



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2015

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***** STOP PRESS *****

GBC ATLAS IS ON ITS WAY

The long awaited Atlas is coming soon
See page 2 for details



Snow Bunting at Southerndown © Paul Roberts

Searching for migrants around the Obs quarry on the GBC weekend in Portland © Adrian Meredith



Nuthatch at Forest Farm © Cliff Woodhead



Grey Plover at Sully © Andy Burns



Dipper in Treorchy © Adrian Meredith

SUBMISSION DEADLINE for the next newsletter is **Sunday 22nd March**

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Happy New Year. Welcome to the new-look Newsletter. Winter is well and truly with us. However the mild autumn meant many migratory birds lingered longer than usual. I was at Slimbridge in mid-November and was privileged to see the first Bewick's Swans of the season fly in - the latest arrival since 1969. A good berry crop in Scandinavia may mean fewer winter thrushes reaching our shores this year. It doesn't look like it is going to be a "Waxwing" winter this year.

You should have already received your 2013 Bird Report. (If you haven't, please get in touch with John Wilson). I'm sure you'll agree that John and the team have maintained the high standards set in the past. (One element that John was not happy with, was that the shading in some of the table headers came out slightly coloured, rather than grey. Apparently this was because these sheets were printed on the reverse of the coloured inserts). Whilst on the topic of the bird report - have you submitted your 2014 records yet? Please send your records to John a.s.a.p. If you're not sure how to submit records, please refer to the club website, where there is a page dedicated to this topic. Also, if you're not in the habit of submitting records, why not make it your New Year's Resolution? All records are valuable, from the Blue Tit that you see in the garden, to the rarity that you spot on your local reserve. Breeding records are especially welcomed. Note that not all the posts on the sightings page of the club website are logged. (There were only 168 contributors to the current report - the Bird Club has over 400 members).

Work has been progressing on the East Glamorgan Bird Atlas. I have already seen a preview copy and it is looking good. There are a few minor issues to sort out but all being well, we'll be "going live" soon. We have decided to have an open access web-based publication. It won't be possible to put it on the club website but there will be links to the Atlas from there. In addition to maps of the recent survey there are details from past surveys so that comparisons can be made.

Recently, Rose Revera from WTSWW, Parc Slip got in touch. The Wildlife Trust are looking for volunteers to help with their Lapwing Project. (Rose actually contacted the club back in early December, meaning that several work parties have already taken place. There's still time to contribute however)

"Staff and volunteers from the Trust are working to reverse the decline of Lapwings at Parc Slip, through a series of habitat creation and management projects. The intention is to create wetland scrapes and cryptic nesting sites. In addition to the practical habitat management, the project will also undertake research and monitoring to better understand and conserve the species. A number of 'Lapwing Conservation Days' have been set aside. These started in December and are planned to continue in to the New Year (every Friday in January has been set aside). Meet at the Visitor Centre at 10:30 a.m. Work parties last about two hours."

Just as we were going to press, we learned that Graham Powell, the Club Secretary and Publicity Officer has decided to step down from the committee. I'm sure you'll join me in thanking Graham for all his efforts and wish him well for the future. This of course means that we have a vacancy on the Committee. If you are interested, please get in touch.

Apologies for the errors that crept in to the last newsletter. The picture on page 5 was of course a Spotted Flycatcher and the bird on page 13 was a Red (or Grey) Phalarope.

Alan Rosney



BIG BIRDING DAY - 12th OCTOBER 2014

Our fourth Big Birding Day (not the third as I mistakenly reported in the last newsletter) took place at Kenfig in early October. In all, approximately 150 people visited the event. It began with a ringing session down by the pool, where David Carrington and Wayne Morris ringed a good number of birds including Reed Bunting, Goldcrest, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Blackcap, Great Tit and Wren. After lunch a further ringing session took place closer to the Reserve Centre, giving visitors the chance to see some common species in the hand. The moth trap was opened in the afternoon, gathering a good crowd of spectators.

Two bird walks around the reserve were led by John Wilson. It was quiet although two Whooper Swans dropped in to enliven proceedings. Late in the day an Otter put in an appearance. Indoor, Anne Wilson sold cakes and refreshments and Adrian Murch manned the book stall. The craft stalls proved quite popular with Graham Holmes, Val Phillips, Sandra Griffiths, myself and young volunteer, Matthew on duty. Mary Gallagher was on hand to run the enquiries desk and shop.

Graham Powell, a.k.a. *The Tall Twitcher*, discovered that it was "BIG SIT" day, whereby the observer sets himself/herself up in one location and records all the species seen or heard from that spot. He recorded 35 species, including a fly-over Tree Pipit and a late Swallow. In the photograph below he's actually standing up - is that allowed? 😊

Also on the day, Jeff Curtis and Tony Messinger undertook their monthly BTO WeBs count. They also undertook a Golden Plover survey at Sker.

