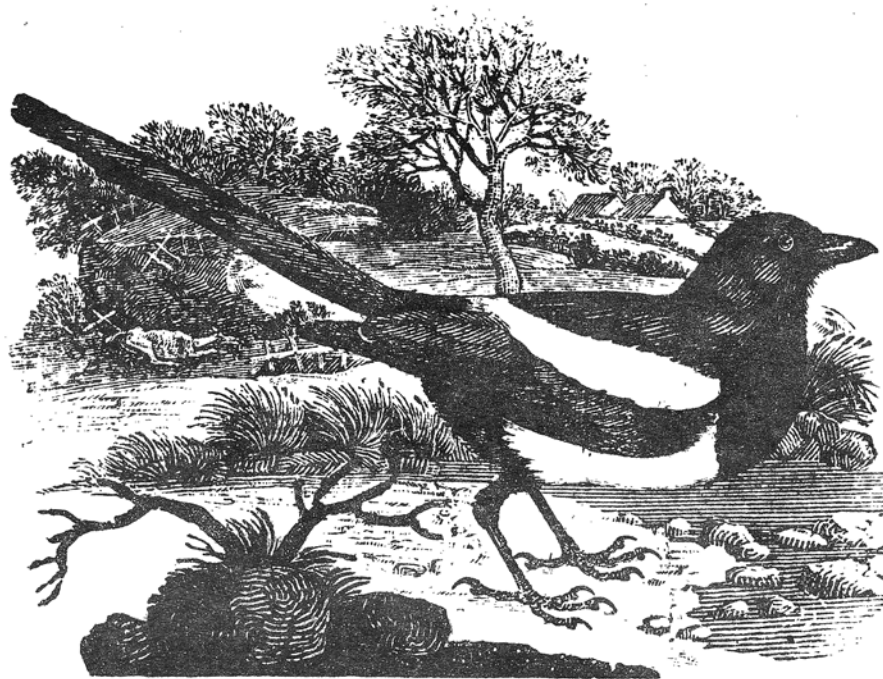


THE BIRDS &  
BUTTERFLIES  
OF  
KEELE WOODS



UNIVERSITY OF KEELE

A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES OF KEELE WOODS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

This guide was written and the pictures drawn by the three authors during the period after they had taken Finals, although it is based on records which they had made during their four years at Keele. A few additional records have been supplied by other people. It is hoped that the publication of this guide will stimulate more people into studying and recording birds, butterflies and other aspects of wild life at Keele.

Any new bird records can be sent to Dr. W. Pigram in the Physics department who will collect them with the intention of producing a revised list.

Mrs. S. Tatton of the Biology department typed the text and Mr. G. Barber of the Geography department drew the map.

K.M. Goodway

For those who would like to find out more about British birds and butterflies than can be given in a brief guide, there are several books (all of which are in the University Library) which will be useful, particularly to the beginner:

A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. Roger Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P.A.D. Hollom. (1951.)

Book of British Birds. Ed. R. Fitter, Drive Publications Ltd. (1969)

The Pocket Guide to British Birds. 3.8.1. Fitter and R.A. Richardson. (1955)

Atlas of Breeding Birds of the West Midlands. J. Lord and D. J. Munns (1970)

The Birds of Staffordshire. J. Lord and A. R. M. Blake. (1962)

A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe. L. C. Higgins and N. D. Riley (1970)

The Butterflies of the British Isles. Richard South (1947)

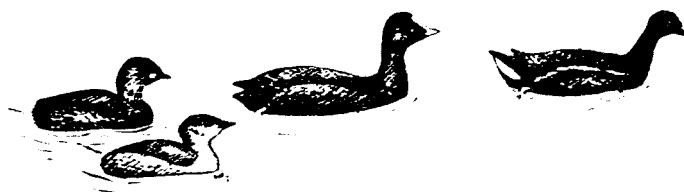
## A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES

### OF KEELE WOODS

This booklet follows the format of a nature trail guide. The complete walk covers a distance of two and a half miles and takes approximately two hours.

