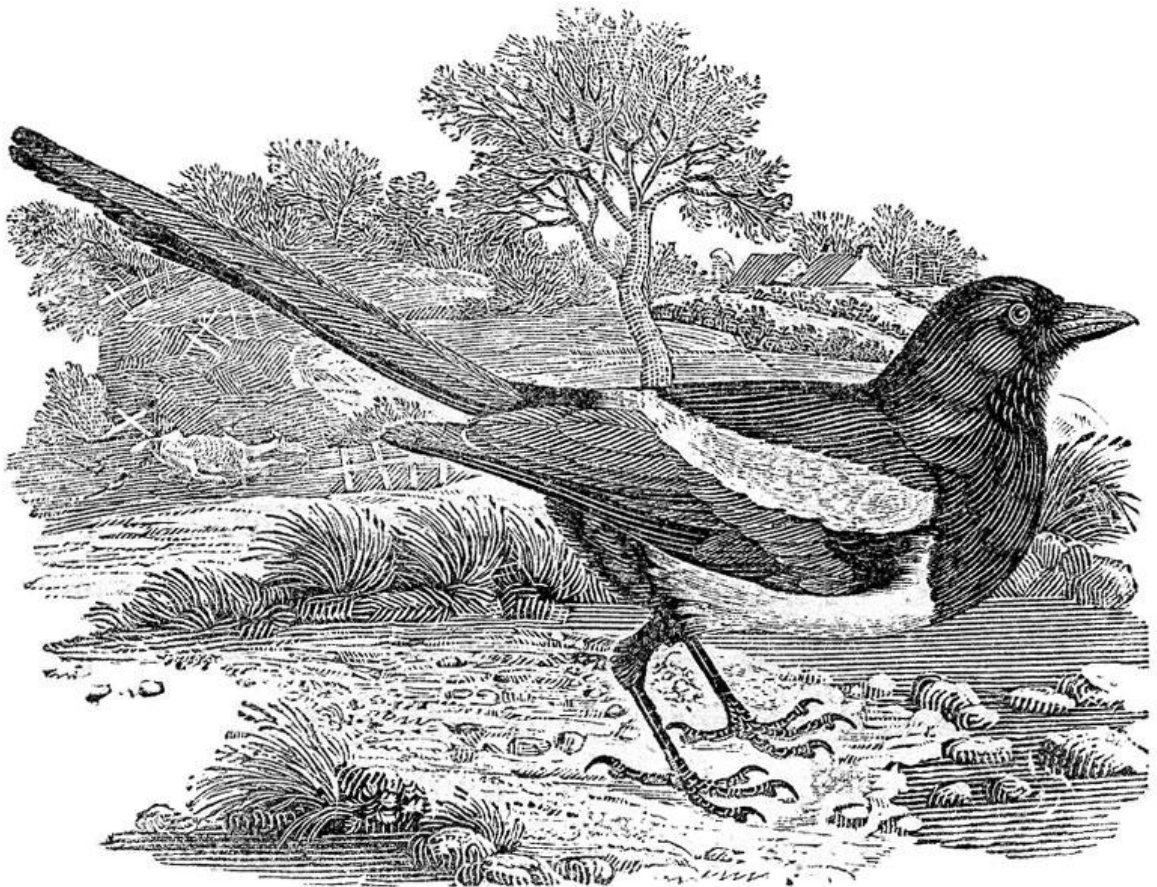


THE BIRDS OF BREDFIELD



An annotated list of birds that may be seen in the vicinity of Bredfield, together with an introduction describing bird habitats.

INTRODUCTION: BREDFIELD HABITATS & BREDFIELD BIRDS

Birds are found in habitats where the food and shelter they require are to be found. If they are seen outside their required habitat, they are usually on the move: from one area of desired habitat to the next. Some birds are less fussy about habitat than others. For example: *Woodpigeons* and *Starlings* can be found in a range of habitats; but *Reed Warblers* will always want to be in and around reeds. Some birds travel a very long way to be in the right habitat. *Swifts* need long hours to feed on abundant flying insects and the right type of buildings to nest in. They travel the length of the globe to find this habitat - and it is here, in this quarter of Suffolk during summer.

