

Ashdown Forest Bird Group

Birds on Ashdown Forest

August

Traditionally July and August are very quiet times in the bird calendar. Most species are busy with their young and generally keeping a very low profile. Few species continue singing into July. One such species which continues to sing is the Yellowhammer, with its distinctive song that sounds like “a little bit of bread and no cheese” which is usually sung from a good vantage point. The males are also equally distinctive in their beautiful canary-like yellow plumage. Best places for Yellowhammer are Millbrook East, Hindleap and Goat, although they can be found throughout.

Small warblers can still be seen, though you need to be a good bird watcher to identify Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler by sight alone! Fortunately some sing (all be it weakly) through to September time.

Our regulars including Stonechat, Redpoll, Coal Tit, Long-Tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Blackcap, Whitethroat and Meadow Pipit can be found throughout the Forest but now is a good time to look for them. Stonechats have had what looks to be a good breeding season despite the weather and so there are quite a few young birds feeding or being fed, usually sitting on gorse or heather.

A good place to walk to see and hear many of the species mentioned above is Black Hill and around Greenwood Gate. There are plenty of other birds to see in this area including Bullfinch, Turtle Dove, and Green & Great Spotted Woodpecker. A few Tree Pipits may also still be singing.

Like earlier in the season you can still see Woodcock and Nightjar flying just before dusk or dawn. The best place to walk, look and especially listen is Wrens Warren. When you listen to Woodcock as they fly past, try to pick out the “Roding” noise after the “Pip!” call they make. The “Rode” is the male Woodcock’s display call which is similar to Snipe, which “Drum” or “Bleat” (but the noise is not the result of air passing through the tail feathers).

Migration won’t start until early September and as we move through August species become more and more difficult to see and hear. Regulars like Blackbird and Song Thrush may still be heard. Other regular common species will still be visible but birds start to feed up before the autumn months, especially if they do migrate. P.Johnson