



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2017

glamorganbirds.com
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Lesser Yellowlegs - an excellent find by Neil Donaghy at Kenfig. Photo © Paul Roberts



Chiffchaff at Cosmeston © Della Lack



Grey Heron in Cardiff Bay © Hayden Lack



Grey Phalarope on the Ogmore © Richard Smith

SUBMISSION DEADLINE for the next newsletter is **Friday 22nd December**

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Welcome to the autumn edition of the GBC newsletter. The autumn migration seems a little early this year and there have been some good finds, especially the Lesser Yellowlegs, which was a first for East Glamorgan and only the second Glamorgan record. Well done to the finder, Neil Donaghy, who got the news out quickly. Sadly it only stayed for a short while. Not so with the Grey Phalarope that graced the Ogmore River. It lingered for some days, giving many people the opportunity to see it.

In this edition, apart from our regular sections, we have a couple of articles from GBC birders, who get out and work their local patch. Steve Young, a former County Recorder, has kept notes of his local patch for over 50 years. He has written us an article summarising the species he has recorded there. (I've said in the past, we really should be archiving such data). Paul Seligman has been out recording the House Martins in Cardiff Bay once more. It can't be an easy task, yet Paul has produced some valuable data, which I am sure will feed in to the on-going BTO survey of the species.

The Rutland Bird Fair is now a very large annual gathering for birders from all around the world. I'm sure many of you have attended. Some time ago, I was having a conversation with Rob Parry (formerly of SWWWT) about the lack of Welsh stands at the event. This was addressed this year, with the Welsh Ornithological Society setting up a stand. Many thanks to Giles Pepler for supplying some photos - see page 5. Another item that arose from a visit to the Bird Fair is the "Birding for All" article on page 14, provided once more by Paul Seligman. Very thought provoking. Perhaps we should all be assessing our local reserves.

The autumn conference season is upon us once more. The club will be represented at the Unknown Wales Conference on October 28th at the National Museum in Cardiff. Other conferences to which we shall be sending a delegate are the WOS Conference in Monmouth in early November and the Curlew Workshop in Builth Wells in January. There are advertisements on pages 5 & 6, if you're interested in attending.

I recently had the pleasure of representing GBC at the launch of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society. There is an excellent exhibition on the society's history in "The Cardiff Story" building in the Hayes, which will be there for at least three months (until late November). I was fascinated to see some of the posters from by-gone times. For example, the Society has had such illustrious speakers as Winston Churchill and Fridtjof Nansen. Why not pop in and have a look if you're in town?

John Wilson has been working hard on the 2016 Bird Report. An innovation this year has been the inclusion of red and amber listed species in the species accounts. Phil Bristow, the County Recorder has written his introduction. It is currently with the printer and should be with you very soon.

Alan Rosney



RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

July 2017

Highlights: The ringed Caspian Tern which first arrived back in June made a surprise return to Kenfig (24th), having been on a tour of various locations in eastern England in the meantime. A Black Kite was watched for several minutes over Ewenny Down (24th). A Cattle Egret was photographed in a field south of Llantwit Major (4th). A Great White Egret graced Roath Park Lake (5th). Llanilid held a Wood Sandpiper (9th).

A Bittern at Kenfig river mouth (2nd) was somewhat unseasonal. Little Egrets were reported from Roath Park Lake, Ogmere Estuary and Barry. The only Storm Petrel was at Porthcawl. A flock of nine Common Scoters (26th) and a Marsh Harrier (27th) were recorded at Rhaslas Pond, with another Marsh Harrier noted over Roath (6th). Waders included Little Ringed Plover, three Black-tailed Godwits and up to 14 Common Sandpipers at Ogmere Estuary, a flock of 15 Common Sandpipers at Roath Park Lake and a Green Sandpiper at Llanilid. Yellow-legged Gulls occurred at Cosmeston and Caerphilly Castle Moat. Three Sandwich Terns dropped in at Ogmere river mouth. Nightjars were at Llanwonno and Mynydd Eglwysilan. A family party of Choughs was at Southerndown.

August 2017

Highlights: A small calidrid at Sully Island (12th- 13th), initially it was thought to be a Little Stint but was subsequently re-identified as an adult Semipalmated Sandpiper, the third for the recording area. A Bonaparte's Gull was on the River Taff at Bute Park, Cardiff (12th). A Cattle Egret was a first site record at Ogmere Estuary (13th). A juvenile Garganey lingered at Kenfig Pool.

Sea watching efforts were rewarded with five Storm Petrels, two Arctic Skuas and a Great Skua off Lavernock, plus another Great Skua passing both Porthcawl and Kenfig. Further sightings at Kenfig included Little Ringed Plover, Greenshank and Chough (the latter at Sker). A Greenshank and 10 Goosanders were at Ogmere Estuary. A Hobby was at Llanishen Reservoir. Five Red Grouse were located at a site in the north of the county. Cuckoos passed through at Parc Slip and Merthyr Mawr Warren. Migrant Pied Flycatchers were noted at Lanlay Meadow, Hamadryad Park, Cefn Hirgoed and Pant Norton.

September 2017

Kenfig: A Lesser Yellowlegs was a brief visitor to the east pool shore (3rd). This represents only the second Glamorgan record, following one at Oxwich Marsh in 1953. Further sightings in the vicinity of the pool were Firecrest (15th), two Pintail, three Ruff (two on 16th, one on 29th), several Black Terns and up to six Arctic Terns. Seabird highlights from Sker, following gales were Leach's Petrel, Sabine's Gull and two Grey Phalaropes. A group of four Arctic Skuas was noted taking off from Kenfig Sands (29th).

