



# NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2014

www.glamorganbirds.org.uk

Registered Charity 1129684

## IN THIS EDITION

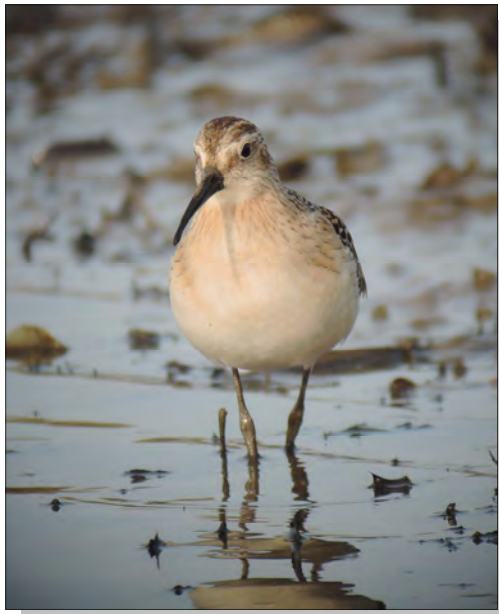
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*2nd year Mediterranean Gull at Cosmeston*  
© Wayne Strong



*Juvenile Knot at Llanilid* © Paul Roberts



*Curlew Sandpiper on the Ognore* © Paul Roberts



*Juvenile Little Tern at Kenfig* © Richard Smith

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** for the next newsletter is **Sunday 28th December**

## EDITORIAL NOTES

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the newsletter. One of the aims of the Glamorgan Bird Club is to promote and educate the general public about birds. We already do quite a lot in this regard. For example; Adrian Murch, Strinda Davies, David Carrington and Graham Holmes run our monthly public walks at Kenfig; John Wilson and myself have run dawn chorus walks at Dyffryn Gardens, Paul Denning has given talks to many local wildlife groups plus Adrian and his team have held nest box making sessions with local youth groups etc. (Apologies if I've missed anyone out).

Bird watching has been recognised as an antidote to the stresses of modern life. You might be surprised at the number of requests that we receive to assist groups with their activities. To date we have helped groups such as "the Girl Guides", "Follow your dreams", "Come outside" and "Community first", amongst others.

The committee are very aware that we need to do more with and for younger bird watchers. Currently we have very few junior members. Thus we are targeting aspects of the Big Birding Day (see page 3) at youngsters. There will be plenty of activities for children (both indoor and outdoor, in case the weather is poor). Please bring your children/grandchildren along to this event. There will be plenty of activities for adults too (Not to mention Mrs. Wilson's exceedingly good cakes). We urgently need helpers on the day. It would be great if you could come along and lend a hand.

I had a call from Carol Gravenor from Caerphilly Bird Rescue recently. She has been caring for an injured male Redstart and was seeking advice on potential release sites, as the bird now seemed fit and healthy. I wasn't aware of this organisation and the work they do. If you wish to contact Carol you can phone her on 02920 865690 or 07807944182.

In August I was delighted to attend the Birdfair in Rutland (thanks to John Duffy for the lift). It's a while since I last attended and I was surprised how much bigger it is nowadays. There was a tremendous array of birding organisations, travel companies, optics manufacturers, writers, artists etc, on show. In addition we had the chance to inspect the impressive new Collins Bird App (currently only available for iPhone) and attended a lecture by Simon King. We even managed some birding at the end of the day, the highlights being views of Osprey, Green and Common Sandpipers.

Alan Rosney

### GBC MERCHANDISE

Christmas is coming (don't panic). Why not order a GBC polo, sweatshirt or fleece? You can have any colour as long as it's bottle green (sorry Mr Ford).

Polo shirt (£10) Sweatshirt (14) Quarter zip fleece (£20), Full zip fleece (£20)

*Remember to add £3 per item for p & p. Cheques made payable to Glamorgan Bird Club*

Approx sizes: Small 36", Medium 38", Large 40-42", X Large 44-46", XXL 48-50"

Contact me by phone 01443 841555 or email (Either via my GBC email address or my gmail address: alanrosneyatgmail.com - my freeserve address is no longer operational)

**Sunday 12th October**

**Kenfig National Nature Reserve**

**10 a.m. till 4 p.m.**

## **BIG BIRDING DAY**

**The Glamorgan Bird Club is pleased to be hosting its third “Big Birding Day” at Kenfig. Come along, there be plenty to see and do.**

**Guided bird walks:** Bring your binoculars\* There will be telescopes to use on the day. There’ll be a list of “what’s been seen” in the Reserve Centre.

**Ringling demonstrations:** The first session will be down by the pool, starting at dawn. Be there by 7.30 a.m. to see the team in action. There will be a second session later in the day, near the Reserve Centre, ringling some of the birds that come in to the feeders.

**Bird feeder making:** Get ready for winter. Make your own bird feeders.

**Moth trapping:** If you’re interested in moths, we’ll be running a moth trap. The “catch” will be examined during the day.