Start at Keele Hall. Notice the FERAL PIGEONS (domestic pigeons gone wild) which frequent the elaborate masonry of the building, a habitat which approximates to the cliffs of their wild ancestors (Rock Doves). Also here are COLLARED DOVES, warm beige-coloured birds with dark half-collars which colonised Britain in the period from 1955-1965. having spread across Europe from the Middle East.

Take the drive out of the courtyard, almost immediately turning right and dropping down a path below a high wall to the Top Lake, keeping to the right-hand bank (1 on map). SWANS (which can be aggressive, especially in early summer), COOTS and MOORHENS are usually present. The last two, members of the same family, can be separated by the white on the coot's bill and forehead, but nowhere else on its body, while the Moorhen has a white line along its side and white under its tail, and its bill and forehead are yellow and red.



Dabchick

Coot

Moorhen

Coots are normally only seen on the top lake at Keele, not being found on small ponds and streams like the Moorhen. The DABCHICK or Little Grebes may also be on the top lake: in the summer it has a bright chestnut head and white spot at the base of the bill, in winter it is greyer, but always looks puffy and "tailless". Ducks likely to be seen here are the MALLARD and TUFTED DUCK, the latter in winter only, told from the green-headed, grey-bodied Mallard by the drake's white sides and drooping crest, but neither species is very common as the abundant leaves make the water too "dirty" for duck.

In winter the alders both here and in Barnes Dell often attract SISKINS. small striated green and yellow finches, the male with a black crown and forehead. They can also be recognised by their twanging, disyllabic call-notes. LESSER REDPOLLS accompany them in the alders, and can be recognised in good light by red foreheads and, in the male, by a pink breast. When colours are invisible they can be told by the call-note, a dry "chich-ich-ich".



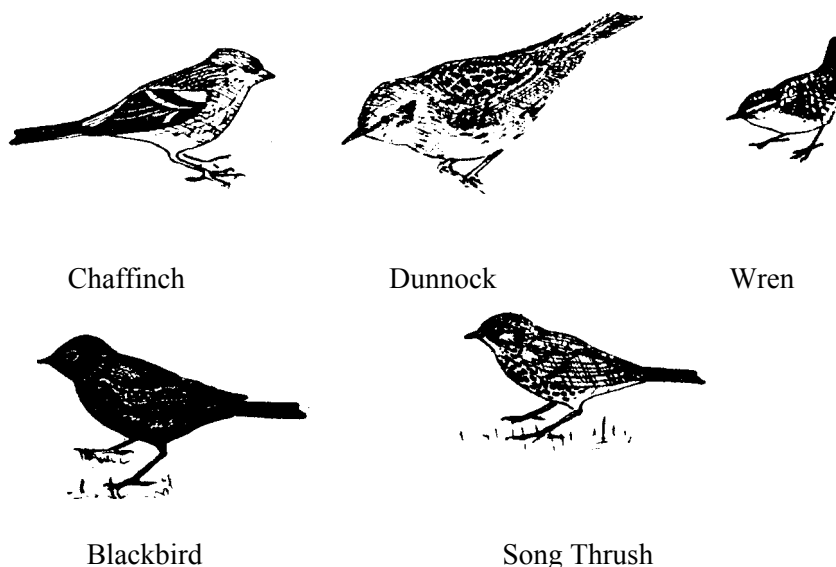
Siskin



Redpoll

At the lower end of the top lake carry straight on down the track, beside the second and third lakes. Instead of following the track to the left across the dam below the third lake, take a narrow path to the right. beside the outflow. This leads into Barnes Dell (2 on map).

This is a damp valley dominated by tall alders, and rhododendrons forming an impenetrable thicket. Birds which are well-known in built-up areas are as common in this woodland habitat, such as BLACKBIRD, SONG THRUSH, WREN, CHAFFINCH, DUNNOCK (or hedge sparrow), ROBIN, BLUE TIT and GREAT TIT. The Blackbird's rich contralto song consists of linked phrases, while the Song Thrush repeats shorter generally higher pitched series of notes. The Chaffinch is well-named "Pink" in some areas, as not only does this refer accurately to its most common call-note, but also to the colour of its chest. It also has double white wing-bars and a slate-blue head. The song is a rapid succession of emphatic notes ending in a cheerful flourish.



