

The Friends of St. Mary's Lands are grateful to Warwick District Councillor Will Roberts for taking on board their suggestion for a completely independent study to be carried out on the ground-nesting birds on St. Mary's Lands (our old Warwick Common).

We were delighted with the report from the prestigious British Trust for Ornithology at the end of the 2025 breeding season, which proved scientifically rigorous, comprehensive and extremely informative. It will, for the first time, provide an accurate baseline by which to monitor the populations of red list bird species on St. Mary's Lands.

The more intensive survey methods and visits were exactly what were required by the Friends.

Since 2021 the Friends have been aware that there was a decrease in skylark activity in July and August 2021 resulting in a premature end to the breeding season. The Friends concluded this was due to the excessive height of the sward making it unsuitable for ground-nesting birds and the BTO report raises this issue and questions if perhaps the duration of the fencing should be shortened.

The optimum habitats are in the centre of the site where the birds have historically nested and where fencing has recently been erected. There are limited options for fencing on other parts of the site as the vegetation structure/composition is suboptimal. It is therefore not possible to state whether the fencing has led to an increase in the bird population. The skylark population has increased in the West Midlands and across the country anyway.

Warwick people have long appreciated the presence of the birds whilst enjoying walking on their much-loved 'Common'. Thanks to the meticulous work of the BTO, it now appears that planned fencing across the whole of Lammas Field is unwarranted and access to this recreational area will not be denied to local people.

Management Committee
Friends of St. Mary's Lands