Other Sites: Sea watching efforts were rewarded by Leach's Petrel, two Sabine's Gulls and a Great Northern Diver off Southerndown; Leach's Petrel and Sabine's Gull from Porthcawl; plus a Great Skua and at least four Arctic Skuas past Lavernock. Windblown Grey Phalaropes arrived at Ogmere



Estuary (one on the 12th, joined by a second on the 13th) and Lisvane Reservoir (14th). A Garganey turned up at Roath Park Lake (29th). A Ruff was at Rhaslas Pond (12th). Waders at Ogmere Estuary included Knot, Greenshank and Green Sandpiper. Cardiff Bay held two Black Terns and an Arctic Tern, another Black Tern was at Lisvane Reservoir, with an Arctic Tern also at Ogmere Estuary. Two Hen Harriers and a Hobby were observed at Mynydd Eglwysilan. Further Hobbies were logged at Lisvane Reservoir, Cosmeston, Rumney Great Wharf and Dunraven, where a Merlin was also found. A number of late Swift reports were received, the latest being one at Canton, Cardiff (23rd). A Firecrest was seen at Llanilid (14th). Five Choughs were at Dunraven.

Paul Roberts

CLUB NEWS

Members' News

Welcome back to John Loyn from Thornhill, John Griffiths from Penarth and Barrie & Sally Gardiner from St Athan. New members include Jan Stoneman from Pyle, Philip Leyshon from Treorchy, David Knapp from Rugby and Stuart and Sue Morton from Bridgend. Welcome one and all.

Committee Update

The committee has met four times since the last newsletter:

- Following the discussion about the use of some of our cash reserve at the AGM, the committee examined several proposals. We decided to concentrate our efforts on local projects. We have decided to make donations to the following : (1) The Gower Bird Hospital, (2) New nets for the Kenfig Ringing Group (3) Taf Fechan Nature Reserve, for equipment hire, (4) Purchase of "mini" binoculars for children to use on GBC walks/events and (5) Purchase of some berry bearing trees for the car park area at Kenfig. If you've got ideas/projects in mind. Please get in touch.
- Andrew Bevan has been undertaking a review of the club's insurance policy
- A sub-committee has met to look at the HLF Swift tower bid
- Strinda Davies has looked in to linking with CVC (County Voluntary Councils) and Interlink, which give training, advice and guidance for charities
- Strinda and Jean have looked in to the club's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- The general committee have undertaken the annual review of the club's H & S Policy
- Discussions on the drop in usage of the Sightings Page on the website were held
- Contact has been made with local farms with a view to fostering links, erecting bird boxes etc. e.g. Strinda and I visited Ty Tanglwyst Farm in South Cornelly and the farmer is keen to install boxes on his land and wishes to re-instate an overgrown pond. Also Paul Roberts has contacted Slade Farm in Southerndown with an offer to help with the farmland bird count.
- It was agreed that the club should be represented at forthcoming events - the Unknown Wales Conference, the WOS Conference and the Curlew Workshop
- The club's notice boards are in a bad state of repair. Wayne Morris has costed a replacement

Alan Rosney



WOS (WELSH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY) CONFERENCE

National Conference 2017

Welsh Ornithological Society / Cymdeithas Adaryddol Cymru

Raptor Conservation in Wales

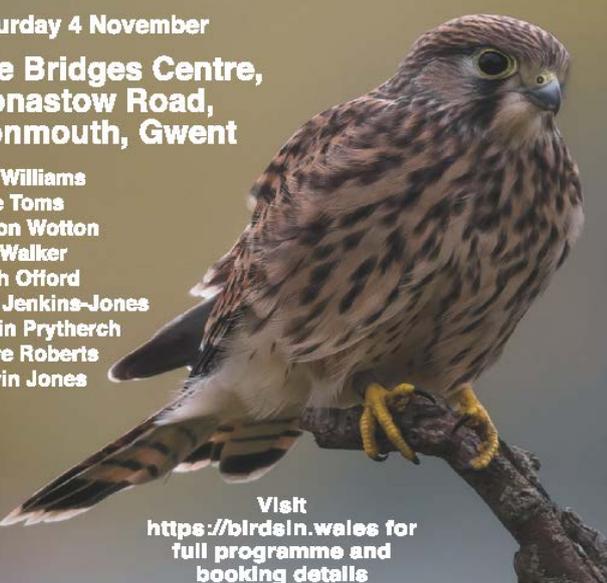
Saturday 4 November

The Bridges Centre, Wonastow Road, Monmouth, Gwent

Iolo Williams
Mike Toms
Simon Wotton
Lee Walker
Keith Offord
Dan Jenkins-Jones
Robin Prytherch
Steve Roberts
Kelvin Jones

Visit <https://birdsln.wales> for full programme and booking details

In association with BTO, yn rhoi cartref i fyfyr natur, giving nature a home



Welsh Ornithological Society / Cymdeithas Adaryddol Cymru

Wales Conference 2017
the gathering for birdwatchers in Wales

Saturday 4 November, Monmouth, Gwent

The Bridges Centre, Wonastow Road, Monmouth NP25 5AS

Raptor Conservation in Wales

Join us for a great day, including:

- Results from the 2016 UK Hen Harrier survey – Simon Wotton
- Understanding Owls – filling the gaps in our knowledge – Mike Toms
- Raptor monitoring on the Welsh uplands – Keith Offord
- The Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme: citizen science translated into policy and regulation – Lee Walker
- Buzzards in North Somerset – Robin Prytherch
- Latest news from BTO Cymru and RSPB Cymru
- Finding breeding raptors – Steve Roberts

Iolo Williams gives the opening address, and presents the WOS Lifetime Achievement Award and the Derek Moore Student Research Award.

