Lapwings, and there used to be a wintering flock on the fields alongside Lymes Road; but no longer. Counts there include 200 in March 2003, a flock of 145 on 29/12/03 and 200+ on February 28th/29th 2004 and 120 on 23/1/05, 800 on 9/4/07, 470 on 6/4/08, 200 on 25/11/08, 170 on 14/1/12, 100 on 24/10/17 remained for a week or so. Today there are just occasional records; the most recent being six over on 1/12/23 *MS*.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*: used to breed on fields adjoining the motorway. Also occurs in small flocks in the winter along Lymes Road; often with Golden Plovers. They used to breed on Home Farm but since the construction of Phase 3, they no longer do so – though a pair displayed in 2013 *DWE*. They are only occasional now. A pair attempted to breed along Lymes Road 2023, but no young were seen *MS*.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*: there are a couple of records in the early 1970s of birds calling while flying overhead at night. One passed over Drive Lodge on 2/8/03, one flew over Clock House Drive on 8/5/08 and one was on Phase 3 on 13/4 and 14/4/10 MS.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*: used to breed in fields nearby but only occasional records now.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*: one was seen along Lymes Road on 18/8/08 NC, one also off Lymes Road 24/6/09 DWE, JAL and one along Lymes Road 28/10/20 and on Lake 7 11/11/22 MS.

**Common Sandpiper** *Tringa hypoleucos*: one was seen flying south over campus on 12/9/78 WJL.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*: one flew over campus on 21/10/03 DWE.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*: one flew over the old sewage works site on 18/9/85 DWE.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*: birds are sometimes disturbed from the woodland towards the motorway (1974, 29/3/76, 7/12/77). More recently, one was seen over the Day Nursery on 17/1/03 and another was found dead by the Library on 25/3/03. Other records include one on 8/11/08 between Lymes Road and Drive Lodge, one in Stacy Plantation on 8/1/09, one over Keele Hall 9/01/10, one in the garden of Drive Lodge 11/4/13 and 8/11/14, one in Lower Springpool Wood 26/12/14 MS, one by Keele Hall 10/11/20 and one on 4/1/22 MS

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*: as well as occasional records of birds flying over in the winter there were nine in a field by Keele Hall on 3/1/04 and six on 17/1/04 and six by the Lodge on Clock House Drive on 2/3/04 NC. A flock of up to 100 wintered in a field by Clock House Drive in 2006/7. Recorded occasionally, but annually, on the wet areas of Phase 3 and adjoining farmland MS.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*: one was flushed from the Phase 3 site on 6/1/13, one on 6/1/22 and an incredible 6 on 1/1/23 and 5 on 16/11/23 MS.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrid*: a flock of four, that had earlier been seen over Northwich, was seen flying over Clock House Drive on 20/5/05 MS. This is the first county record since 1970 of this national rarity.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*: two flew over Drive Lodge on 14/7/13 MS.

**Common/Arctic Tern** *Sterna sp.*: one unidentified bird flew over the Phase 3 site on 26/06/08 ST. This is the first record of either of these two species.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*: one was found dying in the Student's Union car-park on 13/2/72 John Cantello. An adult was seen over Lymes Road on 2/2/21 MS.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*: can be seen flying over at any time of year but is more common in winter when they may be seen on the sports fields or flying westwards in the evening to roost, possibly at Doddington Pool.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*: one was seen with other gulls in a newly-manured field between Lymes Road and the M6 Services on 19/1/09; two second-summer birds over Drive Lodge 25/4/09 MS, one was on a ploughed field along Lymes Road on 13/02/10 and an adult there on 5/1/22 MS.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*: occasionally seen flying over in the winter.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*: commonly seen flying over in the winter months.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides*: a juvenile seen over Drive Lodge 8/1/12 had been frequenting a rubbish tip at the foot of Keele Bank for some weeks MS. One in a field off Three Mile Lane 17/2/17 D. Kelsall.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*: an adult bird was seen with Lesser Black-backed Gulls in fields along Lymes Road on 22/10/11 and opposite Drive Lodge 8/11/20 MS and an adult and a third-

winter off Lymes Road on 31/1/21, up to two birds present along Lymes Road from 17/8 to 31/8/22 and a third-winter bird on Lymes Road 30/1/23. *MS*.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*: commonly seen flying over in the winter months.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cacchianans*: a first-winter bird was seen in a field off Lymes Road and 29/1/21 and was relocated on 30/1/21 and 31/1/21 *MS*.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*: there are a few records of birds flying over each winter. The most recent was of three on 20/12/11 *NDP*, a flock of 12 on 28/12/20 and two on 29/1/21 *MS*.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*: a few pairs breed in the campus woodland. They can also be seen in small flocks on the surrounding fields in winter.

