

Spring Birds at Sharphill Wood 2026

Introduction

Sharphill Wood is home to typical birds of deciduous woodland and margins. Resident species are supplemented by a handful of summer visitors. Although birds can be quite difficult to spot in woodland, particularly when trees are in leaf from late April onwards, spring is the time when birds are settling down to breed and are at their most vocal. Many species use song to establish and defend their territories for breeding. For this reason, spring is the best time to survey birds at Sharphill, notwithstanding the fact that a few winter visitors (e.g., Redwing) will be missed, as well as any migrants passing through. This report is a result of several visits to the Wood between late March and early June 2026. Similar reports have been produced annually since 2018, although the 2020 report was limited because of Covid-19 restrictions.

One purpose of these reports is to identify trends over the years arising from factors such as:

- the impact of nearby housing;
- the impact of increased human footfall;
- the impact of climate change;
- the evolving state of maturity of the Wood and surrounding habitats; and
- national/regional changes in fortunes of the various species.



Juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker at Sharphill Wood, spring 2026 (photo Chris Ritzmann)

Highlights

- Confirmation that most of the usual birds are still present and, in many cases, in good numbers.
- Treecreeper, recorded annually since these surveys began, was not confirmed this year.

- Rose-ringed Parakeets (a.k.a. Ring-necked Parakeets) are now present.

