



Tideswell & District Environment Group

Wildlife Survey 2019



September 2019

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Tideswell & District Environment Group - Wildlife Survey 2019

1. Introduction

The survey was made available on-line and via paper copies during July and August 2019 (our thanks to Tideswell Post Office and Bishop Purseglove School for their help in distributing copies). People were asked whether they had seen different species during 2019 and if they had, whereabouts. 77 people completed the survey - 74 people from Tideswell, and three from just outside the district (Darley Dale, Great Hucklow and Great Longstone).

2. Headlines -

- 77 people completed the survey, with lots of ideas about how to help local wildlife. This number gives an indication of how many people care about the future of wildlife in our area. It is probably only the tip of the iceberg.
- All the species surveyed appeared to be in decline - many people remembered seeing far more swifts, owls and hedgehogs in past years. But it was still good to hear that these animals and birds remain present in our area.
- Of the birds surveyed, Swifts and Tawny Owls were seen and heard most frequently. The Tideswell & District Environment Group (T&DEG) hopes to get involved in a local Swift Action Group this autumn, with lots of ideas to encourage more birds to nest and breed here.
- Barn Owls and Little Owls were seen much less frequently, but some specific sites for these species occur along some of the quiet lanes leading out of Tideswell, and in Hay Dale in particular.
- Hedgehogs appeared to be particularly in decline, but still with some clear areas of activity - "hedgehog hot spots" (probably by just one or two family groups). These occur in Litton, along the top western edge of Tideswell (along Sherwood Road) and around Bishop Purseglove School, St.John's Church and the adjacent playing fields.
- People provided many excellent ideas for helping our local wildlife more in the future. T&DEG intend to take these ideas forward in the coming months. Do join us, if you would like to help (email: tidzaeg@gmail.com).

3. The Results

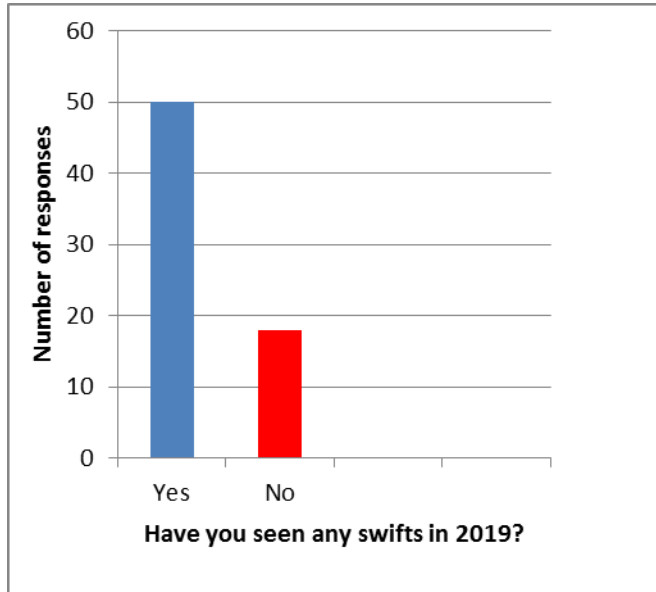
The following analysis provides more detail about the results. Actual response numbers and percentages are given (percentages calculated on the numbers of people who responded to a specific question).

In order to protect the anonymity of everyone, and also those householders who may have nesting sites, specific details of these sites have not been provided in this report - just an indication of general areas. But the details will be very helpful when we come to plan various activities to try to protect and encourage more wildlife in the area.

The final conclusion to this report provides some ideas about what we might do next. These will be discussed and shared during our Tideswell & District Environment Group meetings. Some respondents provided us with their contact details, and we will get back to you all with a summary of these results. If anyone else is interested in joining the T&DEG, please contact us at tidzaeg@gmail.com or T&DEG, Brookbank, Queen Street, Tideswell.

4. Swifts

50 people (74%) said they had seen swifts in the area, whilst 18 people (26%) said they had not. This indicates that they are a common presence in our area, even though numbers appear to be dwindling.



