

Spotters Guide

Mendip Hawk and Owl Awareness Project



Supported by the Mendip Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund

Hawk and Owl Trust

The Hawk and Owl Trust is a national charity dedicated to conserving owls and Birds of Prey in the wild – and increasing knowledge and understanding of them. We create and manage habitats, carry out research and welcome visitors to our reserves, education centres and outreach projects. By working with partners to conserve the places owls and other wild birds of prey nest and feed, we also support many other species.

Hawk and Owl Trust

Tawny Owl

Common

Nocturnal, woodland species.

More often heard than seen; loud 'hooooo-hoo-hooooo', and 'keewick' calls of male and female (respectively), described as 'toowhit, twowoo' when heard together

Length: 37-39cm, wingspan: 94-104cm

Resident all year.



Little Owl

Uncommon

Often seen in daylight. Very round appearance, short wings. Plumage grey-brown with white speckles.

Often bobs when perched. Flight is fast wing-beats followed by dipping glides.

Length: 21-23cm, wingspan: 54-58cm

Prefers pasture land and orchards

Resident all year.



Short-eared Owl

Rare

Mainly diurnal. Favours open moorland.

Similar to Long-eared Owl in flight, but paler and longer winged. Bold bars on tail and wings. Plumage is brown, spotted and streaked with buff, yellow and white, with pale, boldly streaked chest. Clear facial disc with bright yellow eyes set in black patches.

Length: 37-39cm, wingspan: 95-110cm

Winter visitor.



Long-eared Owl

Rare

Long tufts on the top of head, but not visible in flight or when relaxed. Well defined facial disc and orange eyes. Plumage streaked brown/grey, with lighter streaked front.

Feint 'hooo' calls around Feb-March, and 'squeaky-gate' calls of young during summer.

Length: 33-37cm, wingspan: 90-100cm.

Favours open grassland, often near to conifer plantations where it roosts and nests.

Resident all year, augmented by winter migrants which form communal roosts.



Barn Owl

Uncommon

Pale/white plumage, heart-shaped face.

Favours open rough grassland. Mainly nocturnal, but will hunt during daylight, especially during nesting season.

Length: 33-35cm, wingspan: 85-93cm

Slow, floating flight, hovering when prey is detected.

Resident all year.



Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Mendip Hills contain important habitats; supporting many threatened species. The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership works to protect and conserve the area for the benefit of wildlife, visitors and the local community.

The Sustainable Development Fund supports projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the Mendip Hills AONB.

About the project

This survey aims to map the nesting and hunting locations of owls and birds of prey within the Mendip Hills AONB. This will help future conservation strategies and population monitoring.

Records will be collected through organised events and public participation.

For more information, to submit a sighting or take part in a survey, please contact the Project Leader Chris Sperring MBE on 01275 849287.

Taking part in the survey

Please report the whereabouts of nest sites, roost sites, hunting grounds, or one-off sightings to:

chris.sperring@btinternet.com

or text the information to **07799 413 918**

or phone **01275 849287**

All information will be shared with selected conservation partners only, and exact locations will not be disclosed publicly.

We would also welcome sightings of Nightjar.

Kestrel

Increasingly sparse population on Mendip, declining nationally

Small falcon, known for hovering near roads.

Male: Grey head and tail, chestnut back and wings, creamy front with dark streaks. Female: Brown with dark banding and paler underside, tail has dark bands.

Length: 32-35cm, wingspan: 71-80cm

Resident all year.



Merlin

Rare

Smallest UK Falcon (slightly larger than Blackbird), hunts small birds over open moorland.

Male: Blue/grey back. Female: Brown back, both have streaked front.

Fast flight, rapid wing-beats, often close to the ground.

Length: 25-30cm, wingspan: 50-62cm

Winter visitor.



Peregrine

Scarce, but increasing

Large, powerful falcon.

Grey back, cream front with dark bars, prominent moustachial stripe.

Length: 36-48cm, wingspan: 95-110cm

Resident all year.



Hobby

Rare

Small falcon, looks like a large Swift. Hunts flying insects and small birds, often near water.

Length: 30-36cm, wingspan: 82-92cm

Summer visitor.



Sparrowhawk

Common

Fast flight, several wing beats followed by a glide, often close to the ground.

Length: 28-38cm, wingspan: 55-70 cm

Broad, rounded wings and long, banded tail.

Male: Blue-grey back, reddish barring on body and wing coverts. Female: Grey-brown back with brown barring below. Pale stripe above eye.

Often seen near woodland and in gardens, hunting small birds.

Resident all year.



Goshawk

Rare

Shy forest bird. Similar to Sparrowhawk, but much larger.

Length: 48-62cm, wingspan: 135-165cm

Most often seen displaying over territory between January and April.

Resident all year.



Red Kite

Scarce, but increasing

Large bird. Long, fingered wings and distinctive forked tail.

Length: 55-60cm, wingspan: 160-180cm

Red brown in colour, with grey head and white patches under wings.

Can be seen at any time of the year.



Buzzard

Common

Varied colouration; mainly shades of brown & white.

Length: 55cm, wingspan: 120cm

High-pitched, mewing call.

Mostly seen soaring, perched on trees/telegraph poles, or walking ploughed fields.

Sometimes seen in groups.

Resident all year.



Hen Harrier

Very rare

Large bird with long wings and buoyant flight, looking like giant seagull from a distance.

Length: 44-52cm, wingspan: 100-120cm

Male: Pale grey with white body and rump and black wing tips. Female: dark brown above with white rump and banded tail. Streaked chest and banded underside of wings.

Prefers open moorland.

Winter visitor.



Further Information

For information about the work of the Hawk and Owl Trust, and to learn more about Britain's Birds of Prey and Owls visit: www.hawkandowl.org

Or contact: Hawk and Owl Trust, PO Box 400, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton TA4 3WH. Tel: 0844 984 2824

To find out more about the Mendip Hills AONB visit: www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

Or contact: Mendip Hills AONB Unit, Charterhouse Centre, Blagdon, Bristol. BS40 7XR. Tel: 01761 462338