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Glamorgan Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2018

IN THIS EDITION	Page
Editorial notes	2
Recent sightings	3
Club news	5
Swift project update	8
Where can I see?....	10
Confusion species - Pipits	11
Birding with the lights off	12
Photo gallery	14
Trip reports	16
Indoor meetings	19
BTO news	20
Future events	22

*** STOP PRESS ***

GBC have received an HLF grant towards the building of a Swift tower on Cardiff Bay barrage

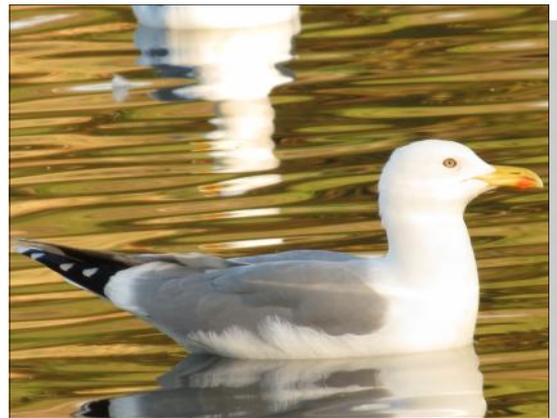
See page 9



Redshank on the Ely Embankment
© Annie Irving



Great Northern Diver in Barry Docks © Paul Bowden



Yellow-legged Gull on Caerphilly Moat @ Mike Pointon

SUBMISSION DEADLINE for the next newsletter is **Friday 23rd March**

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Happy New Year. Welcome to the new look newsletter. Thanks to Tri Haslam for providing the template for freshening up the lay-out. Hope you like it. As indicated on the cover we've some exciting news that our HLF bid for a Swift tower in Cardiff has been approved. There's more detail on page 9. We look forward to sharing the progress of this project over the coming months.

In this issue, we've an interesting article from Trevor Fletcher on a new, but growing aspect of birding. Modern technology has brought the cost of sound recording equipment within reach. Trevor has been recording passage migrants that pass over his house. A fascinating article, Thanks, Trevor.

You should all have now received your 2016 bird report. John Wilson and the team have worked hard to produce, what I think you'll agree, is a first-class document. The aim is to try and produce the report within the calendar year and once again that has been achieved. Well done to all involved.

The task continues however. We now need your 2017 records. Send all records to John, ideally by the end of January. The number of contributors has risen sharply in recent years, mainly due to use of BirdTrack. The current report had over 300 contributors - 112,600 records came in - from various sources : GBC Excel spreadsheet, Mapmate, BirdTrack & SEWBRReCORD. There's a short note from John below:

" Please make sure any handwritten records are clear [although I didn't receive any for 2016]. Also if using BirdTrack or going over to it, please use meaningful site names - e.g. 'garden', 'recreation ground' and the like aren't very helpful and are liable to get ignored. At least, a town or village name should be associated with such sites. Maybe current users who have created a site like that could edit them? Other than that, a big thanks to those members who submitted records by whatever channel and to the team of people who helped in the 2016 report's production".

Submitting records can provide useful information, as highlighted by the photo of the Redshank on the cover, which was kindly supplied by Annie Irving. She first spotted the bird on 27th January 2017, on the Ely Embankment in Cardiff Bay and then saw it again, in almost the exact same location, on 11th March. She submitted the record to both GBC and the BTO and was delighted to receive a reply from the latter :

"This bird was ringed (DK10753) as an adult on 22/2/2016 at Peterstone Great Wharf and has been re-sighted a number of times at/around Cardiff Bay (on 3/3/16, 3/1/17 and 22/1/17). It was also seen at St Thomas Head on 11/3/16. It was ringed as part of a study examining the winter movements of Redshank, Curlew, Dunlin, Wigeon, Teal and Shelduck in relation to the proposed tidal lagoon (see <https://wadertales.wordpress.com/2016/01/11/tracking-waders-on-the-severn/>). "

Ed



RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

October 2017

Highlights: A Glossy Ibis was seen in flight over Parc Slip (2nd). A Golden Oriole was reported at Merthyr Mawr Warren (15th). Whooper Swans stopped off at Kenfig (two on the 6th), Rhaslas Pond (4th) and Ogmomore Estuary (18th). Kenfig Pool hosted two Black-necked Grebes (3th). Seawatching highlights from Porthcawl were Leach's Petrel (10 on the 17th and two on the 21st) and Pomarine Skua (21st). An elusive Wryneck was found at Norton Wood, Ogmomore (1st). Wood Larks were observed at Lavernock (3rd), Nant-y-fyllon (two on the 25th) and Senghenydd (26th). A Water Pipit was in a mixed group of pipits on the cliffs at Southerndown (26th), with another on more typical habitat at Aberthaw (26th). A Lapland Bunting flew over Dunraven in a large coastal movement of birds (18th).

Other Sites: A Pale-bellied Brent Goose was at Barry Old Harbour, with two Dark-bellied passing Lavernock. Rhymney Estuary held 600 Shelduck. Four Red-breasted Mergansers were seen off Sully (27th). A Bittern turned up at Cosmeston. A Great Northern Diver was sheltering from a storm at Kenfig Pool, with another noted past Lavernock, where a Red-throated Diver was also logged. Shags were present at Nash Point and Ogmomore-by-Sea (two). A Hobby was at Cosmeston, while Merlins were at a scattering of locations. A Jack Snipe was at the Watermill, Ogmomore Estuary. The only Greenshank sighting came from Rumney Great Wharf. Short-eared Owls were observed at Kenfig and Nash Point. A huge movement of Wood-pigeons occurred late in the month, for example 67,000 over north Cardiff in a little over an hour (27th). Ring Ouzels passed through at Ogmomore Valley (three) and Pant Norton. Firecrests graced Cwm Nash, Dunraven, Swanbridge and Kenfig. A Willow Tit was at Garwnant. Hawfinch records as a result from the national influx included five at Forest Farm, eight at Lavernock, five at City Road, Cardiff and four at Kenfig. Over 100 Bramblings went over Comin Eglwysilan.