There is a good car park at the Centre and an additional car park across the road.

Conference fee includes coffee, lunch and tea for ticket holders booked in advance. We have vegetarian options for lunch. If you have other requirements, please let us know when booking. Non-members who join WOS at the conference will receive £5 discount on first year's subscription.

Inspiring the next generation: limited number of free places for 16-25 year olds – see our website

Send this section with payment (£25 WOS members, £30 non-members) no later than Friday 27 October 2017, to WOS, c/o Anne Brenchley, 43 Black Brook, Sychdyn, Mold CH7 6LT (annebrenchley@imsab.myzen.co.uk).

Please print clearly and include your first name(s) that will appear on your name badge

Name(s)..... I am a member of WOS Yes / No

Address..... Tel.....

Email address:.....

Specialist food requirement.....

I enclose a cheque for £..... (payable to 'Welsh Ornithological Society')

RUTLAND BIRD FAIR

WOS, of which we are an affiliate, decided to take a stall to the Bird fair at Rutland Water this year. Sadly, no-one from GBC was available to go along, however we did provide some promotional material for the stall. The photos, provided by Giles Pepler, show the stall and some of the visitors.





CURLEW WORKSHOP



One-Day Workshop on the status and future of the Curlew in Wales Wednesday 24th January 2018

We would like to invite you to the **Hafod a Hendre, the Royal Welsh Showground Conference Centre, Builth Wells**, to discuss the future of the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* in Wales. This is part of a series of Curlew Workshops aimed at aiding the recovery of the bird nationwide.

Both breeding and wintering populations of Curlew are declining at an alarming rate throughout the British Isles and the species has recently been added to the Red List of endangered species and is considered Near Threatened, having already vanished as a breeding bird from large parts of the lowlands. Changes in farming practices, predation and human disturbance are the most commonly highlighted factors. This workshop will bring together various interested parties (field workers, conservation professionals, planners, land-owners and farmers) to hear what is happening in different nesting areas in Wales, and to find practical ways to conserve and extend the range of this genuinely iconic and widely-loved species.

TV presenter Iolo Williams will open the day and the morning will consist of a series of short presentations on Curlew projects, followed by targeted panel discussions on specific issues, where the audience will be encouraged to take part. Practical ideas and solutions will be recorded and distributed after the meeting. A simple buffet lunch will be provided.

We would value your presence at this workshop, which is a vital step towards reversing the declining trend of Curlews in Britain. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Please use the link below to register your attendance.

An agenda will be sent out in December. We hope to see you on 24th January 2018.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/welsh-curlew-workshop-tickets-36251733912>

Please contact Mary Colwell - Curlew Media, mary@curlewmedia.com or Mike Smart - smartmike143@gmail.com with any queries.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING Why not order a piece of GBC merchandise as a present? Hoodies, fleeces, polos and sweatshirts are available in bottle green with the GBC logo on the left breast. Unfortunately our suppliers have informed us that prices are going up. Please contact Alan Rosney for an up to date price list.



SWIFT PROJECT UPDATE

See our blog: glamorganswiftchampions.blogspot.co.uk

Obviously the Swifts have left our shores but the work on the Swift Project continues. Meetings have been held with various groups:

- Last summer, Annie Irving alerted that Swifts were prospecting around her local church, Trinity in Penarth. Having got in touch, we met representatives from the church, who were in principle, agreeable to putting some Swift boxes inside their tower. (Pictures on the blog)
- A housing association in Cardiff is hoping to put some Swift bricks in their properties during refurbishment. We are not in a position to divulge where it is yet but we live in hope.
- Further meetings have been held with the RSPB and Cardiff Harbour Authority about a potential Swift tower being built in Cardiff Bay. Also Ceri Jones has been advising on another possibility in Cadoxton Ponds.

And now the bad news... Paul Virgin, the Ranger in Parc Taf Bargoed, has told us that the Swift tower, erected by Merthyr Council, has been vandalised. He believes that the vandals thought that the nest boxes contained a CCTV camera and they wished to destroy it.

BIRDING IN GLAMORGAN

In 2009, we published a guide to bird watching sites in Glamorgan, entitled "Birding in Glamorgan." There have been requests for an update, which is being considered. In the mean time, John Wilson has put the text and maps on to the club website as a free resource. Some of the information is dated (e.g. there is no longer access to the Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir) but it may be useful for reference. Go to <Resources> <Documents> page. As the file is 61MB, the download link is to the GBC Google Drive because we have limited storage on our web site.

TAWNY OWL BOXES



Andrew Bevan has erected the two Tawny Owl boxes in Coed Craig Ruperra i.e. those built by Pencoed College students. The intention was to put them up last spring but it was a little late in the season. Tawny Owls are early nesters, so it was decided to put them up at the end of the summer. Andrew did a lot of research in to the best locations for the boxes. Apparently they need to be near overhanging branches so that the chicks can clamber out. Advice varied as to how close they need to be to other trees. Andrew decided to try one close to a clearing with the other in more closed woodland. It'll be interesting to see if they're used



WHERE CAN I SEE

Chough

Your best chances of seeing Chough are on the Heritage Coast. They may be seen anywhere from Llantwit Major up to the Ogmore Estuary (although we did see one at Kenfig on a recent GBC walk). Listen out for their mewling calls overhead. If you are unlucky here, try Gower. They are fairly regular on the short coastal turf around Fall Bay and Worms Head.