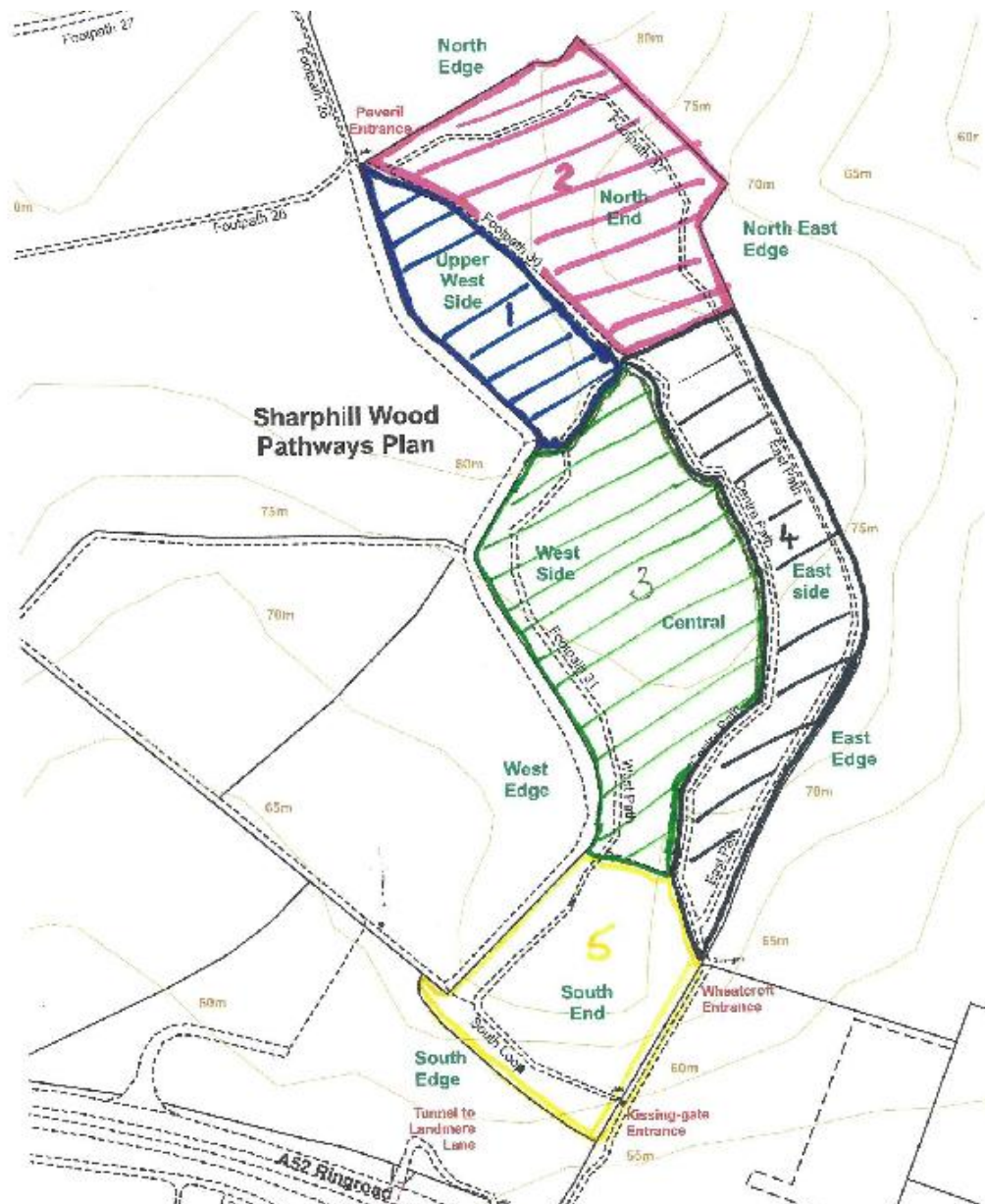
Methodology

Data is based on 6 visits to the Wood from late March to early June 2026 (28th March, 9th April, 23rd April, 7th May, 21st May and 5th June). Each visit started at approximately 09.00 and lasted about 2.5 hours. I received valuable assistance on the 6 visits from Tim Carney, Janet Crowe (twice), Chris Ritzmann (twice) and Bob Stentiford (3 times). Having extra pairs of eyes and ears and somebody to act as scribe on those occasions was very useful. With one exception, the same transect was taken on each visit:

- hedgerow approaching northern (Peveril) entrance;
- central path as far as junction with west path;
- west path down to southern (kissing-gate) entrance;
- southern entrance towards A52 and then back to south-eastern (Wheatcroft) entrance;
- central path back to junction with west path;
- east path from northern entrance southwards to the point where it starts to converge with the central path;
- return via buffer zone outside northern edge of the Wood.

The exception was the first visit, when the western path was skipped because of the noise, as well as possible safety issues, from a strengthening westerly wind.

During each visit, locations where avian species were heard or seen were plotted on a map. Results from the 6 visits were then combined, in an attempt to gain a more complete picture of which birds were present in different parts of the site, in particular in each of the 5 zones defined in the management plan and shown in the map below. Birds within or over the Wood or in close proximity to the Wood were recorded.



Site map showing zones 1,2,3,4 and 5 and the official paths

The methodology is not precise. Some species have quieter or less distinct songs or calls than other species. Some species are less likely to be seen because they are more secretive in their behaviour or spend a lot of time high in the canopy or in dense understorey, and therefore there is a greater dependence on hearing and identifying the call or song. Some species are almost certainly under recorded. Also, a single bird can move around, and it is a matter of judgement whether observations from two or more nearby locations represent the same bird or a different bird. Moreover, it is generally only the male that sings, and although females may call, calls are often less distinct or more subject to confusion than songs. For most species, the presence of a singing male or a cluster of sightings on different visits is assumed to represent a breeding territory.

Because the transect was confined to paths, quieter species in areas well away from paths (in particular, the central part of zone 3) were likely to have been missed.

Allocation to zones is necessarily imprecise because of movement of birds. In particular, many birds were recorded along the central path on the long border between zones 3 and 4, and it is inevitable

that those birds will frequently cross the path. Therefore, allocation to zones in such cases is rather arbitrary.

Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in recent years have led to phone software that is able to analyse bird calls and songs and suggest the species responsible. One such application is Merlin, and this was used to some extent during visits. Merlin suggestions were never taken at face value, but occasionally they were useful for backing up what the observer thought was calling. Where Merlin detected a species that the observer was unable to confirm, even if the species could reasonably be expected on site, this was not taken as confirmed presence of a species.

Throughout the entire period of the survey, most bird species that use song were indeed singing, although singing tends to drop off slightly beyond the middle of May. For this reason, it was not considered worthwhile continuing surveys beyond early June. The earlier surveys, in late March and early April, were too early for some summer visitors, although most of the species had arrived on site by then and were in full song. Late arrivals such as Common Whitethroat will have been recorded during the later visits.