£135 was raised on the day, half of which was donated to the Kenfig Reserve.



Some customers for "Mrs Wilson's" cakes



Graham Powell and the "Big Sit"



Flynn Aitken examines one of the moths



David Carrington demonstrates bird ringing



RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

October 2014

Highlights: A Great White Egret flying north-west over Lavernock was possibly the individual seen the next day at Talygarn Lake, Pontyclun. In a good month for the species further 'GWEs' were seen at Kenfig rivermouth and Llwyn-on Reservoir. The Lesser Scaup remained at Cardiff Bay. Pairs of Whooper Swans dropped in at Kenfig Pool on two separate dates, but neither lingered. Two Black-necked Grebes were at Lisvane Reservoir. A late Osprey was over the Rhondda River. The only Grey Phalarope was at Rumney Great Wharf. A Turtle Dove was noted at Cosmeston. A total of three Wood Larks was recorded at Lavernock. Two Bearded Tits were at Cardiff Bay. Both Great Grey Shrike and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker were found at Garwnant. A good run of Yellow-browed Warbler sightings saw birds at Dunraven, Maesteg, Waterton, Pant Norton and Kenfig. A Lapland Bunting overflew Kenfig rivermouth.

Other Sites: Three Little Egrets were at Ogmere Estuary and another was over Lavernock. Two Pale-bellied Brent Geese were at Sker. Hen Harriers were observed at Rumney Great Wharf and Mynydd Eglwysilan. Several Merlins were recorded at Lavernock, with others at Cwm Nash, Sker and Rumney Great Wharf. A Hobby was near Marcross. Six Grey Partridges were at Llancadle. Waders included a Jack Snipe and 79 Common Snipe at Llanishen Reservoir, Purple Sandpipers at Sully (1) and Sker (4), 26 Knot at Sker, 1000 Redshanks at Green Point, with two Greenshanks and a Ruff at Rumney Great Wharf. A Great Skua and two Arctic Skuas passed Porthcawl. Two Short-eared Owls graced Rumney Great Wharf. Cwmdu, Maesteg, held at least nine Ring Ouzels, with singletons at Cwm Nash and Caerlan Farm. Firecrests were located at Miskin and Lavernock, where a Yellowhammer was a scarce visitor. Nine Choughs frequented the Heritage Coast.

NOVEMBER 2014

Cardiff: A remarkable influx of Black Redstarts at Cardiff Bay saw at least nine present, mainly around Penarth Marina. Further sightings at the bay included Lesser Scaup, Black-necked Grebe, Brent Goose and two Yellow-legged Gulls. A Yellow-browed Warbler was found at Lamby Tip. A Long-tailed Duck turned up at Llanishen Reservoir. Two Jack Snipe were at Green Point. The Hendre Lake/St Mellons, Little Egret roost held a max of 31 birds with a Green Sandpiper also noted there. Up to ten Hawfinches were seen regularly at Forest Ganol.

Kenfig: A Woodlark overflew Sker. Late records concerned an Osprey over the pool (10th) and a Swallow at Sker (26th). Two Siberian Chiffchaffs and a Firecrest were in poolside bushes. A Great Northern Diver called in at the pool, with another two on the coast late in the month. At least one Bittern was present. An Eider, two Purple Sandpipers and 750 Golden Plovers were at Sker.

Ogmere Estuary: A Yellow-browed Warbler remained at Pant Norton, where two Ring Ouzels were also seen. Two Dartford Warblers at Portobello were the first in East Glamorgan since 2012. Two Water Pipits were on the estuary, but elusive. A Snow Bunting stayed a week on the nearby cliffs at Southerndown. Additional records included one Dark-bellied and four Pale-bellied Brent Geese, four Little Egrets, Goshawk, Merlin, Bar-tailed Godwit and six Purple Sandpipers.

Other Sites: Two Great Northern Divers predated crayfish at Llwyn-on Reservoir. A Velvet Scoter flew past Porthcawl. A Red-breasted Merganser was off Aberthaw, while eight Brent Geese on the beach



there included five Pale-bellied. Little Egrets were at Cosmeston and Sully Island, where a Great Skua was also noted. Two Hen Harriers were at Llanilid, a regular wintering site. A Merlin was seen at Mynydd Eglwysilan. A swift species was at Porthcawl (16th), but didn't hang around to be scrutinised. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was at Llanharry. At least four Ring Ouzels were in Cwm Fforch-wen, Pontycymer. Additional Black Redstarts were at Cwm Col-huw and Dunraven. Nelson Wern held a Willow Tit. Six Crossbills went over at Tondu and ten Bramblings were in a finch flock feeding on beech mast at Cwm Kenfig.