November 2018

Highlights: A flock of 11 Whooper Swans briefly at Kenfig, was later noted passing Cardiff Bay, before arriving at Slimbridge WWT in Gloucestershire (13th). Kenfig also hosted a singleton Whooper (16th) and another was at the Watermill, Ogmomore Estuary 27th – 28th). Possibly three separate Great White Egrets were noted at Kenfig, with another at Flemingston Moor (5th). Two Slavonian Grebes lingered at Kenfig. Snow Buntings were at Gileston (two on 26th) and Sker (28th). A Yellow-browed Warbler was found at Nelson Wern (11th).

Other Sites: The now regular wintering Brent Goose flock at Gileston held 13 Pale-bellied and one Dark-bellied. Further wildfowl included two Scaup on Kenfig Pool, Common Scoter at Barry Docks and Red-breasted Merganser past Sker. A Great Northern Diver looked settled at Barry Docks, with others off Southerndown and Porthcawl. Nine Red-throated Divers were observed at Nash Point. Bitterns were at Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve and Kenfig Pool. The largest gathering of Little Egrets was 11 at Hendre Lake. Hen Harriers were at Llanilid (two) and Kenfig. A good count of 18 Purple Sandpipers was made at Sker, elsewhere singles were at Aberthaw and Ogmomore-by-Sea.



November 2018 continued

Peak counts of Golden Plovers and Sanderlings at Kenfig Sands/Sker were 702 and 353, respectively. A Common Sandpiper and a Green Sandpiper looked set to overwinter at Ogmores Estuary, with several Green Sandpipers present - as is usual this time of year – at Peterston Moor. Jack Snipe were put up at Green Point (three) and Llanilid. Two Kittiwakes were at Ogmores Estuary. Yellow-legged Gulls were logged at Blackweir, Cardiff Bay and Caerphilly Castle Moat. A Short-eared Owl graced Mynydd Eglwysilan. Merlins were noted at Southerndown and Kenfig. Five Choughs wandered to Porthcawl from their usual haunts on the Heritage Coast. A Firecrest frequented Kenfig Pool. The last Swallow went through at Cosmeston (12th). The only Black Redstart was at Nash Point. Water Pipits were found at Rumney Great Wharf, Aberthaw/Gileston and Ogmores Estuary. Hawfinches continued to feature, with records from Kenfig, Forest Ganol, Rudry and Caerau, where 22 Bramblings also went over.

December 2018

Highlights: The Aberthaw Brent Goose flock peaked at 21 (17 of which Pale-bellied), with 130 Wigeon also counted there. A Great Northern Diver remained at Barry Docks and a noteworthy movement of 60 Red-throated Divers was observed off Nash Point (4th). A Bittern frequented Kenfig. The largest Little Egret congregations were 19 at Hendre Lake and 11 at Llancadle. A Slavonian Grebe looked set to winter at Kenfig Pool. A Hen Harrier was at Llanilid. Sizeable gatherings of Golden Plovers (away from Kenfig/Sker) were noted at Norton Farm (500) and Monkash (300). The largest Lapwing flocks were at Flemingston (1000) and Ogmores Estuary (800). Woodcocks were at Cosmeston and Mynydd Eglwysilan. A Jack Snipe was at Aberthaw. Guillemot (6th) and Little Stint (11th) at Ogmores Estuary were both rather unexpected. A juvenile Glaucous Gull was picked up in the Cardiff Bay roost (30th). Yellow-legged Gulls were identified at Caerphilly Castle Moat, Cardiff Bay (maximum three), Cosmeston and Roath Park Lake. A hybrid Mediterranean x Black-headed Gull was at Cardiff Bay. A Merlin was briefly at Cosmeston. An unseasonal Ring Ouzel was photographed at Mynydd Meio, Caerphilly (14th). Black Redstarts were at Nash Point and Cardiff University. Hawfinches were reported from Cosmeston, Forest Farm, Forest Ganol, Penyrheol, Rudry and Wenvoe. Two Snow Buntings turned up at Mynydd Eglwysilan (21st).

Paul Roberts

P.S. Congratulations to Paul for becoming the 2017 Patchwork Challenge Wales Mini league winner (Ogmores estuary & environs with 156 species recorded) Ed

Blaencanaid Raven roost counts 2017

Mark Evans continues his hard work, up at dawn, monitoring Ravens leaving the roost at Blaencanaid.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
133	65	116	330	277	401	330	154	124	178	412	112



CLUB NEWS

Members' News

We have several new members to welcome - Tracey Dunford and Matthew Webb from Cardiff, Heather Robinson from Llanharry, Jan Scheeres from Cardiff, Glenys Francis from Pontyclun and Paul Palmer from Tonteg. Also a very warm welcome back to Phil Bristow from Cardiff.

Sadly, we heard that a couple of club members have passed away recently; Martyn Lewis from Pontypriidd and Gerald Edwards from Llantrisant. Our condolences go to their families.

You may have noticed that Dave Rich's talk was switched from December to February because he was due for an operation. Best wishes, go to Dave. For a speedy recovery.