Because there were no night-time or evening visits, owls were not detected.

Results by species.

The following is a list of species encountered this spring (during survey visits or on other occasions), as well as species recorded during previous springs but absent this year. Species are listed in taxonomic order and grouped by family, in accordance with the British List published by the British Ornithologists' Union (<https://bou.org.uk/the-british-list/>), which in turn is based on the taxonomy used by the International Ornithological Congress (<https://www.worldbirdnames.org/new/classification/family-index-2/>).

Species that are on the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (December 2021) Red List or Amber List (https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birds-conservation-concern?dm_i=IG4%2C3WSRE%2CJPVF4R%2CE3H05%2C1) are marked as such.

Note that fly-pasts of species clearly not associated with the woodland and its immediate surroundings (e.g., gulls) are not included in the species accounts.

Pheasants, Partridges and Quails (*Phasianidae*)

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*). Heard on second visit from central part of zone 4.

Swifts (*Apodidae*)

Common Swift (*Apus apus*) – RED LIST. Not recorded this year.

Cuckoos (*Cuculidae*)

Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) – RED LIST. Not recorded this year.

Pigeons and Doves (*Columbidae*)

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*) – AMBER LIST. Heard and seen on each visit, in each part of the Wood except zone 5. Probably several breeding pairs, but difficult to estimate. The species seemed to be particularly vocal in late March.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) – AMBER LIST. Heard and seen regularly in various places throughout the Wood and surrounding areas. No attempt was made to map their locations and numbers were not estimated.

Birds of Prey (*Accipitridae*)

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) – AMBER LIST. Although probably reasonably common in the area and likely to be present in the Wood from time to time, this species is seldom encountered. The species was not recorded this spring.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*). Although increasingly seen in the general area, it was not recorded this spring.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*). Although this is now a fairly common bird in the area, it was recorded only during the fifth visit, over the Wood.

Owls (*Strigidae*)

Because there were no night-time or evening visits, owls were unlikely to be recorded, and indeed they were not. It is probable that **Tawny Owl (*Strix Aluco*) – AMBER LIST** is present.

Woodpeckers (*Picidae*)

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*). This was heard calling on most visits, and also heard drumming at times and seen on a couple of occasions. As usual, it appeared to be confined to the northern half of the Wood. On the final visit (5th June) a juvenile was seen being fed by a female adult, towards the northern end of zone 4 where nesting has been detected in the past. There was nothing to confirm the presence of more than 1 pair.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*). This species is usually quite vocal, and it was indeed heard calling on most visits, generally in the southern part of the Wood. Birds are believed to commute between Sharphill wood and other nearby woodlands (e.g., Wilford Hill wood), and there has never been any evidence of breeding at Sharphill.

Falcons (*Falconidae*)

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) – AMBER LIST. This was seen on one visit below the south-eastern (Wheatcroft) entrance.

Old World Parrots (*Psittaculidae*)

Rose-ringed Parakeet (Ring-necked Parakeet) (*Psittacula krameria*). This introduced species has spread out from the London area in recent decades, and there has been a small population based around Wollaton Park, Nottingham, for a few years. They were detected at Sharphill for the first time during the second survey visit, and have been heard (and occasionally seen) on most survey and other visits since then. Most observations have been around the southern end of the central path (zones 3 and 4), although occasionally further north. It is not known whether they have attempted to breed. It was also difficult to estimate numbers, but 4 were seen on one non-survey visit.



Rose-ringed Parakeet (Chris Ritzmann)

The impact of this species on other wildlife on site remains to be seen, but one possible negative effect could be competition for nest holes with species such as Stock Dove, Jackdaw or even Nuthatch.

Crows (*Corvidae*)

Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*). Seen on two visits, once by the southern entrance and once in the north.

Magpie (*Pica pica*). Seen or heard in or near the Wood on all visits and known to be plentiful in the general area. No attempt has been made to estimate numbers.

Jackdaw (*Coloeus monedula*). Seen or heard in various parts of the Wood on all visits, particularly towards the south of zone 4, near the Wheatcroft gate. No attempt has been made to estimate numbers. Nesting cavities were seen being visited near the centre of zone 4 and in the north of zone 2.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) – AMBER LIST. Heard calling in zone 2 on final visit.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*). Heard and seen regularly in various places throughout the Wood and surrounding areas, in particular on the fields to the north and west. No attempt has been made to estimate numbers.