DECEMBER 2014

Highlights: The undoubted standout was the area's first documented Caspian Gull - a first-winter photographed at Cosmeston (8th). A Long-tailed Duck turned up at Roath Park Lake. A Great Grey Shrike was in the forestry at Coed Taf Fawr. A Lesser Scaup remained at Cardiff Bay. Water Pipits were recorded at Rumney Great Wharf and Ogmere Estuary. Bitterns were noted at Kenfig, Cosmeston, Forest Farm and in a reed near Euroclad. A Firecrest was found at Parc Slip.

Other Sites: A Great Northern Diver was still on Llwyn-on Reservoir. Up to 13 Red-throated Divers were off Sker. Little Egrets were reported from Hendre Lake (maximum 29 leaving the roost), Ogmere Estuary (3), Roath Park Lake and Cadoxton River. Gileston held 12 Brent Geese, 10 of which were Pale-bellied. Sightings from Rumney Great Wharf included Short-eared Owl, 230 Pintail, 600 Dunlin and six Jack Snipe (at Green Point). Further Jack Snipe were seen at Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr Warren. A male Hen Harrier and a Short-eared Owl were at Mynydd Portref, above Brynna. Two Barn Owls were on Coity Common. Six Black Redstarts were in the vicinity of Penarth Marina. Hawfinches continued to frequent Forest Ganol.

Paul Roberts



Black Redstart in Penarth Marina
© Richard Smith



Kestrel at Ty'n-y-caeau Farm
© David Carrington - Kenfig
Ringing Group



Yellow Wagtail in Monknash
© Gary Light



CLUB NEWS

Members' News

Welcome to new members Sophie Williams & Andrew Davies from Llanishen, Mary Davis & Clive Gaitt from Cardiff Bay and Ray Wysom from Efail Isaf. Also welcome back to Jeff Williams from Ferndale and Phil Routledge from Heath. You may have noticed that the club's bank account details have been removed from the website. Following some unauthorised activity we have been advised to remove them. Anyone wishing to pay subs by bank transfer or to set up a Standing Order will need to contact the Membership Secretary in advance.

The club wishes to clarify the situation regarding access to Llanishen/Lisvane. Currently only four individuals from the birding fraternity are allowed access to the site to undertake WeBS surveys. Please don't trespass, as we wish to maintain good relations with the current owners.

The numbers participating in field outings lately have been very disappointing. Why not join us on one of our trips? They are good fun and open to birders of all abilities.

Committee News

The Committee has met three times since the last newsletter:

- The Big Birding Day was reviewed, with various suggestions for improvements
- The Atlas and EGBR 2013 were discussed at length
- The indoor programme is progressing well, thanks to Paul Denning
- John Wilson & David Carrington presented a framed certificate to Steve Moon regarding the Parc Slip scrapes
- A response to the planning proposals for Rhaslas Pond was considered
- Anne Wilson has switched the club's savings account to attract a slightly better interest rate
- We made a successful bid to RCT for a grant for 3 pairs of Opticron binoculars for use on public walks and events such as the Big Birding Day
- Alan Rosney has led bird watching walks for the *NRW Come Outside* scheme
- As Adrian Murch is still not very mobile, Strinda Davies has led the Kenfig Saturday walks. (I'm sure that most of you will be aware that Adrian has been out of commission in recent months, awaiting a hip replacement. We wish him all the best and hope he's up and about again in the near future)
- As stated in the Editorial there is now a Committee vacancy. Are you able to contribute?

Alan Rosney

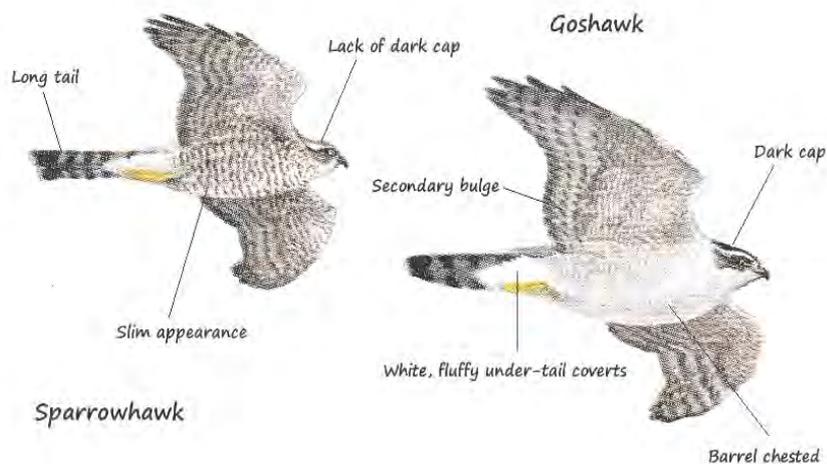
It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Derek Moore in October. He had been battling illness for some time. Derek will be known to many of you from his work with the Wildlife Trusts. His birding knowledge was immense and he gave us a couple of very entertaining talks, illustrating them with some excellent photographs. He will be missed.



