



BIRDS

The three Hurst Trust meadows display most birds typical of rural Oxfordshire plus a number of extra species characteristic of a riverside habitat.

What to see and hear

As with anywhere in Britain, there are constant changes from month to month. Resident birds behave differently with the passing of the seasons, sometimes singing and nesting, sometimes alone or in pairs, sometimes in large flocks.

Spring is especially busy, with the summer visiting migrants flying in from Southern Europe and Africa adding to the birdsong from our local species. The dawn chorus on the meadows is truly remarkable from April into June, peaking during the month of May. It begins before sunrise and is over by the time most people have breakfast. There is a slightly more subdued repeat at dusk. It's best to listen as well as look, as birds are often heard before being seen.

Swollen by numbers of young birds, the summer migrants slip away again as summer ends. As in the spring, unusual 'passage' migrants can turn up briefly as they pass through. Again, as in spring, there can be an overlap with winter migrants arriving before all the summer species have left. Winter can seem quiet on the meadows but most evenings just before dusk there is another remarkable sight as hundreds of rooks and jackdaws fly over on their way to noisy night-time roosting sites.

Top 10 birds

Over 70 different species of bird may be seen on the meadows around the year, but the 10 you're most likely to see are listed below. How many can you spot on a half-hour or hour walk across the meadows?

(Click on the binocular icons to get a visual and audio guide to each type of bird.)

wood pigeon



red kite



carrion crow



blackbird



Robin



blue tit



great tit



chaffinch



goldfinch



magpie





Top 10 summer birds

From March through to October, summer migrants swell the number of birds around the meadows. Many of these, especially the warblers, are great singers and boost the variety and volume of bird song when they arrive in spring. They include:

(Click on the binocular icons to get a visual and audio guide to each type of bird.)

chiffchaff (warbler)



blackcap (warbler)



sedge warbler



whitethroat (warbler)



reed warbler



garden warbler



swallow



house martin



swift



spotted flycatcher



Winter birds

From October to April, winter migrants visit here from Scandinavia, northern Europe and even Iceland to take advantage of our milder winters and less scarce food. They include:

fieldfare



redwing



goosander (duck)



If you are lucky ... Whatever time of year you visit the meadows you should look out for two distinctive sights - a grey heron fishing and kingfishers flying up and down the river – you never know when you might see the characteristic flash of blue!

grey heron



kingfisher