Committee Update

The committee has met four times since the last newsletter:

- }) A review of our insurance policies was undertaken. As a consequence we have increased the level of cover
- }) The date for the next Big Birding Day was set for Sunday 22nd April 2018
- }) Ceri Jones has undertaken a review of the sightings page from the web site (see page 7)
- }) Ceri sent a letter concerning a proposed development that might affect the Coryton heronry
- }) Jean & Rod Haslam attended the Unknown Wales Conference on behalf of GBC (see page 7)
- }) Strinda Davies suggested a survey to gauge members' views on the bird club
- }) National Nest Box Week (14th - 21st February) was discussed (see page 7)
- }) Ceri has looked in to potential conversion of the club from a Registered Charity in to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). If feasible, this will be put before the membership at the AGM
- }) Potential grants sources were considered
- }) Paul Roberts has purchased some berry-bearing trees for our project at Kenfig (see page 7)
- }) Strinda and Alan undertook a farm survey in Cornelly. 30 species were logged and potential nest box sites were found. A species list was presented to the farmer
- }) Lyn Evans's team at Bridgend College are aiming to make us more nest boxes
- }) The club will be represented at Caerphilly Council's Big Garden Birdwatch event on Saturday 27th January at Riverside Park, Trethomas. Why not pop along and join in?
- }) Jean has progressed work on the club's safeguarding policy
- }) Andrew Bevan has drawn up a code of conduct policy for volunteers
- }) Anne Wilson has purchased new notice boards, as per Wayne Morris's suggestion

Continued overleaf



COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Advance notice:

We have for some time been seeking new committee members. Currently there are 10 members and we have 2 vacancies. Obviously elections aren't due until April's AGM but if you'd like to consider taking up the role, please give it some thought and get in touch if you're interested.

Also Ceri Jones has decided to step down as club secretary, following a 3 year stint. He is however willing to stand for a role on the general committee, if elected.

EASYFUNDRAISING

Anne Wilson, our treasurer, sent us this note:

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online at any other time you could be raising a free donation for The Glamorgan Bird Club? There are over 3,300 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay, Argos and Sainsbury's, ready to give a free donation every time you shop online through easyfundraising.

It's really simple, and doesn't cost you anything. Plus sign up and sometimes we receive a bonus donation for The Glamorgan Bird Club. All you have to do is:

-)] Go to: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/invite/1F4712/>
-)] Enter "The Glamorgan Bird Club" in the search box
-)] Click "Join Us" and enter your details and click on "Create My Account"
-)] Choose from over 3,300 retailers, do your on-line shopping as normal and our cause will receive a free donation, at no extra cost to you, for every purchase you make

By signing up, you'll be helping to make a real difference to the club funds. Last financial year we received £47.49 and in September we received £26.96 and should receive more in March, provided we've reached over £15 so it is definitely worth while. Once signed up all you have to do is go to the GBC website and at the bottom of the 1st page you'll find the logo which you just click on and that takes you straight to the Easyfundraising website, where you put in the retailer you want and it takes you there.

GIFT AID

Are you a UK tax payer? Have you signed up for gift aid,? We'd appreciate it if you could do so. By signing, it means that the club can claim back 25p for every pound of your subscription. If you're forgotten whether you are signed up or not, drop the Membership Secretary, Alan Rosney, an email and he'll be able to check the membership database.

Anne Wilson



SIGHTINGS PAGE #glambirds

There has been a decline in usage of the sightings page (shared with Gower OS) on our web site. The main reason, we believe, is the use of social media sites; Facebook and Twitter. This decline is not unique. Other clubs and societies have found the same. Ceri has looked at what others are doing. Following the likes of Gloucester and Gwent, he recommended that those twitter users should add #glambirds to any tweets. If all twitter users started adding #glambirds to their sightings tweets, it will be easy to get up to date sightings by searching for this hashtag and clicking on "latest". This will bring up a list of the most recent news.

We realise that not all our members use twitter, so the sightings page will remain as is, however John Wilson has worked his magic and added a "sticky" post to the top of the sightings page that should take you to the latest twitter feed.

P.S. We've noticed that glambirds is also used by a modelling agency in India. We'll monitor the situation for the time being. Hope it doesn't impinge on your birding. Note if you use @glambirds, that'll take you that modelling agency. 😊

KENFIG TREE PLANTING

Some time ago we put forward some proposals for club projects. One such project was to plant some berry-bearing trees to attract species such as thrushes (and Waxwings 😊). A small team, led by Dave Carrington and Paul Roberts, planted the trees (donated by the club) near to the car park at Kenfig. The trees were Amelanchier Robin Hill, Crataegus prunifolia Splendens, Prunus sargentii, Sorbus Joseph Rock, Sorbus Pink Pagoda and Sorbus Edulis.



NATIONAL NEST BOX WEEK - February 14th - 21st

Every year we take part in National Nest Box Week. We shall be participating in NNBW again this year but with a difference. We've got a stock of boxes so have decided to concentrate our efforts on putting up boxes, rather than making them.

We have been in touch with the BTO to see if there is a possibility that we might link to the nest recording scheme. (Last year we donated two Tawny Owl boxes to Coed Craig Ruperra, which Andrew Bevan is actively monitoring already, as Tawny Owls are early nesters). If you've any suggestions for locations, please get in touch.

Alan Rosney

SWIFT PROJECT UPDATE

See our blog: glamorganswiftchampions.blogspot.co.uk

Aside from the exciting news on the next page, we've got lots more going on. With the Swifts sunning themselves in Africa, you'd think the project had slowed down but you'd be wrong.

I gave a talk to various wildlife groups (Cardiff Naturalists', the Wildlife Trust and Cardiff Uni Wild Soc.) in the Wallace Lecture Theatre of Cardiff University in mid November. There were over 50 attendees. Several new contacts were made and six new Swift Champions were recruited. Another group requested a talk as well. Spread the news folks.

Howard Driver has been busy in his workshop, constructing the boxes for Trinity Church in Penarth (see below). The aim is to get them erected in the New Year. Contact has also been made with two other churches. Fingers, crossed, we could have more sites in the near future. We've used some of the Welsh Ornithological Society grant to purchase two more call systems for use next summer.



Andy Wilkinson, environment teacher with Caerphilly schools, has initiated a Swift project with three more schools in the borough. He was heavily involved with the project in Bedwas Junior School that started last year. Let's hope he can inspire some of the youngsters to take an interest in Swifts and the environment in general. A small donation from the club was made to this project, as well as some technical advice on the siting of boxes etc.