CONFUSION SPECIES – SPARROWHAWK & GOSHAWK

In recent years Goshawks have increased in numbers, although they are not common. Beginners often find them difficult to separate from Sparrowhawks. The most obvious difference between them is size. Goshawks are Buzzard sized, although the size difference isn't always easy to judge when in flight. A female Sparrowhawk can be as big as a male Goshawk, however the bulk of the bird should be evident.

Goshawks are powerful, barrel-chested raptors with broad wings and proportionately shorter tails than Sparrowhawks. Wing shape isn't always easy to use to differentiate between the species. The texts say that Goshawks have more pointed wings, although I must admit I haven't noticed great differences between the species. The rear of a Goshawk's wing often shows a secondary bulge, giving an S shaped curve. In flight the Goshawk has slow deliberate wing beats. Some of the texts describe it as "crow-like". If seen properly the Goshawk's dark cap/white supercilium can be another diagnostic feature. Also Goshawks often appear to have protruding heads, reminiscent of a Cuckoo. The tails are slightly different. Sparrowhawks appear to have longer, square-ended tails, when compared with the Goshawk's broader, shorter and round-ended tail. In their spring display flights, Goshawks often fluff out their white under-tail coverts.



The best time to see Goshawks is in early spring when they are displaying. Your best chance of seeing one is in the valleys. Position yourself where you can overlook coniferous forest areas (It remains to be seen whether the clearance of Larch will affect numbers) and look for their spectacular display flights. Sparrowhawks are fairly ubiquitous and are increasingly visiting gardens in search of prey. They can often be seen soaring/circling overhead.

Footnote : Perhaps the best place to see Goshawks is in the Forest of Dean. A visit to New Fancy View (SO 628095) in late March/early April is often productive. It can get quite crowded so get there early! (GBC has run several trips. Indeed we are going on 18th March. Contact John Wilson if you're interested). For further ID tips have a look at Keith Vinicombe's March 2011 article on the Birdwatch website.

Pictures adapted from the Macmillan Bird Identification Guide.

Alan Rosney



RESERVE SPOTLIGHT - TAFF BARGOED PARK (ST1098)

Taff Bargoed Park (Parc Taf Bargoed) is the site of 3 former coal mines Taff, Merthyr, Trelewis Drift and Deep Navigation. When the last mine, Taff Merthyr closed in 1993 the first challenge was to transform the industrial landscape left from years of mining activity. The reclamation of the former mining sites took over ten years to complete and is now reverting back to a natural landscape. It is not only of interest to nature lovers but also contains many interesting reminders of our industrial past.



The park has become a centre for leisure and recreation and provides environmental and heritage activities for the public, community groups and schools. Taff Bargoed Park has achieved Green Flag status, in recognition of achieving the national standard for parks and green spaces. The lakes on the park were created on the former site of Trelewis Drift. They have become a high quality fishing facility, which is developing a strong wild trout population and supports a diverse range of insects birds and mammals.

Birds found on the lakes include Kingfisher, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Moorhen and Mallard. Dragonflies and damselflies can be seen hovering across the surface of the water on warm days. The lakes are bordered by small areas of wetland ditches that provide natural habitat for frogs, toads and newts. The stone wall areas on the lakes provide nesting habitat for both Sand Martins and Grey Wagtails. Species booklets can be found at the park's visitor centre.

The Taff Bargoed River runs through the lakes and creates fast water habitat where Common Sandpipers can be found bobbing up and down feeding and prospecting a potential nest in site. The waters themselves enriched with minerals washed down from the hills and full with invertebrates provide a home for Brown Trout, Minnows and Water Shrews. The course of the river is lined with alder and willow, these provide perching and nesting sites for many birds including Goldfinch, Dunnock and Song Thrush. Swallows, Swifts and Sand Martins are some of the visiting migrants that feed on newly hatched insects. Numerous boulders in the river are covered with mosses and provide nesting material for the resident Dippers.



In 1994 mine water containing dissolved iron salts flowed from two shafts via a culvert to the surface turning the river orange, downgrading the river for many kilometres downstream. A solution was the development of a filtration system using reed beds. The system successfully filters any iron ochre mine water impurities that may enter the Taff Bargoed River.