On sunny days the azaleas and rhododendrons in Barnes Dell attract White butterflies: the LARGE WHITE has prominent black tips to the wings; the GREEN-VEINED WHITE has, as its name implies, greenish veins on the underside of its hind wings; and the ORANGE TIP male has the outer third of its wings bright orange and the undersides marked with greenish patches.

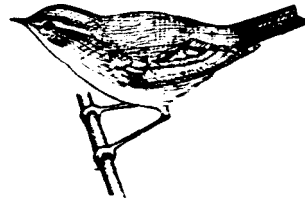
Continue on the same path beside the fourth and fifth lakes. The densely wooded area at the bottom of this last lake (3 on map) is a good place to look for JAYS, shy woodland birds. They are larger than Blackbirds, pinkish, with a prominent white rump or lower back, often seen as the bird flies away.

Follow the path out through the Yews to the clearing, where Pines were felled in 1973, and then fork right, along the edge of the clearing. About half-way to the next tall conifers turn right up a narrow path through the plantation. This leads up to the Beech clump.

The young oak trees in the plantation beside the path provide a good habitat for WILLOW WARBLERS, small greenish insectivorous birds easily told from the very similar looking CHIFFCHAFF by the frequent wistful song, a descending rim of slender notes ending in a gentle flourish. The Chiffchaff, which generally prefers maturer woodland, sings an insistent, irregular repetition of two notes.

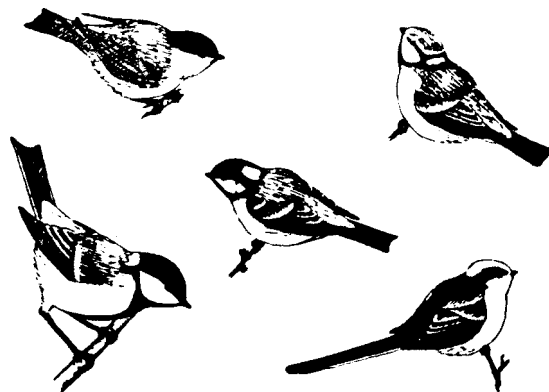


Jay



Willow Warbler

The Beech clump (4 on map) is a good place to watch TITS in winter, searching for food together in flocks. The BLUE TIT and GREAT TIT dominate these flocks, the former with blue crown separated from white cheek by a black line, the latter larger with black crown and a band from chin to base of the tail. The Great Tit has louder call-notes and “see-saw” song in spring. The next most frequent bird in these parties is the COAL TIT (found in summer mainly in conifers) which has buffer underpart. where Great and Blue Tit have lemon-yellow, double white wing-bars, black crown and bib and a white patch on the back of its neck. LONG-TAILED TIT is the easiest to identify, by pink and black back and black lines on the white head, as well as the long tail and spluttering call-notes. Finally these flocks may be accompanied by a MARSH TIT, similar to Coal Tit, but lacking the nape patch and wing bars. Its call is a distinctive double note like “pitchew”.



Marsh Tit

Blue Tit

Great Tit

Coal Tit

Long-tailed Tit

In summer many SWALLOWS, HOUSE MARTINS and SWIFTS can be seen from Beech clump, hawking for insects in the warm air. The Swallow has long tail streamers and a red throat, House Martin has white rump and under-parts, and Swift, unrelated to the other two, is duskier, with long scythe-like wings.

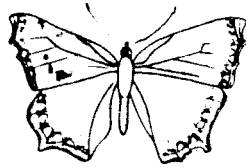


Swift

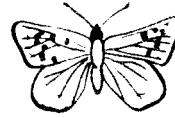
House Martin

Swallow

Follow the path on down from the Beech clump to another lake. On the opposite side of the lake, beside Two-mile Lane is a rough wet area with rushes, Marsh Thistles and Ragged Robin. These attract butterflies, including SMALL TORTOISESHELL and SMALL COPPER.



