



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about BIRDS

The logo of the Hundred Parishes Society includes birds and trees surrounding a church spire. This tranquil scene, a wood engraving by Eric Ravilious, captures the sights and sounds of the countryside, hinting at church bells, wind in the treetops and bird song.

During any countryside walk, you are likely to see a variety of birds, some in the hedgerows and others high above. Mixed flocks of noisy corvids, especially rooks and jackdaws, deftly execute their aerial acrobatics in blustery conditions. The larger ravens are increasing in number and you may hear their gurgling croaks which carry far on the wind.

Mature circle-soaring buzzards are patrolling their territories. Hovering kestrels are searching for food. You may also see a red kite with a forked tail and wingspan of nearly 6 feet (1.8 metres).

As a tractor cuts furrows in damp ground, the corvids are frequently joined by noisy groups of gulls eager to feast on worms and other soil invertebrates. Farmers do what they can to discourage unwelcome flocks of vegetarian woodpigeons as they attack their precious crops.

Mixed parties of tits keep in touch as they flit among branches searching for insect food. Robins sing and a mistle thrush may proclaim his presence from a lofty perch.

In a sunny sheltered spot, starlings whistle merrily.

As you walk, a snap of a twig or the squelch of your boot in the wet mud reveals your presence and a startled pheasant or blackbird may sound an urgent alarm call.

All too often, the background noise of vehicles, sirens and aircraft can intrude, but it is still possible to find locations where the natural sounds take centre stage. I encourage you to experience the sights and sounds of the countryside.

www.hundredparishes.org.uk offers a choice of walks for all seasons. The next page shows a variety of birds photographed in the Hundred Parishes.

If you are interested in finding information about birds recorded in the three counties included in the Hundred Parishes, then do visit these websites:

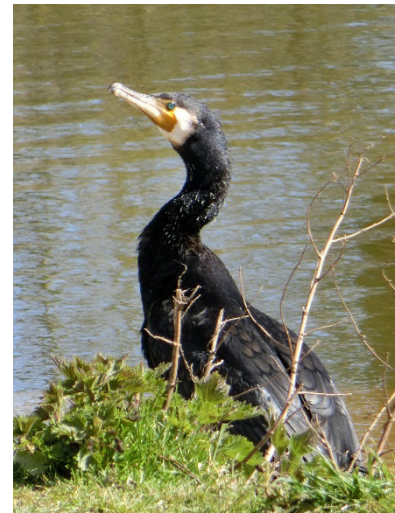
The Hertfordshire Natural History Society www.hnhs.org

Essex Birdwatching Society www.ebws.org.uk

Cambridgeshire Bird Club www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.



Above: a thrush in Stansted Mountfitchet, buzzard in Langley and cormorant in Buntingford parish.

Below: an egret in Little Sampford and swans in Hatfield Forest.



Below: geese in Widdington and a colourful jay feeding on garden peanuts when acorns were scarce.