The reed beds were planted with two different species of reeds: typh (bull rush) and phragmites. These are natural filtration plants which provide habitat for mammals birds, amphibians, insects and invertebrates. Many birds nest in the reed beds, including Reed Bunting, Sedge and Reed Warbler. The grass banks of the reed beds have many wild flowers including Spotted Orchid, Yellow Flag Iris, and Lesser Spearwort. Butterflies to watch out for are Common Blue, Red Admiral, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. Cuckoos can be heard calling in the spring and look out for Grey Herons, Moorhen and Coot. The hillsides above the park are also of interest. If you look up you could be lucky enough to spot Common Buzzard and Red Kite.

How to get there:

Take the A470 north. At the Ystrad Mynach roundabout Take the exit signposted to Trelewis and Nelson. Follow the brown tourist signs for the Welsh International Climbing Centre, until you reach Trelewis High Street. Look out for yet another brown tourist sign, this one shows the entrance to the park on your left hand side. There is plenty of parking space available.

National Cycle Route 476 passes through the site. Toilets are available in the park. The paths are well maintained, being mainly tarmac, with some gravel off shots.



Many thanks to warden, Paul Virgin, for supplying all the information on the park. Photos © Alan Rosney

If you decide to go to the park, why not combine it with a visit to another nearby site - Nelson Wern (ST1195)? The damp woodland here harbours species such as Willow Tit. Ed



TRIP REPORTS (All reports by Alan Rosney, unless stated otherwise)

Goldcliff - September 24th 2014

Quite a good turn out for this one, despite the early start, which was timed to catch the rising tide. The weather didn't disappoint, being calm, dry and warm. Many of the participants were keen to see the juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper that had been on the site for a couple of days. We were out of luck. We bumped in to Gareth Stamp who had seen it early on but it had disappeared by the time we arrived. We did get on to a couple of Little Stints and one or two Spotted Redshanks however. Other waders included Greenshank, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. A Sparrowhawk put all the waders up on a couple of occasions. I was convinced that a small wader flying with the Snipe was a Jack Snipe but alas it couldn't be re-found. Portents of winter were evident with Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and Gadwall all present.

Portland Weekend – October 24th - 26th 2014

Twelve club members were booked in for our annual trip to the bird observatory in Portland. En route we decided to stop off at Poundbury to check out a known Corn Bunting site. We were in luck with a flock of 25 showing well. Here we also saw Yellowhammer and Tree Sparrow. Next stop was Radipole. An obliging Long-tailed Duck was showing right in front of the visitor centre and a Kingfisher flashed by. We were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a Yellow-browed Warbler, which Wayne Strong picked up on call. John Duffy also caught sight of a Bearded Tit plus we also had typically brief glimpses of Cetti's Warbler. Adrian Meredith also saw the long staying Hooded Merganser at this site. Lodmoor was quiet, although Marsh Harrier, Common Tern and Common Sandpiper were seen. A stop at Portland Castle meant we were able to catch up with the long-staying Black Guillemot, resplendent in its white winter plumage. At the Bill we were greeted by "You should have been here earlier." There had been a steady stream of skuas and shearwaters passing. *Ces't la vie*. At dusk, Graham Powell saw a Short-eared Owl.

The following day we decided to concentrate on sea passage. The conditions had eased, meaning passage was light, although we did see Arctic and Pomarine Skuas and Velvet Scoter. The Little Owls were showing well in the Obs quarry and in the Obs garden there were Siskin and Brambling. A stroll around the fields wasn't particularly productive with Peregrine and Yellow Wagtail being the highlights. After lunch we decided to look for two long-stayers – Rose-Coloured Starling and Hooded Crow. We failed to see the former but caught up with the latter.

Next day we concentrated on sea passage with the results being similar to the previous day. The warden, Martin Cade, did show us a Siberian Chiffchaff that had been caught in the nets. A close Yellow-legged gull was a bonus, however as it was quiet we decided to go on a twitch. Steart Point was on our way home and a juvenile Pallid Harrier had been reported. First we stopped off at Ferrybride where large numbers of Brent Geese were present. Stuart Hardcastle picked out a Black Brant and Wayne Strong found six pale-bellied birds. At Steart we were delighted that the Harrier was performing well, albeit rather distant. Other goodies here included Great White Egret, Hobby and Merlin. A great weekend with good birds and excellent company. My list was over 100 species.



Corn Bunting at Poundbury
© John Duffy



Siberian Chiffchaff in the hand
at the Obs © Adrian Meredith



Pallid Harrier at Steart © Mike Trew of
Avon Birding

Penclacwydd WWT - November 13th 2014

Only 6 takers for this one, not surprising as the forecast was for driving rain and gale force winds. Initially we headed for the shelter of the British Steel hide. Waders seen included Greenshank, Dunlin, Redshank, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit and Lapwing. Two Little Grebes were visible just in front of the hide and three Little Egrets and a Grey Heron were on the far side of the lagoon. Unfortunately there was no sign of the Great White Egret that had been reported earlier. A fly-by Sparrowhawk put up the Teal, Shoveler and Wigeon. From here we ventured to the main Observatory, where we added two further duck species to our day list - Tufted Duck and Pochard. The weather forecast had been accurate. The strong winds meant that most of the passerines were keeping their heads down. There were however a few Greenfinches visiting the feeders outside the cafeteria.