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*: breeds and roosts in the thicker plantations. They are common in flocks on surrounding fields in winter.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*: a common resident, frequenting the farm and residential areas.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*: only three records; 1973, 13/5/77 and 15/5/07 *MS*.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*: one was seen by the Clock House 23/1/06 *Russell Toon*.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*: they are occasionally heard on passage in the spring and last bred in 1972. Recent records include 25/5/04 in Upper Springpool Wood, 27/4/11 flying over Drive Lodge *MS*, 28/4/11 in Clock House Drive *Ian Wright* and 20/5/13 in Upper Springpool Wood *Clare Holdsworth*, 15/5/14 in Upper Springpool Wood *DWE* and 29/5/14 *Bev Roberts*. One by Drive Lodge 23/4/20 *MS*, two flew over campus 9/5/20 *Andy Mason*.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*: seen near Keele village on several occasions in February 2002 and on campus in the winter of 2022/2023, on 12/3/23 (2) and 10/12/23 to 5/1/24 *MS*.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*: breeds on adjacent farmland.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*: at least four territories on campus of which three fledged young in 2020 *MS*.

**Swift** *Apus apus*: a summer visitor but not a common bird here; they are occasionally seen flying over. There are two exceptionally late dates: 5/11/76 and 26/11/76 and an early date of 30/4/77.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*: occasionally seen flying over the lakes.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*: one in Clock House Drive on 12/5/75 *Dr. Ross*

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridus*: they are occasionally heard in the spring and there is one record of breeding. Three were seen on Observatory Ridge on 24/9/94 *NC*; one near the sports field on 29/7/03; one along Lymes Road on 5/10/03, one by Lake 1 on 12/2/04 *MS*, one in Springpool Wood 15/4/05 *Malcolm Wright*, one in Springpool 4/3/08 – 19/3/08 *DWE*, *Debbie Knight*, one by the tennis courts 1/6/14 *Peter Knight*, one Stacy Plantation 13/4/15 *DWE*, one on 25/3/20, one flew over Keele village entrance, calling, on 8/8/23 and one present by Lake 3 on 9/11 and 10/11/23 *MS*.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus major*: a common resident.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus minor*: probably breeds here but is seldom seen. A bird was seen for a week or so by Barnes Dell in 2001. A pair was displaying, drumming (both birds) and calling around Lake 3 on three dates in mid-March 2004 *MS*. One was seen and heard by Lake 3 on 19/2/05 *MS*.

**Magpie** *Pica pica*: a common resident.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*: a common resident.

**Western Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*: a common resident (especially around Keele Hall). A flock of over 50 gathers on Phase 3 in the winter.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*: there used to be a rookery of up to 30 nests near the Students' Union buildings and another by the Library, but these have long gone. Birds often fly over and feeding birds are seen on adjacent farmland.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*: a common resident, with over 50 sometimes in winter on Phase 3.

**Raven** *Corvus corax*: the first record is of four birds, flushed from a field behind Paris Avenue, Westlands on 23/8/97, which then flew over the Observatory *WJL*. One was seen over Keele village on 20/8/00, one over Drive Lodge on 14/8/01, two on 1/1/02, two on 22/3/02 and one on 12/10/03 *MS*. Two flew west over campus on 27/12/03 *Keith Longshaw* and one south on 28th/29th February 2004 *NC*. One was seen from Clock House Drive on 4/1/05 *JAL* and two were mobbing a Buzzard on 14/1/05 *DWE*. Has since bred on campus and sightings are now regular.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*: a resident; more common in the coniferous plantations.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*: one was seen on 1/1/84 near the motorway *DWE* and another remained from 16/1/03 into February in the Larchwood area, visiting residents' gardens.

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*: a common resident.