We are very pleased that a Swift tower is to be erected by the Wildlife Trust at Cadoxton Ponds in Barry. They chose a Stoneyford tower that will sit alongside their Education Centre. Thanks to Katherine Lewis, the Education Manager at the site, for driving the project forward and to Ceri Jones for liaising with the Trust. Who knows - Swifts may well take to towers, as Purple Martins have done in North America.?

GREAT NEWS - HLF BID IS SUCCESSFUL

We can now announce that our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund was successful.

Working in collaboration with the RSPB and Cardiff Harbour Authority, we submitted a bid for a Swift tower, to be placed on the Cardiff Barrage. An artist's impression of what it might look like is shown below .

There were a lot of hurdles to negotiate and many meetings to attend, to get to this point. We're hoping that this will be a flagship for Swifts. It will certainly provide a talking point. The barrage was chosen as it already hosts a large number of Swifts on passage and they have already investigated some boxes that were erected on the Environment building a couple of years ago. The area is fairly open, ideal for Swifts, as they like clear sight lines in to their chosen nest sites.

There are already similar towers in Belfast and Exeter. Designed by Menthol Architects in Poland, there will be 90 Swift boxes, plus a call system, to attract Swifts to the tower. These have proved to be successful on the continent. It can however take several years to establish a nesting colony, so we'll be closely monitoring the tower to assess the situation.

There'll be a lot of work to do before it can be officially opened. All being well, we hope to erect the tower next spring/summer. We hope as many of you as possible can attend the launch event (details to be announced later) and we'll be looking for volunteers to take the project forward. Please get in touch if you'd like to get involved.



Many thanks to Carolyn Robertson and Ian Hartrey from the RSPB, Natalie Taylor, Chris Seddon and Dave Westerland from CHA, plus Ceri Jones, Mike Pointon and Strinda Davies from GBC for all their hard work in preparing the HLF bid.

Alan Rosney



WHERE CAN I SEE

Redwing & Fieldfare

Redwing and Fieldfare can often be seen together, stripping berries from trees and bushes. They also feed on the ground. Early in the winter, large flocks can be seen in the north of our area. Last winter there were large numbers of Fieldfares passing through Garwnant, their rattling calls ringing out across the valley. As the number of berries become depleted they move further south, seeking fresh supplies. Try the coastal fields in the Vale. Merthyr Mawr is often a good spot.

Waxwing

Here's hoping that 2018 will be another "Waxwing" year. They are usually found in urban areas, often in supermarket car parks! They also go for berry trees, especially Rowan. Last year they obviously had a loyalty card with The Range, as they appeared outside both the Cardiff and Swansea stores.

Goshawk

Whilst not wanting to pinpoint exact locations, you may be lucky to see this impressive raptor in several parts of our recording area. Head for the coniferous woods in the north. We saw one on a recent GBC trip to Garwnant and we run an annual trip to the Forest of Dean, where birds can be seen displaying from the New Fancy View raptor watch point. (GBC trip on 7th March).

Snipe

In the last issue we looked at Jack Snipe but what about the Common Snipe? They are never easy to see due to their cryptic plumage. A visit to Forest Farm in the winter might produce views. The flooded carr area, opposite the hides, can hold good numbers. Any of our river valley flood plains and wet coastal marshes might be productive and Kenfig is worth a try.

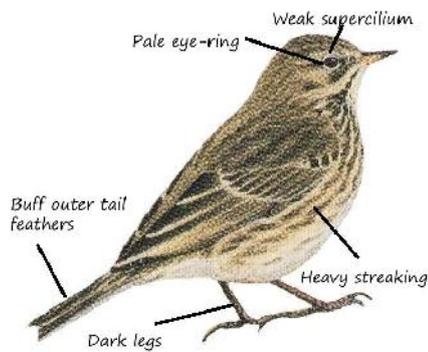
Dipper

Dippers often move from their upland rivers down to lower lying streams in winter. Try the River Taff at Blackweir and the Ogmere, in the centre of Bridgend. A very good location to see them is from the bridge over the Taff Fawr, just before entering the Garwnant Forestry Centre.

Common Bulbul

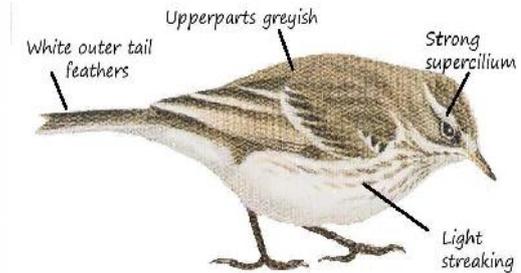
Book a holiday to Morocco 😊

CONFUSION SPECIES - ROCK & WATER PIPIT



< Rock Pipit

Water Pipit >



Pictures adapted from the Macmillan Field Guide

This time we are looking at winter Rock and Water Pipits. They were only “split” in to different species in 1986. Before starting to discuss Rock and Water Pipits, we need to separate them from Meadow Pipit. Start with the legs. If the bird you are observing has orange/pink legs, then it is likely to be a Meadow Pipit. (Other rarer pipits have orange or pink legs but we haven’t got room to discuss these here.) Meadows are generally brighter in colour and more stripy than the other two pipits under discussion. Meadow Pipits are smaller than the other two at 14 - 15½ cm cf. 15½ - 17 cm. OK, so you’ve dismissed Meadow Pipit, what next?

Rock Pipits are sturdy looking birds and often sit upright. The legs are dark, as is the bill, which is quite long. Look for the narrow white eye-ring, which may appear broken. The supercilium is creamy buff and is quite subdued. The outer tail feathers are buff or dirty grey and the under parts are pale grey with heavy streaking, often reaching down to the belly. The upperparts are dark olive-brown. You may be able to discern creamy-buff wing bars but these are often indistinct. The call is a shrill *pseep* and is more strident than Meadow Pipit or Water Pipit (see Mike Pointon’s photo on page 14).

