

A Year of *BirdNetPi* at All Saints' Springfield

By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. *Psalm 104:12*

These words from Psalm 104 reflect what we have been using *BirdNetPi*, an automated wildlife listening station powered by artificial intelligence, to record in the grounds of the church. Over the last year, a small microphone mounted on the Church Centre has been listening and has revealed an extraordinary hidden world of birdsong. It has recorded more than 323,000 bird detections across 119 different species in the year since May 2025.

What makes the project so fascinating is not simply the headline numbers, but the stories hidden within them. The system has quietly followed the changing rhythm of the seasons: spring arrivals, winter visitors, dawn choruses and late-night calls that most of us would never otherwise hear.



Tawny Owl

One of the most memorable discoveries came during the dark winter months. In December and January, a Tawny Owl became a regular visitor to the church grounds, recorded 230 times across the two months. While

many of us were indoors escaping the cold, the BirdNetPi microphone was capturing the haunting calls of an owl moving through the churchyard and surrounding trees after dark. The owl disappeared again as spring approached, making its winter appearances feel even more special.

The data also tells the story of migration and the changing seasons.



Redwing

Redwings, winter thrushes that travel to Britain from Iceland and Scandinavia, arrived in large numbers during autumn, peaking through October, November and January before almost vanishing again by late spring. Their calls became one of the defining sounds of winter around All Saints'.

Spring brought a very different soundtrack. Chiffchaffs returned strongly in April, with more than 3,800 detections that month alone after being almost absent through winter. Their familiar repetitive song is often one of the first signs that warmer weather is returning, and BirdNetPi captured that transition perfectly.



Some species became constant companions throughout the year. European Robins were by far the most frequently recorded bird, with more than 137,000 detections. Their song carried

through every season, from summer mornings to winter afternoons, becoming the background soundtrack of the church grounds. Woodpigeons, Blackbirds, Wrens, Blue Tits and Magpies also featured heavily, painting a picture of a rich and thriving local ecosystem.

There were surprises too. Tiny Goldcrests, Britain's smallest bird, appeared in remarkable numbers, with over 12,000



detections across the year. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were regular visitors, while Long-tailed Tits arrived in noisy flocks during the colder months.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the project is how it changes the way we think about the church environment. Even in the middle of everyday life, services, school runs, traffic and busy schedules, nature continues around us constantly, often unnoticed. The BirdNetPi project has given us a window into that hidden world.

What began as an interesting technology experiment has become something much more: a year-long diary of creation surrounding All Saints' Springfield. Each

detection represents a brief moment in time, a robin singing at dawn, an owl calling in the darkness, or the first chiffchaff of spring announcing that winter is over.

Jon and Ian Poston



Great Spotted Woodpecker

To find out more or to share your ideas on Eco Church please go to the website www.allsaintsspringfield.org.uk/church-life/eco-church or speak to one of the Eco Church Group – Roger McFarland, Nicky Morecroft, Chris McFarland, Ian Poston, Dave Gauld, Beth Cornish, Ann Salmon, Shirley Duggan.

This month's eco suggestions

- Buy food which has **less packaging** (particularly **less plastic**) and instead of clingfilm use **wax wraps**
- **Support charities** who care for the environment, and **campaign** for climate action