Where have swifts been seen?	Sightings
Centre of Tideswell/ All over	15
Pinfold/ Sherwood Road/ Summer Cross,	12
Litton (or between Tideswell & Litton)	9
Whitecross/Lane Head	4
Alma Road/ Townhead	3
Wheston/Wheston Bank	3
Cressbrook	3
Millers Dale, Ashford in the Water, Great Longstone	1
Total	50

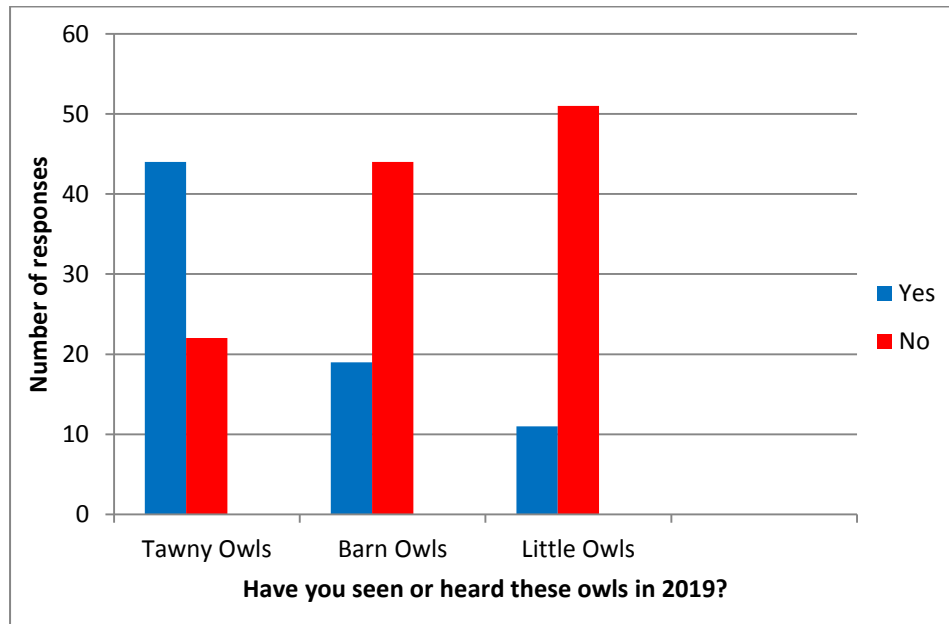
Very few people were aware of any nesting locations for swifts (particularly in the last year). Several people mentioned knowing about swift nests many years ago in houses along the High Street, right in the centre of Tideswell, as well as on Parke Road and near the doctors' surgery. Some local farm buildings were suggested as nesting sites, on more isolated lanes leading out of the village (although there is a possibility that these are swallows' nests as well - also a nice bird to see in the area). Swift nesting sites at the Old School on Alma Road were mentioned - but again from previous years.

Several people mentioned the numbers of swifts they had seen. The most frequently seen were groups of 12-14 swifts, circling high in the sky. Later in the season, as they gathered to get ready for their long return flight to Africa, maybe up to 30 swifts were seen on one occasion. Whilst these are precariously low numbers, maybe we can encourage more of the fledged young birds to return to Tideswell and the surrounding area, and nest in the following season.

5. Owls

Most people had seen or heard Tawny Owls in and around the area - 44 people (64%) had, 22 people (36%) had not. The sound of Tawny Owls calling to each other appears to still be a relatively common occurrence in our area - although again, less than in previous years.

Far fewer people reported seeing Barn Owls - 19 (30%) people had, 44 (70%) had not. Only 11 people (18%) had seen Little Owls this year, whilst 51 (82%) had not.