Water Pipits are winter visitors and often occupy similar habitats to Rock Pipits i.e. rocky coastlines, however Water Pipits will often perch in bushes, which is rare in Rock Pipits. They are easily flushed, giving a *fist* call as they fly off. They are smarter looking birds than Rock Pipits, with grey-brown upperparts and white under parts. Streaking is confined to the breast and flanks. The outstanding feature is the white supercilium, which stretches from the bill, over the eye down to the nape. Both the wing bars and outer tail feathers are white. If you come across a Water Pipit in late winter, they may be starting to attain their breeding plumage, showing a peachy breast and blue-grey head.

Try the lower Ogmore river or Rumney Great Wharf for these species. One was reported at Aberthaw, earlier in the season. A Water Pipit used to visit the spillway at Llwyn - onn Reservoir in past winters but hasn’t been reported there recently.

There is a further confusion - the *littoralis* ssp of Rock Pipit, which has a marked supercilium. It is however very rare in our area.

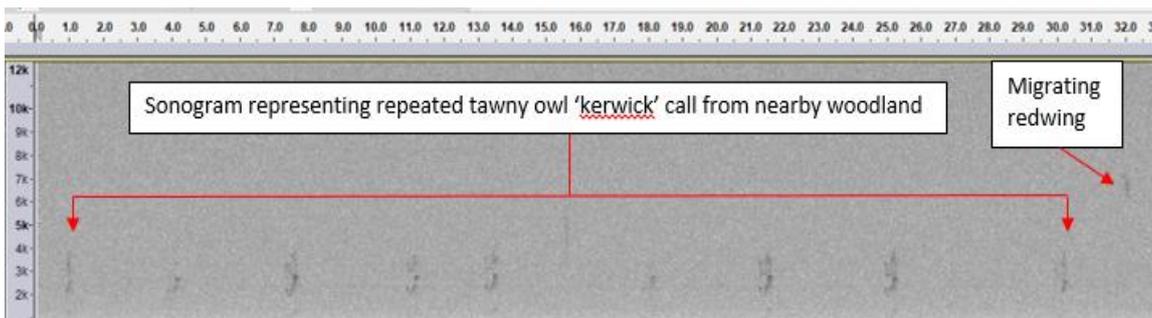
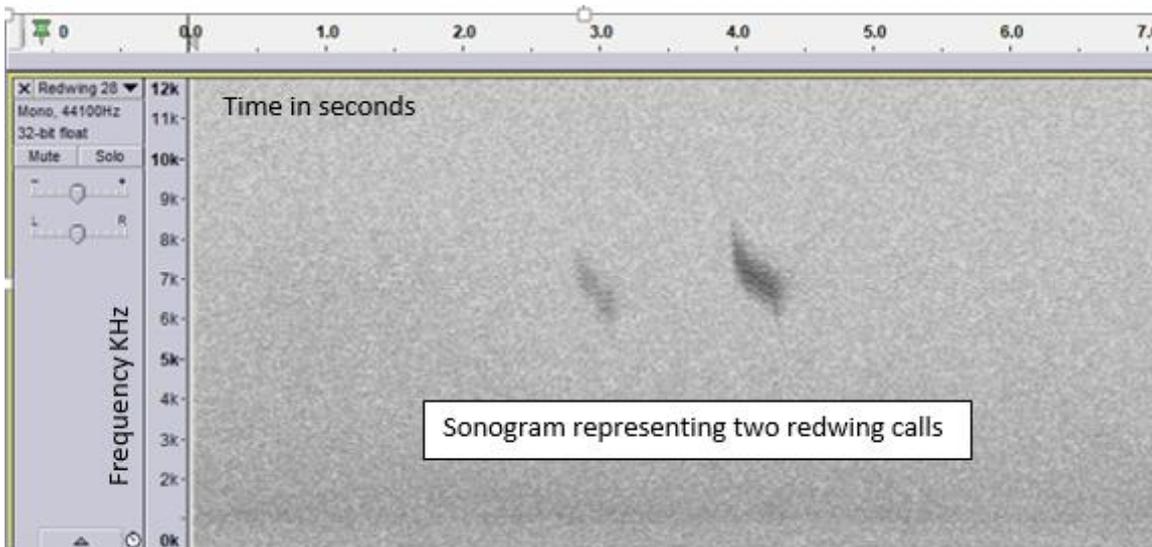
BIRDING WITH THE LIGHTS OFF - *recording nocturnal migration*

Migration holds a universal fascination for birders; be it eager anticipation for the arrival of rarities in spring and autumn or the wonder of watching the progress of geo-locator tagged cuckoos as they move between the UK and Africa. Many birders experience of nocturnal migration is limited to cupping an ear to the sky on a clear autumn night to note the 'seep' calls of redwing passing overhead. A variety of species (including grebes, coots, waders, robins, chats and thrushes) migrate at night; largely unnoticed. Sound recording is a different way to experience this marvel of nature, adding a new dimension to birding.

This basic guide will outline how you can secure a view into this secret world without breaking the bank or the need for anything beyond basic technical aptitude. Much of what is presented here has been gleaned from others; I am an enthusiastic novice having started to explore sound recording a couple of years ago, inspired by the work of the Sound Approach team (Soundapproach.co.uk). I searched the internet for information and guidance on how to get started but was soon overwhelmed by the baffling array of equipment, technical terminology and prohibitively expensive recording devices. The idea of recording was put on the back burner until quite recently when I found, via Twitter, that Joe Stockwell had been recording migrants (including Ortolan!) from locations in Dorset. I caught up with Joe on the annual GBC weekend at Portland Bird Observatory this October and he gave me some straightforward advice on how to get started on making quality recordings for a modest outlay. It is possible to spend upwards of £800 on a parabolic microphone set up (Telenga produce top end gear) and thousands on professional recording devices but good results can be achieved from spending considerably less.