Short-eared Owl

Numbers can vary, year on year, depending upon the availability of prey. Good numbers can move through on passage in autumn. Two years ago we had several over-wintering on the Wentlooge Levels. The two best sites are undoubtedly Rumney Great Wharf and Kenfig, although they are not as easy to see at the latter due to the hummocky nature of the ground. (We've got a club trip visiting RGW in January).

Goosander

They appear to be increasingly seen in our area in recent winters. Probably the best spot to try for them is the River Ogmore. They can often be seen up-stream of Portobello. Elsewhere they have been seen in Cardiff Bay.

Jack Snipe

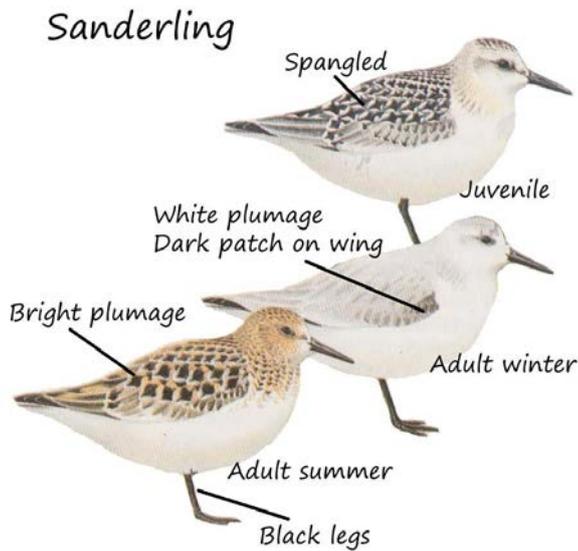
These winter visitors are probably commoner than you'd think. Their habit of sitting tight means that they are much more difficult to spot than their commoner cousins. You'll need to get your wellies on and do a bit of bog-snorkelling (not really). A walk around Green Point at the mouth of the River Rhymney might yield results. Try the flood plains of the Taff, Ely and Thaw as well. We sometimes see one or two on the GBC trip to Whiteford on Gower. (There's a trip in early January).

Starling murmurations

The spectacular evening gatherings of Starlings are well worth seeking out. Their mesmeric display delights birder and non-birder alike. They tend to roost in reed beds (although I well remember them gathering in the ship yards near my home on Merseyside, when I was a child - a long time ago, admittedly). It is probably best to view them in December and January, when our resident birds have been joined by their continental neighbours, thus swelling their numbers. Kenfig, Cardiff Bay and Newport Wetlands are all worth trying. There have also been reasonable gatherings at Cosmeston on occasions. Out of our area, the RSPB run guided walks to see them in the Somerset Levels at Ham Wall. The difficulty is that the precise location of the murmuration cannot be guaranteed. If you're heading west, a good number gather under Aberystwyth Pier as well.



CONFUSION SPECIES - SANDERLING



In this edition we are not going to compare similar species but examine one species that we might see in a variety of plumages. Let's take a look at the Sanderling.

Most of us are familiar with the little white wader that dashes back and forth on the shore-line, picking up morsels brought in by the waves, reminding us of a clockwork toy. This is the winter plumaged Sanderling. They are probably the only white wader sandpiper that we are likely to encounter. However they can occur in other plumages and aren't always easy to pick out. For example, Mike Pointon and I were birding at Goldcliff last summer when a couple of "odd" waders turned up. We examined them for quite a while before Mike realised that we were watching Sanderlings in breeding plumage.

Not only did they look different, they were behaving differently. There was no sign of the frenetic dashing about, indeed they were behaving more like the Dunlin that they accompanied. The richly patterned upperparts were obvious but the breast band was the clinching feature. According to the text books, males exhibit brighter plumage than females, although the light didn't help us establish their sex.

In this plumage, there is the chance that they might be mistaken for Little Stint. Sanderling however are Dunlin sized and lack the "braces" of the Little Stint. Also, if they fly, Sanderling have a marked white wing bar. Another feature to note, although I admit I've never noticed it, is the lack of a hind toe.

Juvenile birds may also cause confusion. The upperparts are generally dark with white edges to the feathers, giving a spangled appearance. The crown is often dark and there is no discernible breast band.

They are almost always encountered on the coast. A good place to see them in winter is at the Kenfig river mouth. A sizeable flock can often be seen here. They also often roost on Sker rocks near Kenfig. Out of our area, try Blackpill in Swansea Bay. They can occur on inland waters whilst on passage. It always pays to check out all the waders on inland waters.

Alan Rosney

Pictures adapted from the Macmillan Field Guide

NEW WEBSITE

The Friends of Llwynog Park in Bedlinog have launched a website. There are some interesting articles on it, including one by Jim Davies of a dawn chorus survey he undertook last spring



Local Patch Birding: Coed Bychan-St Fagans (ST1277). 50 years on....

My observations and estimates of the breeding bird populations at Coed Bychan were published in the GBC Newsletters of September 1998 and again in April 2015.

I initially carried out a sample survey in Spring 1966 and then more thorough surveys in 1967, 1988, 1997, 2014 and more recently, 50 years after my first survey, in Spring 2017.

The 14 hectare, mainly deciduous woodland, has obviously changed over this period of time particularly in that it ceased to be managed by the late 1970's; the woodland floor became more generally overgrown with fewer healthy, smaller bushes or shrubs, boundary hedges became damaged or lost altogether along parts of the woodland edge. Beyond the area to the east, land which was formerly rough grassland or farmland had been purchased by the local authority in the mid 1960's and soon became covered by the Pentrebanne housing complex. It is impossible to say whether this had any impact on the breeding bird population of the woodland.