Given this relationship between habitat and species of bird, it will come as no surprise to find that the number of bird species to be seen in and around Bredfield is limited. There are no lakes or rivers around Bredfield, no heathland, no wetland, and no extensive forests. So, respectively, you can rule out the chance of seeing: *Great Crested Grebe*, *Woodlark*, *Redshank*, *Crossbill* and a long list of other species.

What you are likely to see around Bredfield are the birds that like the following habitats: farmland, gardens and hedgerows. These are places that need to be protected and managed if they are to continue to provide the right habitat for birds. Sadly, much farmland is no longer a supportive habitat for birds. Farmland birds have suffered a significant decline in numbers. Once-common farmland birds - such as *Corn Bunting* - have now vanished from huge swathes of Suffolk. When farmland is managed with wildlife in mind, birds such as a *Yellowhammer*, *Skylark* and *Meadow Pipit* will thrive, but the current outlook for these birds is not good. These three species of bird can still be found around Bredfield, but only in reduced numbers and only where there are margins of agricultural land available for them to feed and nest. Garden and hedgerow birds generally do well in Bredfield, but these habitats need to be conserved and managed if birds like *House Sparrow*, *Greenfinch*, *Wren*, *Blackcap* and *Whitethroat* are to maintain healthy populations.

What follows, in this document, is an annotated list of the birds that you are likely to see in and around Bredfield. There will always be the chance of finding a species of bird out of place, as it flies from one suitable habitat to the next. So, you may see birds like *Mute Swan*, *Cormorant*, *Marsh Harrier*, *Common Tern* or *Sand Martin* passing over head. Some birds are bucking the trend of declining numbers and may become an increasingly frequent sight around Bredfield. Two or three *Red Kites* are seen annually over Bredfield, and *Ravens* have recently been seen in the village.

This annotated list does not provide much by way of description of each bird. If you are not familiar with a species, you will need to use an ID guide. There are plenty of guides online and also some excellent books. *Collins Bird Guide* is recognised as the best and most definitive guide.

AN ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS LIKELY TO BE SEEN AROUND BREDFIELD

SWANS, GEESE & DUCKS

GREYLAG GOOSE

A small, semi-feral flock of birds has been resident in the area of High House for some years. They can sometimes be seen and heard flying overhead.

MALLARD

The string of clay-pit ponds around Bredfield has provided a welcome habitat for this familiar duck. Some are quite tame and mothers can be seen precariously leading their ducklings down the road. Some males show signs of hybridisation with 'farmyard duck'.



PARTRIDGES & PHEASANTS

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE

This species of partridge can be found in local fields, and some can stray into gardens.

COMMON PHEASANT

A familiar bird that is found around the edges of fields and often strays into gardens to loiter under bird feeders. The population is sometimes boosted by game-related releases.



HERONS & EGRETS

GREY HERON

The lack of watery habitats means that these birds are not a common sight around Bredfield. However they may be seen in flight, and they wouldn't say 'no' to dropping-in to investigate a fish-stocked garden pond.

HAWKS

SPARROWHAWK

This agile predator regularly frequents the fields and gardens of Bredfield. When flying high, it has a distinctive 'flap, flap, glide' flight. The female is larger than the male.

COMMON BUZZARD

Once largely absent from the county, these raptors have made a dramatic comeback. Groups of up to 7 birds (though usually fewer) can be seen circling over Bredfield, making their distinctive 'mewing' call.



RED KITE

This raptor is also making a comeback in Suffolk: larger numbers in the west of the county, but a few are occasionally seen in the east, including over Bredfield. The month of May is when you are most likely to see individuals or pairs cruising through.

FALCONS

HOBBY

This falcon is a summer visitor and is slowly increasing in numbers. Not a common sight around Bredfield, though the presence of families of *Swallow* and *House Martin* attract these hunters in late-summer.

KESTREL

Regularly seen around Bredfield, the year through: in flight, hovering or sat atop roadside posts.



RAILS & GALLINULES

MOORHEN

This familiar gallinule frequents the clay-pit ponds around Bredfield, where they breed. Some will venture into gardens to warily glean seeds dropping from bird feeders.