**Great Tit** *Parus major*: a common resident.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*: a common resident, more commonly seen in coniferous areas.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montana*: a rare visitor that was last seen by the Library on 7/9/05 *Phil Evans*.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*: a rare visitor. Records include one by Lake 8 on 11/5/05 *Phil Evans* and one along Lymes Road on 16/6/06 *MS*.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*: breeds on surrounding farmland and sometimes gathers in flocks in the winter, especially on fields near to the M6 service station where up to 250 were seen on 6/11/90.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*: occasionally seen flying over.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*: a common summer visitor. A very late record on 17/11/77.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*: a common summer visitor. However, a regular count of nests by Nick Pomiankowski has shown a decline in 2008, 2009 and then a gradual increase. A new colony of was found on Barnes Hall and this boosted numbers slightly.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caedatus*: a common resident.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: used to be heard singing regularly on spring passage in the 1970s but there were no further records until one was seen and heard by the Clock House on 27/4/10 *DWE*.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*: a common summer visitor with occasional records of overwintering birds.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*: a once common summer visitor but numbers have fallen considerably. For example, 24 were recorded in song in 1977; in 2002 only four or five and none in 2012. Two territories were counted in 2020 *MS*. This is a national trend but the habitat at Keele has now matured and is probably no longer as attractive to them. However, one or two breed / are on territory annually still, usually one on Phase 3 and one near Lake 7 *MS*.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*: a common summer visitor with occasional winter records too. They breed most years in the Walled Garden and at a number of other sites on the estate.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*: an uncommon summer visitor. Records include birds seen on 4/5/06, 12/5/06, 2/5/07, 24/4/08, 28/4/10 and 24/7/11. They have bred in or behind the Walled Garden

from 2011-13 and by the Sustainability Hub in 2013. One sang in the Memorial Garden 13/5/14 DWE. Ten territories were counted in 2020 MS. Four were seen on 9/5/22, six on 17/5/22 and there were six pairs in 2023 MS.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*: an uncommon summer visitor with campus sightings on 6/6/73, 1/5/77, 27/5/03 to 29/5/03, 24/8/07 and in Lymes Road 2/7/11 MS, 20/5/15 NDP, one on 2/5/19 (Lymes Road) and 14/8/21 (Phase 3) MS.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*: a regular summer visitor. Records include sightings on 25-27/4/04, 28/4/08, 9/5/08, 22/5/12. There was one on Phase 3 on 16/4/13 and a pair along Lymes Road 30/4/13, one below Walled Garden 30/4/14, one breeding behind Students' Union car-park, one in Lower Clock House Drive 22/4/15. In 2020, 10-12 territories were counted (7+ on Phase 3 and 3+ along Lymes Road/Clock House area) MS. Now breeds annually on Phase 3, Lymes Road and Clock House Drive MS.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*: a rare summer visitor. One was seen on 6/5/76 DWE, one by Keele Hall on 01/05/06 MS and one in the Walled Garden on 1/8/13 DWE, one near the Observatory 19/4/20, one on Phase 3 26/6/21 MS.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: rare summer visitor, the only records being of one by the former Sewage Works on 17/8/76 DWE and one singing on Phase 3 site 27/4/20 and 22/4/21 MS.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: the first record for Keele was found near the Cauldwell Centre on 9/6/22 MS.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*: there were three in February 1996 following a major influx in which some 4000 were recorded in Britain. A flock of up to 50 was resident in Newcastle at the time. A flock of around 110 flew over Lymes Road on 15/2/05 at a time when flocks of up to 1000 were seen in North Staffs area in January and February MS. One was seen on 3/2/05 in a Larchwood garden *Pauline Weston*. A flock of 25 fed on berries by the Medical Centre 13/4/17 *Stephanie Odell*. One flew over campus on 30/11/23 MS.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*: a common resident. Keele has a good population of this species.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*: a common resident.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*: a common resident.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*: a common resident whose numbers are supplemented by winter migrants.

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*: there are one or two old (pre-1970) winter records from the stream by the motorway (between Lakes 6 and 7).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*: a common resident with numbers supplemented by migrants in the winter. An impressive 34 were feeding in the garden of Drive Lodge on 2/2/19 MS.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*: a common winter visitor. They are attracted to the sports field in hard weather in search of worms.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*: a resident, though numbers are reduced in the winter months as birds move southwards. In 2020, 20+ territories were counted MS.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*: a common winter visitor. They are attracted to the sports field in hard weather and are seen around central campus in very hard conditions.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*: a resident species. Flocks of up to 30 can be seen in the autumn feeding on Rowan and Yew berries. 15 were feeding on the Sports Field on 22/7/15. In 2020 5+ territories were counted MS.