The table on the next page is a simple comparison chart showing the changes noted over the fifty year period; the in-between years have showed some variations, many of which fall in line with national changes and range contraction. The figures refer to the estimated number of pairs based on singing males (except Buzzard, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Magpie, Carrion Crow) holding territory present over several separate days during Spring, late April-end May.

Garden Warblers were recorded singing in 1967 (one singing) and 1988 (2 singing) but were probably on passage.

A single Pheasant in 2014 and single Nuthatch in 2017 on one occasion.

26 breeding species were recorded in 1967 with an estimated 101 pairs of birds.

20 breeding species were recorded in 2017 with an estimated 60/61 pairs of birds.

Steve Young

I think you'll agree that Steve has undertaken some very valuable surveys in this woodland. Included in his piece was the following passage: *"Recently the local authority earmarked 900 acres of land, bordering St Fagans for a new "Garden City", which will mean the total destruction of this woodland site". It has never been a sensational wood in respect of the number of species or numbers of breeding pairs but it is the last area of woodland on the western edge of Fairwater.*

Personally I find this very sad. Cardiff is expanding rapidly and there is need for new housing but at what cost?

Ed



	1967	2017
Buzzard	nil	1 pair
Greater Spotted Woodpecker	nil	1 pair
Wren	15	18
Dunnock	5	1
Robin	6	12
Blackbird	10	6
Song Thrush	4	2
Mistle Thrush	1	1
Whitethroat	3	nil
Blackcap	9	3
Chiffchaff	6/7	3
Willow Warbler	7	nil
Goldcrest	1/2	2
Spotted Flycatcher	1	nil
Long Tailed Tit	3	nil
Marsh Tit	3	nil
Willow Tit	2	nil
Coal Tit	1	2
Blue Tit	3	3
Great Tit	3	2
Tree Creeper	1	1
Jay	1 pair	1 pair
Magpie	1	3
Carrion Crow	1 pair	3 birds
Chaffinch	6/7	1
Greenfinch	1	nil
Bullfinch	1	nil



HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY - CARDIFF BAY (2014-2017)

Background

In 2014, I conducted a large scale survey of House Martin (HM) nests in the Greater Cardiff Bay Area. After checking every housing area around the Bay, I found 108 nests which were believed to be in use that year, at three main sites. I suggested that these formed a 'super colony', with all birds essentially feeding over the Bay.

I continued this survey at the known sites in each subsequent year, and I now have data for 4 years. I record the number of nests on each building where they are found. Data summarised by 1k square is submitted to the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology). For further details of the methodology, please see my reports published by Glamorgan Bird Club in 2014 and 2015.

Overall Result

In 2016, numbers fell significantly and only recovered marginally in 2017. The possible reasons for this will be discussed in the next section.

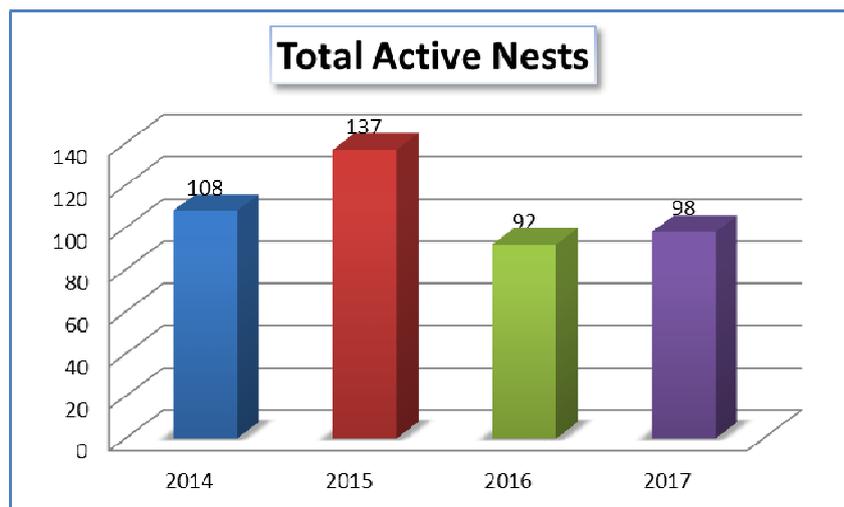


Figure 1 - Total no. of presumed 'active' nests each season around the Cardiff Bay area

By Site

There are now three known locations around Cardiff Bay with clusters of nests, shown in the next graph. Most of the buildings were constructed in the 1998-2002 period. Grangemoor Court, which only holds 2 nests, was not surveyed in 2014. After I completed the 2017 survey, I was informed of a small number of active nests in Glebe Street, in the old part of Penarth. These could be considered as part of the colony as this area overlooks the Marina and the Bay. However, for consistency, they will not be included here.

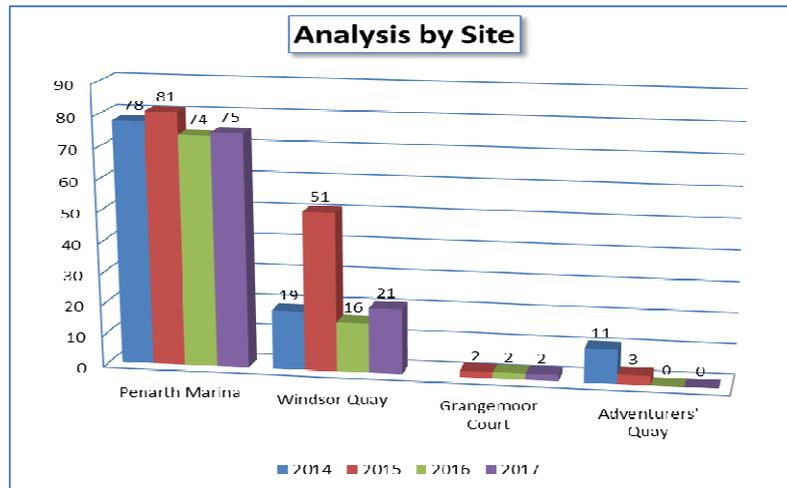


Figure 2 – Analysis of Active Nests by specific site

With the benefit of four years' data, we can see that 2015 was an optimum year for HM nests as far as this survey is concerned. National population trends for this period are not available at the time of writing, but the HM population has been trending downwards for some years. It will be interesting to see whether my local results are in any way consistent with the results of the BTO's three years (2015-2017) of special House Martin surveys at a national level