PLOVERS

LAPWING

Flocks can be found in winter, feeding in the surrounding fields.

GULLS

BLACK-HEADED GULL

By far the commonest gull; found around the year, but particularly in winter. Flocks will follow a ploughing tractor. These gulls may also drop into gardens if bread is thrown out.



COMMON GULL

Despite its name, much less likely to be seen around Bredfield than the above species, though it can be seen loafing in fields.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Sometimes found consorting with its more common cousin, the *Herring Gull*.

HERRING GULL

A large, common and often noisy gull.



PIGEONS & DOVES

FERAL PIGEON

These pigeons, which come in all sorts of plumages, are distantly related the *Rock Dove* and, despite centuries of hybridisation, still sometimes go by that name. Usually seen in flight, hurrying to some distant destination.

STOCK DOVE

A dainty grey pigeon that lacks the white markings of the *Woodpigeon*. Pairs will sometimes frequent gardens if there is food for them there.



WOODPIGEON

This is an extremely familiar bird, which has taken to gardens as a suitable home. Numbers are increased in winter by an influx of birds from Scandinavia. As a rule, the immigrant birds stay in the fields, whilst resident birds are more likely to visit your garden.

COLLARED DOVE

Another dainty familiar bird, though it is a fairly recent coloniser. There were no Collared Doves in the UK before the mid-1950s.

TURTLE DOVE

Familiar enough to feature in the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' (though Turtle Doves visit Britain in summer and wouldn't be around at Christmas!). This once common bird has suffered a catastrophic decline. However, its 'purring' song is still occasionally heard around Bredfield. In 2019, at least one pair was present, and there were two other sightings. Be sure to report any sighting of this bird that you may have.

CUCKOOS

COMMON CUCKOO

Spring arrivals can occasionally be heard around the village, as the birds investigate for appropriate habitat (with lots of caterpillars) and hosts.

BARN OWLS

BARN OWL

Barn Owls are doing fairly well in east-Suffolk, mainly because of the provision of nest boxes. Birds can be seen at dusk, hunting around field margins, roadside verges or patches of set-aside. At least one pair nest in the village on an annual basis.



OWLS

LITTLE OWL

This small owl is resident in Bredfield, though it is difficult to say how many birds reside. The presence of young owls has confirmed breeding in the village.



TAWNY OWL

Rarely seen, but often heard. This night owl is resident in the village: perhaps 2-3 pairs breeding. Often calls from sets of trees, but you might see one sat on your TV aerial!



SWIFTS

COMMON SWIFT

The last of the summer visitors to arrive and the first to depart. Screaming parties of birds are a familiar sight and sound of summer. A lack of nesting spaces has led to a serious decline in numbers.

WOODPECKERS

GREEN WOODPECKER

This large woodpecker is just as likely to be seen on the ground, feeding on ants, as it is to be seen in the trees. A regularly-seen resident of Bredfield. Listen out for its 'yaffle' call.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

A much more arboreal species of woodpecker. This thrush-sized, black-white-and-red bird might come to your feeder.



CROWS, MAGPIES & JAYS

MAGPIE

Common around gardens and not at all choosy in its diet.

JAY

This is a gaudily attractive bird, though usually seen less often than the other Corvids, and never in flocks. Listen out for it in small copses, such as the one near High House. In autumn, it gathers nuts and hides them in a winter cache. Jays are more conspicuous when engaged in this endeavour.

JACKDAW

The smallest member of the crow family. Often found in noisy flocks, consorting with the following species. It has a grey head and a white eye.

ROOK

A large crow with a large dagger of a beak – useful for probing for *Leatherjackets* in fields. The best identification mark is the bald patch around the top of the beak.

CARRION CROW

Also common around the fields and margins of Bredfield.

RAVEN

Until very recently, Raven would not have found its way onto this list. However, this large member of the crow family is re-colonising Suffolk and was seen in Bredfield in March 2021. Listen out for its deep ‘cronk, cronk’ call.

KINGLETS

GOLDCREST

Goldcrest is one of Britain's smallest birds. This yellow-green bird, with a gold flash on its head, can be found amongst stands of trees - though it may take some searching to find it. In winter, they frequent conifers. Their call is very thin and high-pitched. Older birdwatchers often fail to hear it!