Small Tortoiseshell

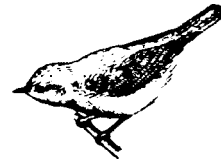


Small Copper

Turn back and follow the path below the Beech clump, along the bottom of the valley. On the Spring Pool (6 on map) look out for Dabchicks, often hard to see among the white mass of Water Crowfoot. Two of our summer Warblers, the BLACKCAP and GARDEN WARBLER, inhabit the dense growth of trees in this area, and although they are best separated by sight the Garden Warbler lacking the black or chestnut cap of the male and female Blackcap, in thick foliage it is often hard to detect them, except by song. The Blackcap has a rich contralto voice which characteristically begins quietly and reaches a loud crescendo. The Garden Warbler's song is equally rich in quality but is more even in volume and pitch and is carried on for longer periods.

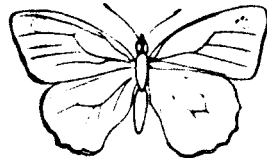


Blackcap

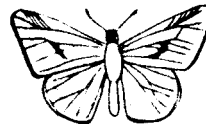


Garden Warbler

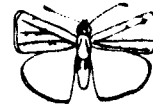
Continue to the clearing at the junction of the path you are on with the track from Two-mile Lane (7 on map). MEADOW BROWN, COMMON BLUE, and LARGE SKIPPER butterflies can be seen here from late June, and the more local DINGY SKIPPER, a small brown moth-like butterfly can be found near its food plant. Bird's-foot Trefoil, which grows abundantly in the short grass here.



Meadow Brown



Large Skipper



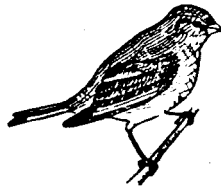
Dingy Skipper

Continue on along this path. In the yews which abut onto the path the high tinkling song of the GOLDCREST, the smallest British bird, can be heard throughout the year. With green plumage and agile hovering flight this bird recalls the Chiffchaff or Willow Warbler, but bright orange or yellow crown stripe and wing bars are good visual distinctions.

Where this path bends round to the left (8 on map) listen for the high trill. and call-notes of LESSER REDPOLL which often fly over this area in spring. They can be separated from the commoner GREENFINCH also found in the area, by not only their lack of green plumage, but by their smaller size, more high pitched song, and faster flight,- lacking the Greenfinch's slow flapping display flight. GOLDFINCHES can also be seen here, identified by their bright yellow wing-stripes and red faces.



Goldcrest



Greenfinch



Goldfinch

Follow this path to the sewage works (9 on map) which, with abundant insects throughout the year, is a good place for winter birds. Large numbers of MEADOW PIPITS, small brown ground birds with striated under-parts, thin bills and characteristic “peep-peep” call-notes are winter visitors here, joining the local Coal Tits, Chaffinches, Starlings and other birds. PIED and GREY WAGTAILS are always present, the former in good numbers in winter. While Pied Wagtail has a dark grey or black back, crown and bib, and white underparts and cheeks, the Grey Wagtail has slate-grey back, black bib in the male and yellow underparts, most intensely yellow on the flanks and under the base of the tail. Its call is more metallic, less liquid than the Pied’s. The third British Wagtail, the YELLOW, is an occasional visitor on migration, and is separated from the Grey by green upperparts, bright yellow eye-stripe, and loud “sooeep” call.



Pied Wagtail



Grey Wagtail

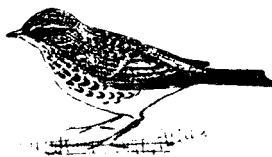


Meadow Pipit

During the winter months the fields of permanent pasture on the east of the sewage works often hold flocks of FIELDFARES and REDWINGS, Scandinavian thrushes spending the winter in Britain. The Fieldfare is larger than a Song Thrush with slate-blue head, chestnut back, pale grey rump and black tail. The call is a harsh “chak. chak”. The Redwing is smaller with a long white eyestripe and red on the flanks, its call a thin “seee”.