The peak in 2015 was due to the rapid expansion of the Windsor Quay sub-colony, which more than compensated for the decline of Adventurer's Quay. The latter site, which peaked at 21 nests in 2009, has had no nests at all since 2015, possibly due to deliberate nest destruction in previous years. It's also possible that nest construction was attempted earlier in the season before the surveys, but was prevented.

The steep decline in 2016 was likewise attributable (in statistical terms) to a plummeting nest population in Windsor Quay, from 51 to 16 nests in a year. It is now known that the estate had exterior refurbishment carried out in 2015-2016, including cleaning the eaves where House Martins nest. This may be very relevant to the sudden decline, and we may hope that the small increase in 2017 is the start of a recovery trend.

Incidental Comments

It's relatively easy for the experienced surveyor to determine if a natural nest has been used this season, even when birds are not seen using the nest in the few minutes that I observe each building. It's much harder with artificial nests, of which there are quite a few in Penarth Marina and a smaller number at Windsor Quay. Thick spider webs over the entrance: unused. Fresh excrement on adjacent wall: in use.

I err on the side of caution if I don't see evidence of use but at one building in the Marina, I had just decided that the artificial nests were unused when a bird went into one of them. As with nearly all bird surveys, there are elements of approximation. In this context, small annual variations are not important unless a trend can be proven to have statistical significance.



At one nest, I watched three birds repeatedly visit together, apparently feeding young. Perhaps one or more were recently fledged birds or helper birds from a previous brood, which is known behaviour for this species.

Young birds were seen in about 40 of the nests.

Despite the late stage of the season, a few nests at Windsor Quay (surveyed on July 7th) appeared to be under construction. These were always where nests had been previously so it may be that the some mishap had occurred and the birds decided to try again. These were not within reach of windows, and active complete nests were nearby, so human interference was not the issue.

Several nests appeared to have an entrance that was much larger than expected. Assuming the nests were original completed 'normally', could they have been predated? Are the entrances opened up when the young are fledging? Or do some nests just have a more open design?

While I am conducting this survey, I am also collecting other records: not just of birds, but also butterflies, hoverflies, bees, dragonflies and whatever else I spot. 'Breeding evidence' for birds is still required for the European Breeding Bird Atlas, so make sure your records for the period 2013-2017 are submitted to the BTO by the end of September. For example, behind Grangemoor Court, which backs on to the River Ely, I was able to log a Great-Crested Grebe on a nest (and another pair in a short display), and singing Cetti's and Sedge Warblers, as well as 'Nest Containing Young' for the House Martins.

BIRDING FOR ALL

We don't think about mobility until we have a problem. Disability happens to someone else. Then as we get old and our hips and knees can become problematic. Bones break more easily after a fall and take longer to heal. Maybe we need a walking aid or a wheelchair. One way or another, accidents, age and illness can limit our ability to climb over stiles, ascend steps or traverse rough ground. What happens then when we want to go birding or for a country walk? How many of our favourite places are still accessible to us? These thoughts were triggered at this year's 'Bird Fair', when I found myself standing by the stand of "Birding For All".

It's an organisation dedicated to encouraging better access to reserves, resources and services for all birders, without compromising the needs of the birds. This very worthwhile charity has attracted a lengthy list of well-known patrons, including TV presenters such as Chris Packham, Mike Dilger, David Lindo, Nick Baker, Bill Oddie and our own Iolo Williams. The BTO's Dawn Balmer is also involved.

We know that some of the wilder places can never be fully accessible but that leaves many others where measures such as firm paths, rather than gravel; kissing gates instead of stiles or cattle grids, and ramps as well as steps up to well-designed hides can create "Barrier Free Birding".

One way to help is to assess a local nature reserve, using the information on their website, <http://www.birdingforall.com/> where you can also join. Membership is free, and the more people who join, the louder their voice.

Paul Seligman

Contact me on pimms15-nature@outlook.com or <https://twitter.com/PaulSeligNature>



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

Goldcliff/Uskmouth - Wednesday 12th July

A good total of 17 members met for this trip. We started at Goldcliff at 09.30 to coincide with the high tide. Wader species were in disappointingly small numbers, nevertheless, we did see Black tailed Godwits and Dunlin, (both in summer plumage still), Lapwing, Ringed Plover (adults and juveniles), Little Ringed Plover, Redshank, Turnstone, Oystercatcher, 3 Common Sandpipers and one Knot on the lagoons. No Spotted Redshank, Greenshank or Avocet were seen. Graham Powell was confident that he saw a Wood Sandpiper before it flew off into the vegetation. He had arrived at 08.30, before the rest of us and seen this bird shortly after arriving. Unfortunately, it didn't re-appear for the rest of us to see it.