The afternoon was spent in the Millennium Wetlands where there was little of note. A single Pintail was asleep on one of the islands and amongst the Teal there was one bird that certainly caused some discussion. The back and sides of the head were white, making it look quite like a Hooded Merganser.

Our last port of call was the viewing tower, overlooking the estuary. From here we saw huge numbers of birds, albeit a long way off. Oystercatchers dominated the scene but we also saw Peregrine, Brent Goose, Shelduck and more Pintail.

Labrador Bay & Dawlish - November 30th 2014

Another poor turn out for this trip - only 8. Unfortunately John Wilson was unable to lead the trip due to a bad back. Nevertheless we looked forward to a good day's birding. The day dawned foggy but this soon burnt off and we were rewarded with some glorious sunshine. We began at Labrador Bay - a new site for me. We saw good numbers of Cirl Buntings here, together with Skylarks and three Thrush species. Next we headed for Dawlish Warren. The Hoopoe and Siberian Chiffchaff that had been reported the day before weren't playing ball. Luckily we hit the tide just right. Our first notable sighting was a Long-tailed Duck out at sea. We searched the foreshore for a reported Water Pipit but could only find a couple of Rock Pipits, one of which was potentially a littoralis race bird. There were plenty of waders to see - Oystercatcher, Curlew, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Turnstone and Bar-tailed Godwit were the main species.



In the estuary Gareth Jenkins picked out a small grebe, which turned out to be a Black-necked. There were also plenty of Brent Geese, many of which were on the golf course. Our next port of call was Langstone. Here we added Red-throated and Great Northern Divers to our day list, together with Gannet, Razorbill and Common Scoter. Lastly we stopped off at Powderham corner, which now boasts a fancy new footbridge over the railway line. Few new species were added here but the number of birds on the mud was quite spectacular.

Whiteford Point - 14th December 2014

With a forecast of 80% likelihood of rain the 8 participants set off from Cwm Ivy bedecked in wet weather gear. As it happened, luckily, we avoided all the showers and had a very profitable days birding. As we were early for our proposed start time, we stopped off at Penclawdd Pill en route. Quite unexpectedly a Red Kite drifted right over our heads. We also saw 3 Greenshank here, our only sightings of this species during the day. On the way to Cwm Ivy, we were surprised to see a Red-legged Partridge scuttling across the road.

As we made our way through the woods on the hill above the marsh we picked up several new species for the day - Bullfinch, Redwing, Raven, Stonechat, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Goldcrest, Treecreeper and Great Spotted Woodpecker. On the marshes the usual fare was on show with Lapwing and Linnet being the most numerous birds. In the pines near the point a female Merlin made a brief appearance, battling against the strong south-westerly wind.

From the hide we saw plenty of Eiders. Great Crested and Slavonian Grebes were seen Another grebe cause quite a lot of discussion. It had only partially moulted, meaning it had a lot of black around the head and neck. The first thought was that it was a Black-necked. However the bill appeared quite straight, not upturned. The conclusion was that it was probably another Slavonian but in unfamiliar plumage. Other birds showing were Pintail, Wigeon, Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Brent Goose, Shelduck, plus several common wader species. From the point we were lucky to catch sight of a Great Northern Diver just off-shore.

To round the day off we decided to try Llanrhidian. We were very lucky as John Wilson immediately spotted a superb male Hen Harrier accompanied by a ring-tail. To finish off a great days birding we then saw a Great White Egret. Thanks to John for leading the trip, despite his painful back.

Bridgwater Bay - 11th January 2015

A good turn out for this trip. We visited the newly named Steart Marshes Reserve. From the Polden Hide we had good views of large flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover, plus several duck species. The incessant wind was keeping many species down however. On the shoreline we were truly delighted to see vast flocks of Dunlin and Knot performing their aerial acrobatics. Other waders included Grey Plover, Turnstone, Oystercatcher and Curlew (plus a lone Black-tailed Godwit) Overlooking the Parrett river we saw a Peregrine perched on the grass with the local Lapwings seemingly unperturbed by its presence. Here we also saw 5 Roe Deer. Our last port of call was Hinkley Point in search of a Richard's Pipit that had been reported - no luck, just Meadow Pipits and a solitary Reed Bunting. The lack of raptors was a little disappointing but the wader spectacle more than made up for it. This reserve can only get better over the next few years, as it matures.