Redwing



Fieldfare



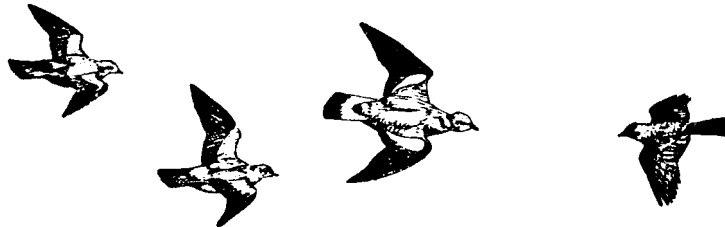
Spotted Flycatcher

Continue on up the grassy bank, through a metal gate and into the woodland again. This mature woodland above Barnes Dell (10 on map) is a characteristic habitat of Chiffchaff, which like the Willow Warblers sing continuously from April to July. The Chiffchaff’s two-note song and its marked preference for taller trees is an essential distinction, for the only visual difference between the two birds is in the colour of the legs (Willow Warbler’s usually paler) which is very difficult to see well in the field. Another very characteristic bird of this sort of oakwood is the SPOTTED FLYCATCHER, a nondescript hair-brown summer visitor with the distinctive habit of sitting upright on exposed perches and making agile sallies out to capture insects, usually returning to the same perch, The call is quiet but insistent, a high-pitched “zhit” or “tu-tic-tic”.

The alders in Barnes Dell, which can be seen well from this area, hold JACKDAWS and STOCK



DOVES in the breeding season. The former are smaller than their relatives, the Carrion Crows and Rooks, and have a grey patch at the “nape” at the back of the head. Their rather high-pitched calls resemble their name “jack” or “chack”. The Stock Dove is often detected first by its muffled, trisyllabic cooing which is quieter and less insistent than that of the Collared Dove, a bird which is well established in the area of Keele Hall. Stock Doves are distinguished from the commoner WOOD PIGEONS by their darker slate-blue plumage and wings, which lack the white transverse bars, but have black linings. They are closer in size to Feral Pigeons but lack the white rump and thin black bars on the wing.



Feral Pigeon      Stock Dove      Wood Pigeon      Jackdaw

Turn right just beyond the steps leading down into Barnes Dell and then take another right turn up into Mill Green. This track leads through the most extensive and least managed mature woods in Keele and hence is a good area for hole-nesting woodland birds. (11 on map). Probably the commonest are Starlings, and certainly one of the most characteristic sounds of this part of the woods in June is the harsh churring call of their young. Another bird to look for is the NUTHATCH, which climbs tree trunks, and can be detected easily in early spring by its loud whistling and trilling calls. It tends to fall silent later in the season and is then more elusive. If seen, however, it can be identified by its slate-blue back and tail, deep orange flanks, and conspicuous black stripe through the eye.

Also found on tree-trunks rather than branches is the GREATER SPOTTED WOODPECKER, the least uncommon of the three British woodpeckers in Keele Woods. Like the Nuthatch it is best detected in early spring when it drums rapidly and loudly with its bill against a dead branch or trunk. When seen, it is a black and white Woodpecker with white “shoulder” patches and red under its tail and on the back of the head of the male.



Greater Spotted Woodpecker      Nuthatch

In the open woodland and clearing near the Springpool Houses, Warblers of all four common Keele species are present (12 on map). MAGPIES and CARRION CROWS can often be seen too. The Magpie is conspicuous with bold black and white plumage and a long tail while the Crow, all black, without the shaggy appearance of the ROOK (which nests in a colony behind Keele library), has a heavy black bill while the Rook is thinner, with a bare patch of greyish white skin at its base.



Magpie



Carrion Crow



Rook

Crows and Magpies are great predators on the eggs and young of other birds; this area is a good place to look out for the real birds of prey. The KESTREL is easily the commonest and is recognised by its rich chestnut back and wings and slate-grey head, slim appearance, and by the habit of prolonged hovering, watching for small rodents and large insects on the ground. SPARROWHAWKS have also been seen here and elsewhere at Keele. They can be told from the similar-sized Kestrel by slate-grey or dull-brown rounded wings, longer tail and different flight: they either dash low over the ground to surprise small birds into flight, or soar in circles with occasional deep flaps of the wings.