**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus toquatus*: a passage migrant was seen on Phase 3 / Home Farm site on 15/4/13 JAL and by MS on 9/11/20.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*: they used to occur regularly, but it is now a very uncommon bird. Five were seen on 27/9/76. The most recent records include one near the rugby pitch on 9/6/03, one by Drive Lodge on 1/9/07 MS, one along Lymes Road 10/5/12 MS and a pair bred at the Hawthorns in 2013 (*David Gould*), two seen on 20/5/19 MS. Bred annually from 2019 to 2022 (three territories in 2022), but no singing birds were noted 2023. However, there were two birds present along Clock House Drive from 8/8 to 21/8 MS.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*: a common resident.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*: they used to be seen occasionally in the spring but the last was one on 2/5/96 by former sewage works *D. Woodward*. Then, a male was seen in the copse (Bears Rough) that borders Lymes Road on 19/4/2013 DWE, one sang in the garden of Drive Lodge and hung around a nest box from 29/5/16 to 2/6/16 MS, a male sang near Lake 3 on 21/5/18 JAL.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*: one found on 25/5/20 MS.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: there are very few records, all on spring passage: 1/6/74, 3/5/75, 29/4/05 MS and one near Home Farm 29/4/13 NDP. A male sang in the Walled Garden on 2/5/14 DWE.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*: the very few records on spring passage come mostly from a silage heap along Lymes Road. The last records include 2/5/84, 1/5/05 MS, 24/4/07 JAL and NC, 9/5/10 MS, 19/4/20 MS.

**European Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*: one was seen along Lymes Road on 26/9/2008 JAL, one on Phase 3 on 9/10/12 JAL, one along Lymes Road 4/4/16 MS, one along Lymes Road 13/11/19 JAL, one off Lymes Road 18/3/20 and a male on the Home Farm development site through January and February 2021 MS. One was found on 16/10/22 and two on 19/10/22 MS. There were three on the Science Park on 25/10/22 with two there on 11/11/22 and four on 16/11/23. A pair was present by the Solar Farm from November into December 2023 MS.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*: an occasional visitor on migration. Records include two on 26/3/76, one in April 1978, one on the sports field on 10/7/03 and two along Lymes Road on 2/4/05 NC, four along Lymes Road 24/4/07 NC, JAL, two Lymes Road 30/4/08, two on Phase 3 23/4/10 MS, one on Lymes Road 7/4/11 MS, one on 30/4/12 *Debbie Knight*. Then two on Phase 3 15/4/13 JAL, DWE, one on 21/4/20 MS, one off Lymes Road 15/9/20, one there on 5/4/22 and one on Clock House Drive 9/5/22 and on Lymes Road 3/5/23 MS.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*: a common resident.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*: a common resident, seldom seen far away from staff housing.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*: There is a record of 25 being seen around Home Farm in 1977 and there were 12 along Lymes Road from January – March 2003 with three there on 5/10/13. Not seen since.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*: they are occasionally seen in spring and has bred on surrounding fields though it is a scarce species these days. Singles were seen along Lymes Road on 1/5/08, 24/4/10 MS, 25/5/12 JAL, 10/5/15 DWE, JAL, 20/5/15 (4) NDP, one on 21/8/23 and two on 22/8/23 along Lymes Road MS.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*: odd birds are frequently seen around the lakes and occasionally around campus buildings. Three territories were counted in 2020 MS.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*: resident. They are often seen around the campus buildings and the sports fields, where large numbers (up to 100) are sometimes seen in the autumn.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*: one was seen on the lawn below Keele Hall on 9/5/02 NC. One on the very late date of 15/11/20 MS.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*: it has bred in the past in Lower Springpool Wood but no longer does so. One flying over Lymes Road 5/8/2005 was the first record since the 1970s while another was seen passing over Drive Lodge on 16/8/07 MS, one on Phase 3 on 25/9/18 DWE, two along Lymes Road on 26/4/20 and one over Drive Lodge on 11/8/22 MS.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*: seen or heard on spring/autumn passage. Sometimes seen in winter on surrounding fields and on Phase 3. Twenty were seen on Phase 3 on 26/10/12 JAL and 12 on 25/10/17 JAL, 54 off Lymes Road 21/1/21 MS.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*: a common resident whose numbers are supplemented by winter migrants.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montefringilla*: an uncommon but annual passage / winter visitor. The maximum count is of 11 in the garden of Drive Lodge 17/4/04 MS. A very early bird was seen by Drive Lodge on 9/10/05 MS.