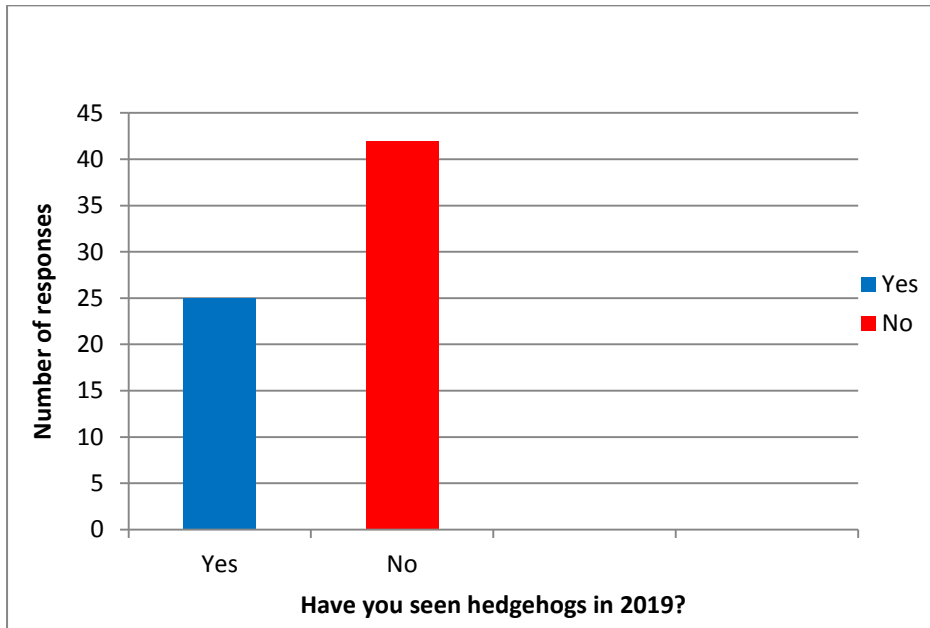


Whereabouts have you seen or heard owls?	Tawny Owls	Barn Owls	Little Owls
Sherwood Road/ Summer Cross/ Parke Road	10	2	
Litton/ Littondale/ Litton Mill/ roads over to Litton/ Litton Edge	10		2
Centre of Tideswell (including on the Cliffe)	7		
Alma Road/ Manchester Road/ Brook Bottom	6	3	4
Wheston/ Wheston Bank/ Hay Dale	5	1	4
Lane Head/ Conjoint Lane/ along A623/ road to Eyam	1	5	1
Meadow Lane		3	
Millers Dale/ Upper Dale	1	2	
Tideswell Dale/ Windmill		1	
Ashbourne Road		1	
Taddington		1	
Great Hucklow, Abney Moor			2
Total	40	19	13

Even those people who reported seeing or hearing owls were generally unaware of nesting sites. Some people reported knowing about Tawny Owl nesting sites in the past - but not recently. Barn Owls typically nest (as their name suggests) in old barns and isolated farm buildings. They may be present on Meadow Lane, on Manchester Road and near Lane End. Little Owls probably select the limestone crags in our area for nesting sites - so Hay Dale and Litton Edge are likely areas, along with possible sites along Manchester Road.

6. Hedgehogs

Only 25 people (37%) have seen hedgehogs (or signs of hedgehogs) in the last year, 42 people (63%) had not.



Whereabouts have you seen hedgehogs?	Sightings
Pinfold, Sherwood Road, Sunny Bank, Summer Cross, Parke Road,	8
Litton/ Littondale/ Litton Mill/roads over to Litton	6
School/Old School/Bowling Green/Alma Road	6
Centre of Tideswell (including on the Cliffe)	2
Wheston/Wheston Bank	2
Manchester Road/Brook Bottom	1
Lane Head/ Conjoint Lane/A623	2
Great Longstone	2
Total	29

The information in the table above suggests we still have some hedgehog `hot spots` around the area. Hedgehogs are known to roam up to 2km every night, often following the same route as they hunt for food. When males are looking for females in the breeding season, they may travel even further afield. So the more we can do in those areas identified above to protect those families, the further they may spread around the area.

Only three people thought they had hedgehogs hibernating in their gardens, and these were mostly in the past. Several people commented there were far more several years ago. Sadly, quite a few of the above sightings were road deaths.

7. Other Wildlife of Interest

Over 30 people mentioned other types of wildlife which they loved to see around the area. Many respondents shared their concerns about nature generally.

Many people mentioned specific birds, particularly familiar garden song birds such as robins, sparrows, thrushes and finches, but also birds of prey, such as peregrines, buzzards and sparrowhawks. Some people were particularly concerned about ground-nesting birds such as curlews and lapwings, which they knew were in steep decline (and people mentioned how in the past they could remember hearing and seeing flocks of these birds in the local area). Swallows and house martins were also much loved by people, along with woodland birds such as woodpeckers and nuthatches. Several people expressed concerns that some of our familiar garden birds might be threatened by too many jackdaws and crows, as well as other predators (perhaps we can discuss the issues and evidence around these concerns at future T&DEG meetings?). There are clearly a lot of bird lovers in our area.