Sparrowhawk



Kestrel



From Mill Green take a small path which leads below the houses and back to the top lake. Near the lake watch out for the white rump and deep pink chest of the BULLFINCH whose call is a low melancholy pipe. Continue on the path beside the lake, but notice beside the track the massive trunk of a tall redwood. It has clearly visible hollows excavated in the soft bark - the work of TREECREEPERS which roost in the hollows at night. Although they share the tree-trunk climbing habits of Nuthatches, they are completely different in appearance being striated, brown, rather wren-like birds with stiff tails and a long curved bill, which is used as forceps rather than the pickaxe of the Nuthatch.



Treecreeper



Bullfinch

BUTTERFLIES FOUND ON THE CAMPUS

BUTTERFLY	SEASON*	GENERAL COLOUR	CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS
LARGE SKIPPER ( <i>Ochlodes venata</i> )	June-July	Fulvous and brown	Grasses
DINGY SKIPPER ( <i>Erynnis tages</i> )	May-June	Fuscous, or very dark brown	Bird'sfoot Trefoil
LARGE WHITE ( <i>Pieris brassicae</i> )	April-June July-Sept	White	Cabbage family
SMALL WHITE ( <i>Pieris rapae</i> )	Apr-July	White	Cabbage family
GREEN-VEINED WHITE ( <i>Pieris napi</i> )	May-June July-Aug	White	Cabbage family
ORANGE TIP ( <i>Anthocaris cardamines</i> )	May-June	White with orange wing tips	Cabbage family
SMALL COPPER ( <i>Lyceana phlaeas</i> )	May-June July-Sept	coppery-orange and black	Docks and Sorrel
COMMON BLUE ( <i>Polyommatus icarus</i> )	June-Sept	Blue	Bird's-foot Trefoil
RED ADMIRAL ( <i>Vanessa atalanta</i> )	June-Sept	Black, with scarlet bands and white dots	Nettles
SMALL TORTOISESHELL ( <i>Aglais urticae</i> )	Mar-May June-Sept	reddish-orange	Nettles
PEACOCK ( <i>Inachis io</i> )	Mar-Apr	Brownish-red, with blue eyes	Nettles
SPECKLED WOOD ( <i>Pararge aegeria</i> )	Apr-May June-Sept	Blackish-brown with yellowish spots	Grasses
WALL BROWN ( <i>Lassiomata megera</i> )	May-June July-Aug	Bright fulvous	Grasses
MEADOW BROWN ( <i>Maniola jurtina</i> )	June-July Aug-Sept	Fuscous brown and dark orange	Grasses

\*Some butterflies have more than one brood.

CLASSIFIED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED AT KEELE 1970-1974