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*: a common resident, though numbers have dropped in recent years. Sometimes small flocks feed on Yew berries e.g. by the Clock House. In 2020 4+ territories were counted and there are currently (2023) 30+ wintering birds MS.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*: a common visitor, often seen on thistles in the autumn and occasionally on Alder catkins in Barnes Dell and on Larches near the motorway in the winter. Now a common visitor to bird feeders in gardens where they seem to prefer nyger seed and sunflower hearts.

**Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*: a common winter visitor, feeding on Alder catkins in Barnes Dell and Larches near the motorway in the winter. Regularly visits garden feeders, especially in late winter/early spring.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*: can occasionally be heard or seen flying over at any time of year. There were 30 along Lymes Road on 20/3/07 NDP. A flock of 210 was on Phase 3 site in March 2009 NDP. In 2020 at least two territories were counted (1 or 2 on Phase 3 and one Lymes Road) MS. On 11/11/22 a flock of 140 was seen on Lymes Road. This increased on 28/12/22 to an amazing flock of 280 MS.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Carduelis cabaret*: a regular winter visitor and passage migrant that can often be found with Siskins feeding on Alder catkins. In recent years there has been a trend for them to visit resident's gardens and feeding on nyger seed especially.

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*: they have been recorded flying over in years of irruptive dispersal. Records include eight flying low over Drive Lodge on 4/3/00 (at this period there were quite a few scattered records in the county); one over Drive Lodge on 22/8/01; one flew over campus on 1/11/02 (again there were flocks on nearby Hanchurch Hills); one flew over on 1/10/03 and another on 7th November 2003. Two flew over campus on 15/8/05 NDP while four flew over Drive Lodge on 18/4/11 MS and six were seen in Norway Spruce at Firs Hill on 14/10/11 DWE. A flock of 15 were in the Norway Spruce behind Keele Hall on 5/5/14 DWE, two flew over Springpool plantation on 12/7/2018 NDP, one near Lake 6 25/4/19 MS, one over Drive Lodge 4/4/20 MS, one over Drive Lodge 9/4/20 MS, three over Science Park 28/5/20 MS, two near Lake 6 30/5/20 MS, four over Drive Lodge 22/6/20 MS, 10 flew SW over Science Park 1/7/20, a max of 18 on 6/4/21 over Keele Hall and three by the Hall on 4/11/23 MS.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: a common resident.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: a pair was seen in a Yew by the Keele Village entrance to campus on 21/5/00 MS. One visited a resident's garden from 02/12 to 03/12/13 Peter Thomas.

Following a major UK influx, five were seen in Springpool Wood on 30/10/17 *Joshua Broster*. A group of six was then seen on Clock House Drive on 19/11/17 *MS* and a varying number of birds remained there up to the year's end. One was seen over Church Plantation on 8/1/18, three by White Well 2/2/18 *DWE*, 17 near the Clock House 11/2/18 *MS*, five in Yews by campus entrance 22/2/18 *JAL*, and there have been a few in Keele Churchyard and largest count was 19 on 25/2/18 *MS*. Four by Keele Hall 6/3/18 *DWE*, two in the top of a Lime by Keele Hall 13/3/18 *DWE*, 13 were by Drive Lodge 3/4/18 *MS* with three by the Clock House on 9/4/18 *JAL*. Two seen on 28/1/22, five on 6/2/22 and one near Keele Hall from 8/12/23 to 13/12/23 *MS*.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*: breeds on surrounding farmland. One noted flying over on 16/11/20 was first record for seven years *MS*.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*: an occasional visitor, sometimes frequenting residents' gardens in the winter. A group of 9 was seen by the pools on Phase 3 on 20/12/17 *JAL*. One (possibly two occasionally) pairs present on Phase 3 since 2020. *MS*. A record seven were found on 22/10/22 *MS*.

## EXOTICA

**Muscovy Duck** *Cairina moschata*: one remained on Lake 1 from 19-20/5/75.

**Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*: an Ibis, probably this species, was seen circling high over Home Farm on 24/7/2012 *DWE*. There had been earlier reports of an escaped bird in the Manchester area, so this may have been the same one.

**Grey Cockatiel** *Nymphicus hollandicus*: one was seen by the Terrace on 23/1/06 *DWE*.

**Green Singing Finch** *Serinus mozambicus*: one in September 1981 in a garden in the Covert *DWE*.