People also talked about the importance of insect life such as bees, butterflies, dragonflies and moths. Frogs, toads and newts were also raised as species of concern.

Some people were particularly concerned about apparent declines in the number of hares and different bat species around the area, as well as other mammals such as wood mice, squirrels, water voles, badgers, foxes and rabbits. Many people felt all animals needed our protection, but others also expressed concern about reports that some of these species prey on other species, and therefore should be managed more effectively. Again - maybe in the future, we could invite an expert to come and talk to the T&DEG about these issues?

8. Additional Comments

There were lots of interesting and helpful comments about things we might do to help wildlife. Some involved encouraging others to take action or to be more wildlife friendly. These included:

- Encouraging more tree planting;
- Working with local builders to encourage spaces for wildlife in new buildings or when buildings are renovated;
- Encouraging nature friendly farming practices;
- Changing highway and public space mowing regimes to encourage more wild flowers and insects;
- Asking cat owners to think about managing their pets during the bird breeding season.

There were also lots of suggestions about things we could all do, such as creating wildlife ponds and bird baths; planting insect friendly gardens; and erecting bat boxes, insect hotels and bird boxes. These are all excellent ideas, and more are discussed in the next section.

9. Conclusions and Next Steps

With almost 80 people taking the time to complete the survey and to suggest ideas of their own, we are delighted at the results of this small exercise. It demonstrates just how many people love to see wildlife around their homes and care about the future of nature. The results do also suggest that there is not as much wildlife in and around the area as perhaps some of us remember from previous years (this is in line with the rest of the country). However, it also suggests we remain fortunate in this part of Derbyshire - there is still a lot of wildlife around our homes and gardens which we can encourage further.

The Tideswell & District Environment Group intends to hold meetings with expert speakers so we can learn more about what we can do ourselves, as well as share information through its Facebook page on line. We will be discussing some of the following ideas at forthcoming meetings - we hope that others will join us.

To encourage more swifts to stay and breed in the area, a local Swift Awareness Group has already been established in Hathersage. They are erecting nesting boxes in the area and monitoring increasing numbers. We intend to invite a speaker from the Hathersage Swift Group to speak to us in the autumn, in order to promote similar activities in 2020 in our area. If you are interested in further information about swifts, this is a useful web site - <https://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/news/swift-awareness-week-soaring-success>.

We can also do more to help owls around the area, possibly by trying to protect their nesting places more effectively and again, by erecting nesting boxes. There is more information from the Hawk and Owl Trust about protecting and conserving these special birds on their web site - <https://hawkandowltrust.org>.

Hedgehogs are clearly still living in and around our homes and gardens, and there are many small practical actions we can all take to help them thrive. As they eat slugs and other garden pests, do try to avoid slug pellets which can poison them. It is also helpful to provide gaps in walls and fences to allow them to move around more easily, from garden to garden. Don't over tidy your gardens - leave some log piles or twigs and prunings in a quiet part of your garden. These can provide hiding places for hedgehogs, and you may even have hedgehogs hibernating in such places. Please do not feed hedgehogs bread and milk - this is not very good for them. If you do come across underweight hedgehogs then providing tinned cat or dog meat and fresh water as a stop-gap measure is a good idea. There is more information about helping hedgehogs on the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust web site below.

Of course all of these species rely on a rich, biodiverse ecosystem, to provide places for them to live and food to eat. More insects and small mammals will benefit all these creatures. So do think about any small improvements you can make to your garden to help nature generally. There is lots of information about gardening for wildlife here - <https://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/wildlife-gardening>.

We hope to encourage a lot more of these activities through our group. If you would like more information about our activities, have a look at our Tideswell & District Environment Group Facebook page, or do get in touch. You can email tidzaeg@gmail.com, or contact the T&DEG, at Brookbank, Queen Street, Tideswell, for further information and to be added to our mailing list.