Raven (*Corvus corax*). Not recorded this year.

Tits (*Paridae*)

Coal Tit (*Periparus ater*). Seen towards the north of zone 4 on the first visit, and heard singing across the path in zone 3 on the second visit. Merlin software detected the species on a couple of other visits, but these were unconfirmed. In previous years, this species has generally been recorded only in early spring, suggesting they may not remain for breeding, perhaps moving on to more coniferous habitat.

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*). Widespread, and easily overlooked, particularly when well away from paths. Observations during survey visits suggested they were present throughout the Wood, probably in excess of a dozen pairs.

In addition, nest box monitoring found 13 boxes used by this species, 11 of which were successful and led to fledging. Since there must also have been natural nest sites (and also some older nest boxes that we are unable to monitor), it is likely there were more pairs on site than was apparent from the survey visits. The species was found consistently on survey visits in areas where there are no nest boxes (e.g., along the western path and near the southern entrance), again suggesting they might find other nest sites. It is possible that the population could be in the region of 20 pairs.

Great Tit (*Parus major*). Observed throughout the Wood on all visits. This species is easily overlooked when not singing or when well away from paths, and therefore may be under-recorded. Observations suggest about 10 pairs.

Nest box monitoring found 5 boxes used by Great Tit, all resulting in successful fledging.

Larks (*Alaudidae*)

Sskylark (*Alauda arvensis*) – RED LIST. There was a singing male over the fields just to the north and west of the Wood on most survey visits (2 on a couple of occasions), and also sometimes further south to the west of the Wood. It is likely the fields support 3 or 4 pairs.

Swallows and Martins (*Hirundinidae*)

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). Not seen in vicinity during any of the survey visits, although occasionally seen over the surrounding fields in the past.

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*) – RED LIST. Not recorded this year and not regularly recorded in the past.

Long-tailed Tits (*Aegithalidae*)

Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*). This species was seen only on the first and third visits, on each occasion about half-way down zone 4. There was no clear indication of breeding on site.

Leaf Warblers (*Phylloscopidae*)

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – AMBER LIST. Not recorded this year and not regularly recorded in the past.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*). Heard singing (and occasionally seen) on all survey visits, throughout the Wood. There were probably 13 or more singing males.

Reed Warblers (*Acrocephalidae*)

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*). Not recorded. Note that this is not a bird to be expected away from reed-fringed water, but singing was heard on a visit in 2024.

Sylviid Warblers (*Sylviidae*)

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*). Heard singing (and occasionally seen) throughout the wood, and also in the scrub below the southern entrance, on all survey visits except the first, which would have been too early for these summer visitors. There were probably 12 or more singing males on site.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*). Not recorded since before these annual surveys began.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Curruca curruca*). Not recorded this year.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) – AMBER LIST. This migrant species, which tends to arrive in late April, was first observed on the third visit (23rd April), and observed again on the 4th and 6th visits. On each occasion there was a bird (possibly a pair) at each of the usual locations: the scrub below the southern entrance and the hedgerows to the north.

Goldcrests (*Regulidae*)

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*). This was seen on the third visit from the central path near the centre of zone 3.

Wrens (*Troglodytidae*)

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – AMBER LIST. Abundant and widespread throughout the Wood, this was heard on each visit and seen occasionally. Probably about 25 pairs evenly distributed, and therefore probably the most numerous species on site.

Nuthatches (*Sittidae*)

Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*). This was seen on the second visit towards the northern end of zone 4, heard on the third visit from the western path in zone 3, and seen on the 4th visit in zone 1. Therefore present, but perhaps only a single pair.

Treecreepers (*Certhiidae*)

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*). Sadly, there were no confirmed observations of this species, which had been recorded annually up till now. It can be hard to hear, but was picked up by Merlin on several visits. Despite the lack of a confirmed sighting, it is probably still on site.

Starlings (*Sturnidae*)

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – RED LIST. Although common in the local residential area, this species is not normally observed on site in spring. However, this year, on the 5th visit, birds were seen on the hedgerow leading down from the northern entrance.