INDOOR MEETINGS

Birding in the Nakchivan Autonomous Republic - 7th October 2014

Paul Bowden opened our indoor season with a talk/presentation on a visit to the Lesser Caucasus region. I'd never heard of the NAR (Apparently it's an enclave of Azerbaijan, bordered by Iran, Turkey and Armenia). Aside from the birds, the images of the region were fascinating with vast grassy plains, scree covered slopes, large water bodies and imposing snow-capped peaks. Paul's description of his journeys in a 4 x 4, with four occupants, all speaking different languages, was most amusing. (I think they had to use a field guide and the Latin names of birds quite a lot). As usual Paul treated us to some superb bird photography. The pictures of various lark species were most interesting, as were his pictures of colourful birds such as Roller and Hoopoe. All in all, a cracking night's entertainment. Thanks, Paul.

Birdlife from Finland - 4th November 2014

Cate Barrow was the second speaker of the winter programme. We were treated to superb images from her recent visits to Finland. She admitted that her focus was not solely on birds. Indeed her photos of mammals were equally impressive. The dedication involved in taking the shots was evident, having to spend long hours (sometimes days) in isolated hides, braving the mosquitoes in summer and snow drifts in winter. The birds on show included Siberian Jay, Hawk Owl, Hen Harrier, Willow Tit and Osprey. Mammals included Wolf, Wolverine, Brown Bear and Ermine. Yet another super show.

Central India and Sri Lanka - 2nd December 2014

Richard Smith is one of our regular speakers. His photography skills are well regarded. This time he regaled us with talks on two recent trips. We started in Sri Lanka, where Richard's main focus was not birds but whales. Based in the south of the island, he went on a couple of whale watching trips. We saw some stunning images of Killer, Bryde's and Blue Whales plus Spinner Dolphins. The birds weren't ignored with lots of photos of colourful species included. Our last port of call was Yala National Park, where we ended with some lovely shots of the resident Leopards.

The second half of the talk was based in Nagpur in central India. Richard visited a couple of National Parks here. Once again there were sumptuous images of the birdlife and mammals but the icing on the cake were the shots of Tigers. Thanks to Richard for a great talk. I believe he's planning another visit - don't forget the camera, Richard.

Members' Own - 6th January 2015

Four club members contributed to our annual get together. John Wilson kicked off proceedings with a presentation on recent trips to Extramadura. There were lovely images of the countryside as well as the wildlife. Next up was Dave Rich who showed his highlights of 2014, which included some shots of beautiful orchids in Sardinia. Our third contributor was Cliff Woodhead who delighted us with his photos. The majority were from his local reserve, Forest Farm but we were also



treated to shots of rarities such as Red-flanked Bluetail and Great Spotted Cuckoo. Last but not least, Paul Denning presented his past year's highlights, which not only included birds but also butterflies, dragonflies and flowers. Thanks to all the contributors. (Dave Bush even had one of his cryptic quizzes up his sleeve but there wasn't time to include it. Next year, Dave?)

BTO NEWS



BirdTrends

The latest BirdTrends <<http://www.bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2014>>report is now available, summarising the population trends for 120 breeding bird species across Britain & Ireland using data collected by volunteer surveyors. For the first time, this year's report provides habitat-specific trends for many species, highlighting those habitats where species are in trouble.

While intensive conservation efforts and targeted habitat management have benefited some rarer UK bird species, many widespread and formerly common birds are experiencing severe declines. Twenty-eight species, almost a quarter of those included in the report, have exhibited a fall in numbers of greater than 50% over the last 35-45 years.

House Martin Survey

This year marks the start of a two-year House Martin Survey <<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/house-martin-survey>>. Around 2,000-3,000 survey squares (1-km squares) will be randomly selected using a stratified sampling technique.

- The survey will consist of three visits – a recce visit in mid to late May to map the location of colonies followed by two survey visits (an early visit in the first three weeks of June; and a late visit in the last week of June or the first half of July).
- During the survey visits, volunteers will be asked to record some basic information about the nests and the buildings they are on, and to count the number of complete nests and the number of apparently occupied nests.
- The survey will be an online survey, although paper forms can be arranged if volunteers do not have online access.
- The 2016 nest study survey will be online with volunteers selecting their own study sites that they are able to watch regularly during the breeding season in order to record activity at the nests.

Please contact Dan, our Regional Organiser, to express an interest in participating.

Wayne Morris
BTO Regional Representative in East Glamorgan

eastqlambto@gmail.com

Dan Jenkins-Jones
Assistant BTO Regional Representative

eastqlamwebs@gmail.com



BTO GARDEN BIRDWATCH

Lôn Las Cymru Fundraiser

In September Rhisiart and I cycled the *Lôn Las Cymru* route 8 from Holyhead to Cardiff, and back home to Penllergaer. With a distance of 301 miles and to ensure that I didn't jump on the first train home, we decided to raise money for *Gower Bird Hospital*. In my role as Ambassador for the *British Trust for Ornithology's* (BTO) *Garden BirdWatch* survey, I receive lots of phone calls from people seeking advice about injured or sick wildlife. I often refer them to this fantastic wildlife hospital based in Pennard on the Gower Peninsula.