TITS

BLUE TIT

A common garden favourite, which will frequent bird feeders and use nest boxes. On cold winter nights, birds will roost communally for warmth, often in a nest box.



GREAT TIT

Larger and more robust than the above species. Adults have a black crown and a black stripe down the breast. They have a large vocabulary of calls, with the most familiar being: 'teacher, teacher, teacher'.



COAL TIT

Less common than the above two species of tit. Coal Tits will frequent bird feeders, though they are low in the 'pecking order' and won't perch for long. Look for the white patch at the back of the head.

LARKS

SKYLARK

We are still lucky in Bredfield to be able to hear the wonderful song of the Skylark in spring and summer. Clearly there are still sufficient suitable margins to the arable fields, where the birds can feed and nest on the ground. In winter the birds collect into small flocks of around 7-8 birds.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS

SWALLOW

Swallows usually arrive in Bredfield in the second week of April. Many of them won't depart until October.



HOUSE MARTIN

House Martins usually arrive in the second or third week of April, and soon begin their investigation and restoration of nests in the eaves of Bredfield houses. Many return to same nest that they were born in. Lucky are you who have a pair nesting on your house.



LONG-TAILED TITS

LONG-TAILED TIT

A fluffy ball with a long-tail. Almost always found in active small groups flitting from tree to tree.

LEAF WARBLERS

CHIFFCHAFF

The first warbler to arrive and the most common. A few may over-winter here. From April onwards you can hear it calling its onomatopoeic name. Numbers may be swelled by returning autumn migrants, amongst which might be the now rarer *Willow Warbler* (which has paler legs).



SYLVIA WARBLERS

BLACKCAP

This is another species that over-winters in very small numbers. You are most likely to hear the male singing its garbled song from bushes, mid-April onwards. Only males have a black cap; the females have a brown cap. A 'click, click' call from dense vegetation reveals its presence.

LESSER WHITETHROAT

This summer visitor is a denizen of hedgerows. It is grey in colour with a dark-grey cap and an even-darker 'mask'. Far less showy than its 'Common' cousin, it is best located by its song.

COMMON WHITETHROAT

Certainly more 'common' than *Lesser Whitethroat* and often more conspicuous. Its sprightly song it uttered from the top of hedgerow bushes, and sometimes in short display flights. This species has rusty-orange tones to its wings, and an eponymous white throat.

CREEPERS

TREECREEPER

This small bird, with brown streaking, will be seen creeping up trees (always upwards) in search of insects. Individuals can be seen wherever there are stands of trees, including Ufford Thicks. It is much easier to see in the winter when there are no leaves on the trees.

WRENS

WREN

This tiny bird has an explosive song which punches above its weight. Wrens will search each and every corner of your garden for small spiders and insects to eat. The more wildlife-friendly niches you have in your garden, the more certain you can be that a pair of Wrens will take up residence and, hopefully, nest.



STARLINGS

STARLING

Though a common bird nationally, Starlings are perhaps under-represented in Bredfield. Small flocks gather and roam in winter.



THRUSHES

BLACKBIRD

Every garden should have its resident pair of Blackbird. In summer they are fiercely territorial, driving off interlopers with a swoop and a chattering call. In winter they are more tolerant and their numbers are increased by continental winter visitors. You could find 6-8 birds together in your garden in winter, operating an uneasy truce. In spring, they are one of the best singers in the dawn chorus.

FIELDFARE

This large grey thrush is a winter visitor from northern-Europe. It is always to be found in flocks, often consorting with *Redwings*. Fieldfares are usually seen feeding in the fields, though you will probably also see small flocks gathered in tree tops. When flocks are in flight, you'll hear the birds 'chak-chak-chak' call.

SONG THRUSH

Song Thrush lacks the bravado of a *Blackbird*. In early-spring it sings loudly from a high perch, repeating its phrases. Good to have in your garden, as it loves to eat your slugs and snails. You can often hear the tapping sound of this thrush bashing hell out of a snail shell on a stone 'anvil'.



REDWING

An attractive winter thrush that often consorts with *Fieldfares*. The name comes from the red underwing, which can be seen in flight. This bird has a conspicuous white supercilium above the eye.