All the ducks were in eclipse plumage, except Shelduck and included Mallard, Teal, Shoveler and an unseasonal Pintail. Lots of hirundines were seen but Sand Martin outnumbered Swallow and House Martin by far. Warblers seen were a young Willow Warbler, singing Blackcap, Cetti's and Sedge Warbler. There were 20 or more Pied Wagtails (10 were by the lighthouse and farm) both adults and juveniles and we did eventually see a Yellow Wagtail fly from under the grazing cattle. We had been looking specifically for this, which was a year tick for some.

At 12.30 we made our way back to the wetlands centre at Uskmouth, hoping to see Bearded Tit. No luck, however, the reserve was very quiet bird-wise. The only additions to our list were Little Grebe, Mute Swan, Tufted Duck and Curlew on the foreshore, Great Spotted and Green Woodpecker, Common Whitethroat, Linnet, and a fine adult male singing Greenfinch. Sad that this is now a sight worth mentioning, following the depletion in their numbers due to disease.

The day total was 62 species; Little Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Buzzard, Kestrel, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Dunlin, Black tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper (seen by 1), Turnstone, Mediterranean Gull (1 seen), Black headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Swift (1 seen) Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker (heard), Skylark, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Stonechat, Blackbird, Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Reed Bunting. One other notable sighting was a Water Vole swimming across the reed at Goldcliff.

Gareth Jenkins

Kidwelly Quay & Burry Old Harbour - Sunday 30th July

The weather forecast wasn't great for this trip, however we were lucky and managed to dodge most of the showers. We met at Kidwelly Quay, where lots of waders were gathering on a rising tide. The majority were Redshank and Dunlin but there were a few Greenshanks, Curlews, Whimbrel and a lone Black-tailed Godwit on the mud.



On a grassy area were several Little Egrets. Looking across the estuary we could see thousands of waders and gulls at Pembrey. A walk along the canal saw a colourful Kingfisher fishing, a great sight. We didn't see many more species here, although a few Chiffchaffs were in the canal side trees.

Our next port of call was Burry Old Harbour. Here we saw hundreds of Oystercatchers and dotted amongst them were some Sandwich Terns and several Mediterranean Gulls. A long way off (and viewable only for those with telescopes) a few Common Terns were also fishing off-shore). A party of five young Stonechats on the harbour wall was a delightful sight. The arrival of some heavy showers forced us to make a hasty retreat but nevertheless it had been a good day's birding.

East and West Aberthaw - Sunday 27th August

Fifteen folk gathered in the car park at Gileston on a glorious sunny morning. As it was late August we were hoping for some migrants. There were plenty of Goldfinches and Linnets in the fields to the west of the power station. We met Steve Hinton, who told us he had seen some Grey Partridges in the fields further west. We weren't successful in finding them but were delighted to see good numbers of Yellow Wagtails in a stubble field (est. between 15 to 20). A lovely male Yellowhammer was seen atop a hedgerow here also. An obliging Sparrowhawk perched on top of a stone wall and a Kestrel did a fly past. In the same stubble field were two Peregrines on a kill. We think it was adult and juvenile. On the sea wall were a couple of Wheatears, although we missed out on the Whinchats reported by another birder.

We went on to East Aberthaw after lunch, however the heat of the day meant that many of the warblers proved very elusive. We saw a Common Sandpiper on the Thaw and a Rock Pipit on one of the groynes. On the shoreline, the rising tide pushed up some Turnstones, plus both Ringed Plover and Dunlin and on the salt marsh were a couple of Little Egrets and a juvenile Grey Heron. The lagoon held Coot, Moorhen. Little Grebe and Mallard plus several species of dragonflies. An interesting find near the lime kilns were some Autumn Ladies Tresses, which I've never seen before. They were much smaller than I expected. The heat meant we were wilting a little by mid afternoon, so we made our way back to the car park. An enjoyable day overall.

Lavernock Point - Wednesday 6th September

Co-incidentally there were 15 participants for this walk. We were hoping to see some migrants and there were plenty of hirundines passing overhead. Sadly there were few other migrants to be seen - a couple of Chiffchaffs and single Willow Warbler and Whitethroat were all we could muster. Strinda Davies found a Goldcrest and there were small numbers of Goldfinches, Linnets and pipits in the fields. We did chance upon a Peregrine Falcon stooping on a Wood Pigeon near the stubble fields alongside the coastal path. The sea produced a few Oystercatchers and the usual gulls but was otherwise quiet.

After lunch we visited the Wildlife Trust Reserve, where as it was so quiet bird-wise, we spent much of the time insect watching. Twelve species of butterfly and four dragon/damselfly species were recorded. There were some birds around. A couple of Sparrowhawks, a Kestrel and a very obliging juvenile Green Woodpecker were added to our day list. Despite the lack of birds it had been an enjoyable day with some lovely autumnal weather. Some of the group went on to Cosmeston, where there had been reports of Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher and Redstart earlier in the day.



Goldcliff/Uskmouth - Sunday 24th September

Despite a poor forecast the weather proved ideal for the eighteen participants. From the hides and platforms we had excellent views of the waders. Perhaps the highlight was the flock of six juvenile Little Stints that were with the Ringed Plovers in front of the first hide. Here we also we saw Ruff (2), Spotted Redshank (2), Knot (1), Greenshank (8), Black-tailed Godwit (3) plus numerous Dunlin, Curlew and Redshank.

We saw five raptors on the day - Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine and Marsh Harrier. Some of the group saw Yellow Wagtail. There were two Wheatears on the sea wall together with dozens of Meadow Pipits, presumably on passage. A distant wader in the saltmarsh turned out to be a Whimbrel.

At Uskmouth we had great views of a Kingfisher and added several warblers to our trip list, including a very late Sedge Warbler. A great day out with 77 species logged by the group.