We tackled the route over six days staying each night in a pre-arranged B&B or hotel. Our route started in Holyhead and took us to Porthmadog, Machynlleth, Rhayader, Glasbury and Merthyr Vale before finishing in Cardiff. It was then a quick train ride to Swansea and a few more miles on the bike back home to Penllergaer.

Wales is very hilly and as I already knew, for every downhill an uphill is close on its heels; many of which had gradients of 20-25%! Fortunately, the amazing views made up for it, particularly in North Wales. As much of the route is along quiet country lanes or dedicated cycle tracks, it was lovely to be able to enjoy the sound of nature and do a spot of bird watching as we cycled along. It was great to have the time to appreciate all the birds that perhaps we all too often take for granted, such as Swallow, House Martin, Robin, Blackbird and Buzzard. Nature provided a welcome distraction from the effort of cycling on many occasions!

There was a real sense of freedom cycling from one B&B to the next. Our only deadline was to arrive before dark (failed twice) and before the local pub stopped serving food (failed once)! Our daily routine was very simple – enjoy a full breakfast; cycle a bit; stop for a cake; cycle a bit more; stop for another cake and so on. Well, we were burning a lot of calories!

So far we've raised over £300 for the Gower Bird Hospital. If you've been inspired by our adventure, please consider making a donation via the donate button on their website, or by sending them a cheque. Thank you.

www.gowerbirdhospital.org.uk

Gower Bird Hospital, Sandy Lane, Pennard, Swansea, SA3 2EW

Amanda Skull, Garden BirdWatch Ambassador

Evenings and weekends only:

07952 758293 or 01792 891013

gbw@hiafi.co.uk www.bto.org/gbw

GBC MERCHANDISE

We now offer hooded tops in bottle green with the club logo on the left breast - cost £18.00 (add £3 for p & p). Polos, sweats and fleeces are still available.

Contact Alan Rosney if you're interested



FUTURE EVENTS

Field trips

Wednesday 21st January	Cosmeston & Cardiff Bay
Thursday 1st February	South Gower Coast
Thursday 12th February	Ogmore-by-Sea
Sunday 8th March	Goldcliff & Uskmouth
Wednesday 18th March	Forest of Dean
Sunday 12th April	Kenfig & Sker

Contact John Wilson at least 7 days before the due date. Departure times vary but John will be able to give information.

Indoor Meetings

Tuesday 3rd February	ID night - Herons, Crakes & Rails
Tuesday 3rd March	Photographing Birds in Thailand-Hugh Lansdown
Tuesday 28th April	AGM & Quiz

Held at Kenfig Reserve Centre, beginning at 7.45 p.m.

Monthly walk - Kenfig NNR

This takes place on the third Saturday of each month. Meet at the Reserve Centre at 9 a.m. For details please contact David Carrington, 01656 743386

ITEMS FOR SALE

Slik Master tripod - good condition £20/Mirador car window mount - £5

Contact Alan Rosney for details

CONTACT DETAILS

See the GBC website for further e-mail addresses etc.

Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	Bird Report Editor/Field Trips
Adrian Murch 30, Lewis Avenue, Bridgend CF31 4JJ 01656 768155/0785156287	Position currently vacant	Anne Wilson 122, Westbourne Road, Penarth VoG CF64 3HH 02920 339424	John Wilson 122, Westbourne Road, Penarth VoG CF64 3HH 02920 339424/07999801645
Membership Sec/Newsletter	Indoor Meetings Organiser	Publicity Officer	Mapmate Hub
Alan Rosney 10, Parc-y-Nant, Nantgarw, RCT CF15 7TJ 01443 841555/07906558489	Paul Denning 17, Maes Maelwg, Beddau, RCT CF38 2LD 01443 202607	Position currently vacant	David Carrington Kenfig National Nature Reserve Tonkenfig, Bridgend CF33 4PT 01656 743386
BTO Representative	BTO WeBS Organiser	Bird Recorder (East)/Chair of GRC	Bird Recorder (West)
Wayne Morris, 8, Hughes Street, Pen-y-Graig, RCT CF40 1LX 01443 430284 eastglambto@gmail.com	Daniel-Jenkins Jones 18, St. Margaret's Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 7AA 02920 621394 eastglamwebs@gmail.com	David Gilmore 116, Donald Street Cardiff CF24 4TN d.gilmore2@ntlworld.com	Mark Hipkin 6, Holly Road, Neath 01639 638475/07875431917 markhipkin1@gmail.com