The basic elements to get started are threefold; a microphone, recording device and a computer programme to analyse recordings. For the purpose of this introductory piece I won't go into any technical stuff but basically you can either use a standalone directional shotgun or an omni / cardioid microphone with a parabolic dish. I purchased a shotgun microphone (MOVO VXR40) for under £50 and set this up on an old Slik tripod I found in a charity shop in Cardiff for the princely sum of £7.

It is possible to purchase a very good recording device for about £70, the Tascam DR-05 was recommended to me but as is often the case serendipity stepped in and I was given a Roland Edirol R-09HR that was gathering dust in an office store cupboard. It has a retro look but works really well. Any device needs the capability to record in MP3 format to enable easy sound analysis and hassle free uploading. Software to playback and analyse recordings is free, I use Audacity but Raven Lite is also apparently good and widely used. Recording is simple. Just connect the microphone to the recording device, point the microphone to the open sky and press start! Avoid nights when rain is predicted as this could ruin your equipment and recordings will be poor anyway. I run a long 3.5mm cable from the microphone into the house where the recording device is powered from the mains and is safe from the elements. If you go down the parabolic route there is no need to spend a fortune on a bespoke dish, I have seen a set up using a plastic drain pipe as a base and an adapted fruit bowl forming the dish!



The fun bit comes when analysing the recording! There are plenty of guides on the internet to using Audacity and although I'm a bit of a Luddite I got the hang of it in a few hours. The recording uploaded to Audacity from your SD card can be displayed as a sonogram and you can then work systematically through the recording, listening for calls and the associated sonogram representation.

A recording of 8 hours may take about an hour or so to search through and a pair of decent over ear headphones is recommended. Once you spot a calling bird you can clean up the recording to remove background noise and 'spikes' caused by extraneous sounds and then save to your computer and /or upload to Xeno-Canto, a fantastic database of recordings of birds from all over the world. Use the 'advanced search' function to locate my name and you can see/hear my first recordings of redwing and tawny owl. It gives an indication as to how a good quality recording can be obtained with minimal skill, experience or outlay.

Living adjacent to a farm I have recorded sheep, cockerel and cow, however I have also recorded migrating redwing, robin, song thrush and blackbird passing over my house near Caerphilly this autumn. Each species has a distinctive call which, with a little practice, can be recognised from the sonogram. It is like starting out birding all over again! Bring on the Ortolan (or much more likely a coot)!!

Resources:

Sound recording analysis/ discussion

Joe-stockwell.blogspot.com - *Some short videos on recording/ Audacity*

<http://birdsoundsblog.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Nocturnal> - *A brief guide to Audacity recording*

<https://soundapproach.co.uk> - *In depth analysis and experts in the field*

Software

Raven lite - www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/raven/Raven

Audacity - www.audacityteam.org

Sonograms

Birds-in-flight.net - *Great flight photos and sonograms to view*

www.xeno-canto.org - *The go to resource for bird recordings/ sonograms*

Trevor Fletcher

PHOTO GALLERY



We just had to include one of the Rock Thrush from Blaenavon © Rhos Williams



Rock Pipit in Cardiff Bay © Mike Pointon



Shoveler on Roath Park Lake © Mike Pointon



Slavonian Grebes on Kenfig Pool © Mike Cram



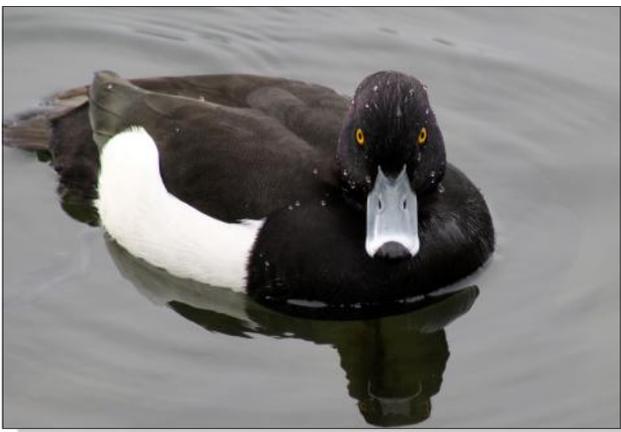
Common Gull at Kenfig © Stuart Morton



Reed Bunting at Cosmeston © Annie Irving



Whooper Swan at Kenfig © Mike Cram



Tufted Duck at Cosmeston © Annie Irving



Hawfinch in Margam Park © Emma Cram

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

The species list for all trips in this current bird club year is standing at 198. An impressive total, I think you'll agree.

Portland Bird Observatory - 13th - 15th October 2017

Fifteen club members set off for the bird observatory, eagerly anticipating a weekend searching for autumnal migrants ... and we weren't to be disappointed. Stopping off at Maiden Castle, Corn Bunting, Golden Plover and Yellowhammer were seen. Our next stop was Lodmoor, where a long staying Lesser Yellowlegs was the star bird. This site proved very productive with Marsh Harrier, Peregrine, Great White Egret, Spoonbill, Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Water Rail and Little Stint amongst the supporting cast. Ferry-bridge had Sandwich Tern, plus both Pale and Dark-bellied Brent Geese. What a start to the trip and we hadn't even reached the Obs yet.

At Portland there was a steady flow of migrants. The star bird was undoubtedly the Rustic Bunting that Martin Cade, the warden, caught in the mist nets. It was the first ever ringed at Portland. Four Hawfinches were unexpected. There were Firecrests all over the place. On the Sunday morning, they caught and ringed 68 in the Obs. garden - another record for the site. We also managed to see a Yellow-browed Warbler in the garden.

Other sightings included Whinchat, Black Redstart and Great Skua. We did however miss a few birds - a Radde's Warbler was ringed just after we'd left and Sooty Shearwaters were seen offshore.