MISTLE THRUSH

A large and long-tailed thrush with a heavily speckled breast. Often sings in poor weather; which has earned the bird the colloquial name 'Storm Cock'.

FLYCATCHERS & CHATS

ROBIN

A familiar and well-loved garden bird. It is highly territorial throughout the year, seeing off intruders with some malice. Robins sing all year round.



ACCENTORS

DUNNOCK

Sometimes known as 'Hedge Sparrow', though it is not a sparrow at all. Always feeds on the ground. A common garden bird.

SPARROWS

HOUSE SPARROW

This bird remains one of the commonest of our garden birds, though its numbers have declined significantly. A social bird, always found in small flocks. There are three or more flocks present in Bredfield, each numbering up to a dozen or so birds.



WAGTAILS & PIPITS

PIED WAGTAIL

Often seen actively feeding on the roofs of houses or around puddles. Its tail-wagging behaviour earns the bird its name.

MEADOW PIPIT

A bird of fields and meadows. It is still to be seen around Bredfield, in the margins of fields and in set-aside, though in lower numbers than in the past. In winter, these birds congregate in small flocks. You will hear their 'seep, seep' call when the birds take flight.

FINCHES

CHAFFINCH

A familiar bird that, in this area, has largely forsaken the fields for gardens. Males are beautifully marked with a bold white shoulder and wing-bar. The Chaffinch's song can be heard from early-March and is a harbinger of spring to come.

BRAMBLING

This finch has become quite rare. Its favoured food is beech mast, but it may occasionally come to gardens in winter if food supplies are low elsewhere.

GREENFINCH

This finch has suffered a decline in population, largely due to the avian parasitic disease *trichomonosis*. (Which provides a lesson about cleaning bird feeders and moving them around the garden.) It is now recovering in numbers and is often seen dominating garden bird feeders. Its wheezy call is a sound of summer.

GOLDFINCH

In recent years, this attractive finch has become the predominant bird around Bredfield's bird feeders. Winter flocks can total as large as 40.



SISKIN

This green-and-black finch is a much rarer sight on bird feeders, but a delight when it happens. Its usual habitat is woodland, where it often consorts with *Redpoll*.



LINNET

A bird of the fields and hedgerows. Once common, now far less so. In summer, males sport a bright pink breast and sing a sweet song.

LESSER REDPOLL

There are various species of Redpoll, and one called '*Common Redpoll*' (or '*Mealy Redpoll*') is much less likely to be seen. The Lesser Redpoll is a small finch, which regularly consorts with *Siskin* in winter flocks. It will occasionally come to bird feeders, especially if you put out Niger seeds.

BULLFINCH

A large finch with a fat stubby bill. Males have a wonderful salmon-pink breast. Usually seen in pairs, with the female being rather duller. When the birds fly away, notice their broad white rumps.

BUNTINGS

YELLOWHAMMER

Males are bright yellow and, in spring and summer, they sing their 'Little bit of bread and no cheeeese' song. In winter they will form small flocks. This bunting can still be found around Bredfield though, again, in lower numbers than previously.

OTHER BIRDS

One of the delights of birds is that, within reason, you never know what might turn up in your local area. With this in mind, be prepared to see species in and over Bredfield that are not on the above list. Some of these might be relatively common birds elsewhere that are passing overhead. Birds in this category include *Mute Swan*, *Common Tern* and *Cormorant*. Some other birds might be driven here in winter, escaped freezing conditions elsewhere. Don't be too surprised if a *Woodcock* or *Snipe* ends up in your garden after another 'Beast from the East'. *Waxwings* have previously visited Bredfield and could quite likely do so again, if there is an influx and if berries are still on village bushes and trees in winter. *Little Egret* was once a very rare bird in Britain, but it is now relatively common and its range is expanding. It wouldn't be too surprising to see one in flight or feeding in a local watercourse. Real rarities could also turn up. *Yellow-browed Warbler* is a gem that wanders all the way from Siberia: there is a past record of one found in Bredfield and it could turn up again. In the heat of summer, a flock of *Bee-eaters* might be heard overhead and may even settle on wires - but don't get your hopes up on that one.