Mewslade - Wednesday 4th October

Eighteen participants met at Mewslade on a very blustery day. Even before we left the car park we'd seen three raptor species - Peregrine, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk. There was a lot of activity in the woodlands with Long-tailed Tits, Goldcrests, Goldfinches and Blue Tits forming large foraging parties. The wind however meant that lots of birds were keeping low. We ploughed on to the coast where we saw Cormorant, Shag and Gannet. On the coastal path Meadow Pipits and Stonechats were particularly evident.

At Worms Head, Kittiwake and Oystercatcher were added to our day list. A Chough showed well on the coastal path. It was ringed but was too distant for us to be able to read the details. In Rhossili Bay a few Common Scoters were picked out, often associating with Razorbills and Guillemots.

On our walk back to Pitton, we stopped off at Middleton to check the site where Firecrest, Yellow-browed Warbler and Booted Warbler had been seen the week before. We had no luck, although there were plenty of Goldcrests and Chiffchaffs in the area.



Howard Driver sent me this shot of a leucistic Shag that he saw on a recent visit to Grassholm. What a strange looking bird.

Apologies to all the regular photo contributors, I didn't have room to include a *Photo Gallery* this time. *Ed*



INDOOR MEETINGS

Birding around the Arctic Circle - Paul Bowden

Our first indoor meeting of 2017-8 took us to Finland, Estonia and Iceland. Paul, as usual, showed us some high quality video of the birds he encountered and the scenery was particularly impressive too. I was particularly interested to see familiar birds such as Redwing and Fieldfare on their breeding grounds. The song of the Redwing was very unexpected as was the sight of Common Snipe sitting on top of pine trees. Other rarer species (to us) were illustrated, such as Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit, Red-flanked Bluetail, Common Rosefinch, Pine Grosbeak, Little Bunting and Great Grey Owl.

On the Icelandic leg of our journey we saw Gyrfalcon, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-necked Phalarope and Eider. The spectacular scenery was a bonus. The idea of travelling round in an 8 wheel ex Russian missile transporter was quite appealing. Once again, huge thanks to Paul, for providing us with an excellent presentation.

BTO NEWS



Latest BBS Report Published

The latest Breeding Bird Survey Report for 2016 is now published. In Wales, Greenfinch numbers continue to tumble, but we are seeing an increase in Siskin numbers, in line with the UK increase of 61% since 1995. Chiffchaff numbers too, continue to climb, but as many readers will know, Curlews are in desperate trouble.

More details at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/bbs/bbs-publications/bbs-reports>

Online Ringing and nest recording

The latest ringing and nest recording figures are out and show that during 2016 over one million birds were ringed across the UK, with 5,723 contributed from Glamorgan.

Notable recoveries include a female Mute Swan ringed as a first year in Weymouth in 2010 being found dead in Bridgend; the continued movement of a Coot between Cosmeston and Greater Manchester and the return of a Reed Warbler at Cardiff Bay Wetlands six years after it was ringed as a juvenile there.

More details at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>



The Wetland Bird Survey: as easy as 1, 2, 3

Can you identify the UK's commonest waterbirds?

Do you have half a Sunday free, once a month, between September and March?

Do you want to add value to your birding?

If you can answer 'Yes' to all three of those questions, then the BTO's Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) could be just the thing you're looking for. WeBS is the survey which monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK, aiming to identify population sizes and to determine trends in numbers and distribution of waterbirds.

We need more volunteers to join our local WeBS team to help count wetland birds in East Glamorgan.

The good news is that the survey is as easy as 1,2,3 . . .

1. Turn up once a month on a specified date to your allotted wetland site
2. Count the waterbirds you see there
3. Submit your records to the BTO – either online or on paper forms

We're looking in particular for somebody to count Talygarn Lake. At the risk of sounding like an estate agent, it is a very desirable WeBS site which has recently become available and which I'd recommend as an attractive proposition for any 'first-time surveyor'. It is conveniently situated south of the M4 near Brynsadler. It is a large, shallow, man-made fish pond constructed I'd say around the late 19th/early 20th century. It's an attractive location, surrounded by some lovely woodland, it also fringed with some reed.

Talygarn Lake attracts a nice variety of waterbirds such as Gadwall, Teal, Tufted Duck and Mallard as well as Little Grebe, Water Rail and Kingfisher. To add value to your visit the surrounding woodland is home to a nice variety of species, including Marsh Tit.

If you're interested in taking on Talygarn (or any other site) for WeBS or, to continue the estate agent analogy, you'd like me to accompany you for a 'viewing' first, please contact Dan for a no-obligation chat.

More details at <http://eastglambto.wordpress.com/webs/>

Wayne Morris, BTO Regional Representative

eastglambto@gmail.com

Daniel Jenkins-Jones, BTO Assistant Regional Representative & Wetland Bird Survey Local Organiser

eastglamwebs@gmail.com



FUTURE EVENTS

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

Sunday 12th November	- Labrador Bay & Dawlish
Wednesday 29th November	- Parc Cwm Darran & Rhaslas Pond
Wednesday 13th December	- Forest Farm & Cardiff Bay
Sunday 7th January	- Whiteford Point & Llanrhidian
Wednesday 24th January	- Rumney Great Wharf

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

Tuesday 7th November	- Galapagos & Ecuador - John Wilson
Tuesday 5th December	- Rio Grande Birding - Dave Rich
Tuesday 9th January	- Members' Own

Monthly walk - Kenfig NNR

Third Saturday of each month. Meet at the Reserve Centre at 9 a.m. For details please contact David Carrington or Strinda Davies.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE for the next newsletter is **Friday 22nd December**

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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