We decided to visit RSPB Arne on the Sunday afternoon in search of a long staying Stilt Sandpiper. We saw Dartford Warbler en route to the wader viewpoint. The light wasn't great and we struggled to pick out the Stilt Sandpiper. However John Duffy, Tim Adcock and I went around to the other side of the estuary where the light was better and we managed to see the bird in the company of three Curlew Sandpipers. A cracking weekend with around 120 species logged. Thanks to John Wilson for organising it all.



A bird in the hand is
Firecrest and Rustic Bunting from
Portland Observatory © Alan Rosney

Labrador Bay & Dawlish - Sunday 12th November

Fourteen participants braved the icy winds for this trip to South Devon.

We began at RSPB Labrador Bay, a reserve specially managed for Cirl Buntings. The strong winds meant many of the smaller passerines were keeping low but Tim Adcock eventually spotted a lovely male Cirl Bunting in one of the hedgerow bushes. This was then joined by two more. A great start to our trip. Off-shore, there were several Gannets patrolling the coastal waters.

Onwards to Dawlish. We quickly got on to three divers fairly close in - two Red-throated and a Great Northern. Then a really squally shower hit us, so we headed for the hide. From here, we saw plenty of Brent Geese, Wigeon, Oystercatchers, Dunlin, Sanderling, Grey Plover plus lower numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits, Great Black-backed Gulls, Curlews and Ringed Plovers. Sadly we couldn't locate the Pale-bellied Brents and Slavonian Grebe that had been reported earlier.

On our return walk we visited the ponds near the reserve centre and saw Water Rail and Common Snipe. As we had about an hour's daylight left we decided to visit Powderham, where we added Common Gull and Black-tailed Godwit to our day list.

Parc Cwm Darran & Rhaslas Pond - Wednesday 29th November

The day dawned bright and sunny with near freezing temperatures. We gathered in the car park at Parc Cwm Darran and set off on the woodland walk which produced Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Song Thrush, Buzzard, and Long-tailed Tit. Above us both Sparrowhawk and Kestrel showed well. From here we walked around the lake, where a drake Goosander was showing well. Perhaps the best find was a lovely male Crossbill, picked out by Lee Taswell. It stayed for a long while, giving all the participants great views. The waterfall was particularly appealing. Photo © Alan Rosney



After lunch we headed up to Rhaslas Pond. It was particularly chilly up on top, with a biting wind blowing. A couple of Fieldfare were on the path, near the car park and a Stonechat briefly showed in this area too. We approached the pond slowly to avoid disturbing the birds. The use of telescopes was very useful here. We initially viewed the south-west corner, where Goosander, Goldeneye, Wigeon, Great Crested Grebe and Tufted Duck were seen. Parts of the pond are not viewable from the path, so we moved round to another vantage point and saw Mallard and Mute Swan, plus several more Goosanders. Elsewhere a Red Kite and a Raven were patrolling the hillside. The latter appeared to be displaying. A good day's birding with 46 species logged in all. Thanks to the eleven participants and to Lee Taswell for his local knowledge.



Forest Farm & Cardiff Bay - Wednesday 13th December

We were greeted by monsoon like conditions as we gathered in the main car park at Forest Farm. Luckily there are hides available, so we quickly headed for the barn hide, behind the reserve offices. Remarkably the first bird we saw was a very obliging Kingfisher, that was checking out the small pond. On the feeders were a good selection of birds, including a lovely male Bullfinch. In the fields were both Song and Mistle Thrushes but no winter thrushes.

The weather eased a little allowing us to press on to the other hides. A very obliging Water Rail was patrolling the reed bed and another Kingfisher flashed by. Five Snipe showed well at the back of the pools. Also here were Sparrowhawk, Buzzard and Raven. We walked around to the canal and saw both Dipper and a flock of Siskins en route.

On our return leg we decided to follow the Taff. (There was a great commotion there, with helicopters and police searching for an unidentified object that had been reported in the river - thankfully a false alarm). Nevertheless we saw a couple of relatively close Goosanders (m & f). The rain returned, so we beat a hasty retreat to the car park, just in time to see a Peregrine fly over. Most of the seven participants were rather damp by this time, so we opted to curtail the day at this point. Cardiff Bay wouldn't have afforded any shelter and the skies were looking very threatening.

Kenfig monthly walks

Our Saturday morning Kenfig walks on 3rd Saturday of each month, come rain or shine and starting at 9 a.m. from the reserve centre, have proved to be very popular again during 2017. A good variety of species have been seen, including such goodies as Purple Heron, Marsh Harrier, Slavonian Grebe, Arctic and Black Tern and even a Chough.

Intended for birders of all abilities and open to both GBC members and non-members, they are a great way to learn more about our resident and migrant birds, as well as enabling us to see Kenfig NNR (especially the Pool) in a variety of guises through the seasons.

The walk generally lasts around 2 - 3 hours and is over variable terrain, which might include sand dunes, some boggy ground and stiles occasionally. Why not make a New Year's resolution to come along? You'll receive a warm welcome. The table shows the number of participants (row A) and the number of species seen (row B) this year. Thanks to Strinda and Jean for leading.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
A	n/a	n/a	14	21	25	22	22	22	21	10	11	20
B	49	47	43	55	44	46	46	44	53	39	37	44



INDOOR MEETINGS

Galapagos & Ecuador - John Wilson

John gave the 31 attendees a great show, featuring some very special locations, which John and Anne visited in May 2016. There were some stunning shots of the unique wildlife of the islands. Of particular interest were the Darwin finches, all of which are adapted to fit a particular niche in the environment. Some spectacular seabirds were featured as well as sea lions, sharks, turtles, tortoises and iguanas.

The second half of the presentation was about the birds they encountered on a post-tour extension to the Andes near Quito. The birds were truly spectacular with colourful humming birds, tanagers, aracarís, antpittas etc. Many thanks to John for putting the show together.