Thrushes (*Turdidae*)

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). This was heard singing and sometimes seen on most visits, mostly in the northern and central areas. Probably about 5 pairs.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) – AMBER LIST. This was heard singing (but not seen) on all but the first visit. Singing was heard from all 5 zones, suggesting there could be as many as 5 territories.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) – RED LIST. Not detected during any of the survey visits, but heard at the southern end of zone 4 during a dawn chorus walk on 25th April.

Chats, old world Flycatchers (*Muscicapidae*)

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) – RED LIST. This passage migrant was not recorded this year.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*). Frequent sightings and singing throughout the Wood. Probably about 15 pairs distributed across all zones.

Sparrows (*Passeridae*)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – RED LIST. Present in the nearby residential area and recorded on the 5th visit in the hedge leading down from the northern entrance.

Accentors (*Prunellidae*)

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) – AMBER LIST. This was seen or heard singing on all but the third visit, although generally only a single observation per visit. These were in a variety of locations (ranging from the northern entrance to the southern entrance), with insufficient evidence to map out territories or estimate numbers. As the song does not carry as far as that of some species, it is possible some were missed away from paths. Nevertheless, there were probably only a few pairs present.

Finches (*Fringillidae*)

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*). This species, normally common throughout the region and fairly common at Sharpill until recently, was seen or heard during only 2 visits, once in zone 1 north and once in zone 2 east. Seemingly the site now supports only 1 or 2 pairs, although it is possible others have been overlooked. Whilst this is a similar result to 2024 and 2025, it is considerably less than the 10 or so estimated in years up to 2023. Whilst Chaffinch numbers generally are known to have dropped in recent years, partly due to Trichomonosis, it seems unlikely that this would fully account for what would appear to be a very substantial reduction in the population on site in 2024 and lack of recovery in 2025 and 2026.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) – AMBER LIST. This species has not been recorded since the 2018 survey.

Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*) – RED LIST. This was heard singing during two visits, towards the southern end of zone 4. Probably a single pair.

Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*) – RED LIST. Seen and heard singing in the scrub below the southern entrance on the first visit, and seen at the same location on visits 4, 5 and 6. On the 5th visit, 4 birds were seen, and one was carrying nesting material. There were probably 2 pairs present.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*). This species was heard singing at the southern end of zone 4 on the first visit, and 2 birds were seen by the path below the Wheatcroft entrance on the 5th visit.

Buntings (*Emberizidae*)

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) – RED LIST. Not recorded during survey visits since 2019, and almost certainly lost from the hedgerow below the south-eastern entrance now that housing is so close. However, there have been occasional casual sightings in the last year or two, in areas to the north and south of the wood.

Conclusions

This was the ninth year that such a survey has been conducted, although the 2020 survey was less detailed. It gives a broad picture of birds present at the site during the breeding season, although any estimates of numbers of pairs are just estimates and could differ significantly from reality.

The most numerous small birds for which estimates of breeding pairs have been made were Wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Robin, with smaller numbers of Song Thrush and Blackbird. Also in and around the Wood in reasonable numbers were Woodpigeon, Stock Dove, Carrion Crow, Magpie and Jackdaw, but no attempt was made to quantify these. Rook was heard within the Wood on one occasion. Rose-ringed Parakeet, a new addition, was also present, and the future impact of this, if any, remains to be seen.

Lesser Whitethroat							√		
Whitethroat	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Goldcrest					√		√*		√
Wren	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Nuthatch		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Treecreeper	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Blackbird	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Song Thrush	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Mistle Thrush		√	√		√	√	√		√
Spotted Flycatcher							√		
Robin	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
House Sparrow			√		√	√		√	√
Dunnock	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Chaffinch	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Bullfinch	√								
Greenfinch	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Linnet	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
Goldfinch		√		√		√	√		√
Yellowhammer		√							
Total species	27	32	31	30	31	29	33	27	33

Thanks to Bob, Janet, Chris and Tim for helping on the visits. I plan to run a similar survey in 2027, beginning at the end of March.

John Elwell, on behalf of Friends of Sharphill Wood, June 2026