LITTLE GREBE or Dabchick (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) Resident.  
GREY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) Occasional visitor, all seasons.  
MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Regular non-breeding visitor, all seasons.  
TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) Occasional winter visitor, staying for quite long periods.  
MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) Resident.  
SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) Occasional visitor, all seasons.  
KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) Resident.  
PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) Resident along border between Campus and Home Farm (J. Green).  
WATER RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*) Two records: Two birds, February 1972, also Spring 1974 (J. Green) but probably overlooked.  
MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) Resident.  
COOT (*Fulica atra*) Resident.  
LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*) Resident and winter visitor on Home Farm.  
GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis apricaria*) Three records: One bird, 9.1.71; heard at night over Keele village, 14.1.71; one bird, 20.10.72 over village.  
SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) Rare visitor, winter.  
WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticola*) One record: February 1974.  
CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) Rare visitor, mummer.  
GREAT BLACK-BACKED CULL (*Larus marinus*) Occasional in winter, with other gulls.  
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) Regular visitor, all seasons: winter roost at Doddington pool c. 8 miles away.  
HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) Regular visitor, all seasons, roost at Doddington.  
COMMON CULL (*Larus canus*) Regular visitor, perhaps mainly in winter.  
BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*) Regular visitor, all seasons: roost at Doddington.  
KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) Found dying in Union car-park 13.2.72.  
STOCK DOVE (*Columba oenas*) Summer resident. (Winter status uncertain).  
FERAL PIGEON (*Columba livia*) Resident.  
WOODPIGEON (*Columba palumbus*) Resident.  
TURTLE DOVE (*Streptopelia turtur*) Only known records: two in June 1973.  
COLLARED DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) Resident.  
CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*) Occasional visitor, Spring. Bred 1972, reared by Dunnock (J. Green).  
BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) Occasional on Home Farm.  
TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco*) Resident.  
LITTLE OWL (*Athens noctua*) Rare visitor, two records (J. Green).  
SWIFT (*Apus apus*) Summer resident.  
KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) Seen regularly most winters (J. Green).  
GREEN WOODPECKER (*Picus viridis*) Not common, but seen occasionally in all seasons. Most commonly heard yaffling in Spring.  
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos major*) Resident.  
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos minor*) Seen most years occasionally but probably overlooked (J. Green).  
SKYLARK (*Alauda arvensis*) Resident on Home Farm.  
SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) Summer resident.  
HOUSE MARTIN (*Delichon urbica*) Summer resident. Nesting on Library and other buildings.  
CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*) Resident.  
ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) Resident.  
JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*) Resident.  
MAGPIE (*Pica pica*) Resident.  
JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*) Resident.  
GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) Resident.  
BLUE TIT (*Parus caeruleus*) Resident.  
COAL TIT (*Parus star*) Resident.

MARSH TIT (*Parus palustris*) Resident, but not very common.  
LONG-TAILED TIT (*Aegithalos caudatus*) Resident.  
NUTHATCH (*Sitta europaea*) Resident.  
TREECREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) Resident.  
WREN (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) Resident.  
MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*) Resident.  
FIELDFARE (*Turdus pilaris*) Regular winter visitor, particularly in hard weather (Late date, one 29.4.73).  
SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) Resident.  
REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*) Regular winter visitor.  
BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) Resident.  
REDSTART (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) First record: birds present summer 1974.  
ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*) Resident.  
BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*) Summer resident.  
GARDEN WARBLER (*Sylvia borin*) Summer resident.  
WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia communis*) Only one record: June 1971, but birds present in the village 1971-73. Presumably was commoner before 1969 population crash.  
LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia curruca*) One record: One bird, 6.6.73.  
WILLOW WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) Summer resident.  
CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*) Summer resident. One Bird wintered at the sewage works 1971-72, and was heard singing 16.2.72 and 1.3.72.  
WOOD WARBLER (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) June 1971. Three sightings May 1974 (D. Emley).  
GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*) Resident.  
SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa striata*) Summer resident.  
PIED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) Three records: 28.4.71 (one male); two birds, April 1971 (J. Green); two birds, May 1974.  
DUNNOCK or Hedge Sparrow (*Prunella modularis*) Resident.  
MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*) Winter resident.  
TREE PIPIT (*Anthus trivialis*) One record: April, 1972.  
PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba*) Resident.  
GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) Resident.  
YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*) Occasional visitor on migration, and present throughout the area at Keele village, 1971-73.  
STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) Resident.  
GREENFINCH (*Carduelis chloris*) Resident.  
GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) Resident.  
SISKIN (*Carduelis spinus*) Regular visitor in winter, but in fluctuating numbers.  
LINNET (*Acanthus cannabina*) Resident, on Home Farm.  
REDPOLL (*Acanthus flammea*) Resident, but more numerous in summer  
BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) Resident.  
CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*) Resident.  
BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*) Birds seen on 9.12.73. In flocks with Finches on ploughed fields W. of bottom lake (W. Pigram, D. Emley).  
YELLOWHAMMER (*Emberiza citrinella*) Resident on Home Farm.  
REED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) Rare visitor, winter.  
HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) Resident.  
TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*) Resident on Home Farm.