Chile, Patagonia & Tierra del Fuego - Richard Smith

We were taken on a chilly trip to Chile with Richard Smith. The undoubted highlight of his trip was an encounter with a family of Pumas. We were treated to some spectacular images of these majestic animals. There were, of course, birds as well. We saw a colony of King Penguins plus a plethora of ducks and geese. As Richard said, "it was like a trip to Slimbridge." I particularly liked the shots of Torrent Ducks.

Another highlight was seeing Andean Condors, both in flight and perched on a rocky outcrop. The scenery was quite stark, with glaciers, lakes, waterfalls and volcanic peaks - beautiful nonetheless. Richard must have enjoyed it - he's planning another visit, in spring, next time. Thanks, Richard.

UNKNOWN WALES CONFERENCE 2017

We attended this event, run by the South and West Wales Wildlife Trusts and the National Museum of Wales, on behalf of the club.

Seven presentations, ranging from bryozoans, worms, sea grasses, natterjack toads, cetaceans and a new field site at Nant Bran, to the highlight for us, a very entertaining and informative talk by Stephen Roberts of the Gwent Ornithological Society on honey buzzards in Wales, made for a very enjoyable and busy day.

The Reardon Smith Lecture Theatre at Cardiff Museum was an excellent venue for this well organised, well attended conference, with good sound and a huge screen and there was lots of interest in our stand at lunchtime, attracting at least one new member. Looking forward to next year.

Jean and Rod Haslam



BTO NEWS

The State of the UK's Birds, 2017

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers across the UK, the latest SUKB is now available. Some of our summer migrants are arriving earlier, the distributions of others are moving north and some are just beginning to colonise. More details: <https://www.bto.org/research-data-services/publications/state-uk-birds/2017/state-uk-birds-2017>

Heronries Census

The Heronries Census is the world's longest running single species bird survey and turns 90 years-old and it will be great to get maximum coverage locally and across the UK. We have 8 known heronries in our area but we are keen to learn of and monitor any heron nesting attempts, including single nest sites.

The survey itself is straightforward. Observers count occupied nests in heronries throughout the UK. Little Egrets and any other colonial herons are fully included in the survey and counts of Cormorant nests at heronries are also encouraged. If nests cannot be counted, a note of whether a heronry is active or not in a particular season is of value. – just count all the nests in a heronry and estimate how many are occupied. If you can make more than one visit it ensures you catch all the early or late breeders.

If you know of a site where herons breed and are willing to monitor it during the breeding season, then please contact Wayne. More details: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/heronries-census>

Project Owl

It's fair to say that we don't know enough about our owls. With some funding and great surveys however, that could be due to change. BTO is currently securing funding to run a number of surveys over the next few years and more details will emerge soon.

There are six main objectives but what can be achieved over the next couple of years depends very much on the success of the appeal. Here's a brief run-down of those objectives (all dependent on funding):

1. Mass participation study of Tawny Owl, repeating the approach adopted in 2005/06 but securing more information on local habitat. Planned for autumn 2018.

2. Provide data on Tawny Owl numbers in key squares using methods which can be repeated in future, so that population change may be assessed accurately and to compare numbers in different areas and habitats. This will involve repeating and expanding on, previous survey methods. Planned for autumn 2018.



3. Further develop networks of volunteers to secure more and better information on demographic parameters that will tell us about clutch size, brood size, laying date and adult survival. These will cover Barn Owl, Little Owl and Tawny Owl.
4. Work with local groups to support their current monitoring; including sharing ideas and learning. We will also look at the connections between our volunteers and local community groups responsible for sites with breeding owls.
5. Build on the pilot research being carried out on Short-eared Owls in Scotland to deliver a better understanding of home range, habitat use and year-round movements.
6. Gain a better understanding of the ecological requirements of the very secretive Long-eared Owl by testing field methods and by then building the skills and interest of volunteers to promote more detailed studies in those parts of Britain and Ireland of particular importance to the species.

Please let Wayne know what you think about Project Owl. We got most or all owl species of in our region, at some time or another. It will be great to know more about them, so that conservation action can be advised and supported by sound research.

Bird winners and losers

The 2017 BirdTrends report has just been published and highlights the rapid and continuing decline of our Greenfinch population, which has declined by 59% in just ten years. The annual BirdTrends report is a one-stop shop for information about the population status of the common breeding birds of the wider UK countryside. The data covered in the report were gathered by thousands of volunteer 'citizen scientists' looking out for birds in every habitat – from the streets of Cardiff to the slopes of Snowdonia and beyond
More details: <https://www.bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2017>

Wayne Morris, BTO Regional Representative

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Daniel Jenkins-Jones, BTO Assistant Regional

Representative & WeBs local organiser

eastglamwebs@gmail.com



FUTURE EVENTS

Field trips Contact John Wilson at least 7 days before the due date:

Wednesday 24th January	- Rumney Great Wharf
Wednesday 7th February-	- Ogmore & environs
Sunday 25th February	- Tregaron
Wednesday 7th March	- Forest of Dean
Sunday 25th March	- WWT Penclacwyd

Indoor meetings Held at the Kenfig Reserve Centre at 7.45 p.m.:

Tuesday 6th February	- Rio Grande Birding - Dave Rich * <i>N.B.- change to programme</i>
Tuesday 6th March	- The mystery of disappearing flycatchers - Dr Rob Thomas
Tuesday 24th April	- AGM & quiz

Monthly walk - Kenfig NNR

Held on the third Saturday of the month. Meet at the Reserve Centre at 9 a.m. For more details please contact David Carrington or Strinda Davies.

CONTACT DETAILS

See the GBC website for further details - email addresses etc

Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	Bird Report Editor/Field Trips
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Membership Sec/Newsletter	Indoor Meetings Organiser	Publicity Officer	Mapmate Hub
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