**Book & magazine stall:** A chance to pick up a bargain or two.

**Childrens’ activities:** There will be plenty for the youngsters to do, including a “children” only bird walk, quizzes, craft activities, games etc.

**Cakes & refreshments:** If you haven’t sampled Mrs Wilson’s cakes you are in for a treat.

\* Kenfig have several pairs of binoculars available for hire/loan

## **RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS**

### **July 2014**

Cardiff: A Great White Egret turned up at Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve. An Avocet was noted on the Rhymney River at Lamby Way. A Quail was picked up in a Leckwith garden. A Short-eared Owl was at Rumney Great Wharf. The first returning Yellow-legged Gull was found at Lisvane Reservoir. Oystercatchers bred at Cardiff Bay.

Kenfig: A Great White Egret remained until early in the month at the Saltmarsh, where two Marsh Harriers and a Greenshank were also logged. Sightings from the vicinity of Sker included a calling Quail, four Whimbrels, seven Sandwich Terns and two Yellow Wagtails. A migrant Little Ringed Plover was at the pool and a smattering of Little Egrets were reported.

Other Sites: Llanilid hosted Greenshank (two), Green Sandpiper (maximum six) and several Yellow Wagtails. Both Greenshank and Green Sandpiper were observed on the new scrapes at Parc Slip. Ogmores Estuary held three Little Egrets, two Green Sandpipers and two Mediterranean Gulls. A Chough strayed to Lock's Common, Porthcawl.

### **August 2014**

Cardiff: No fewer than three Black-necked Grebes frequented Lisvane Reservoir, where three Black Terns and a Greenshank were also noted. Marsh Harriers were seen at the Heliport and Cardiff Bay, with breeding Oystercatchers and two Yellow-legged Gulls also at the latter site. A Wood Warbler and up to four Redstarts were at Radyr Floodplain. Sightings from Rumney Great Wharf included Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and three Little Egrets.

Kenfig: Three Garganey were found at the rivermouth. A juvenile Little Tern lingered at the pool. A morning's ringing session saw 26 Tree Pipits netted. Other notable reports comprised two Ruff, up to six Greenshanks and a Red-breasted Merganser.

Llanilid: Waders featured heavily, with Wood Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Knot, Whimbrel, Greenshank and Green Sandpiper all recorded at this inland location. Little Egret and juvenile Cuckoo added some variety.

Ogmores Estuary: A Little Stint was on the beach adjacent to the rivermouth in a sizeable mixed flock of Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Sanderling. Further waders included several each of Greenshank, Whimbrel and Green Sandpiper. A Goshawk was observed. Pant Norton turned up Pied Flycatcher and a Reed Warbler among the more common migrants, such as Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher.

Parc Slip: An Osprey was seen flying over. Further noteworthy records included Hobby, Wood Warbler, Redstart, Green Sandpiper, 11 Crossbills and breeding Tufted Ducks.

Other Sites: A Marsh Harrier and three Common Terns were at Rhaslas Pond. A Quail called at Michaelston-le-Pit. An Osprey passed over Beddau. Three Choughs were reported at Nell's Point, Barry. A Hobby was near Pentre Meyrick

## **September 2014**

The returning Lesser Scaup frequented Cardiff Bay. Black-necked Grebes were at Llanishen/Lisvane Reservoir and Llanilid, where a Dotterel was also reported. A Marsh Harrier was over Roath. A probable Corn Bunting was briefly at Lavernock.

Other sites: A covey of six Grey Partridges was near Cwm Nash. Little Egrets were recorded at Rumney Great Wharf (four) and Ogmere Estuary (two). Hobbies were seen at Bettws, Lisvane, Pant Norton and Penarth. The first Merlins of the autumn appeared at Nash Point and Sker. Waders included an inland Knot at Llanilid, where a Ruff, two Greenshanks and several Green Sandpipers also occurred; four Curlew Sandpipers and two Greenshanks at Ogmere Estuary; two Curlew Sandpipers at Newton Point; up to eight Greenshanks at Rumney Great Wharf; a Greenshank at Kenfig, and a Green Sandpiper at Lisvane Reservoir. Over 30 Mediterranean Gulls were in the vicinity of Nottage, Porthcawl. Yellow-legged Gulls were noted at Cosmeston and Cardiff Bay. A Guillemot inland at Ogmere Estuary was an unusual occurrence. A flock of forty Stock Doves was present at Dunraven. A late Swift was at Llanilid, where a Kingfisher was an uncommon visitor. Two Grasshopper Warblers were observed at Radyr Floodplain. Firecrest and Ring Ouzel dropped in at Lavernock.

Paul Roberts



*One of several Black-necked Grebes that visited our area in September. This juvenile was at Llanilid. Photo © Paul Roberts*



*A juvenile Pied Flycatcher visited Margaret & John Samuel's garden in Wildmill in September. Photo © Margaret Samuel*



*The sacrificial crop at Ty'ny-caeau Farm is looking good this year. Thanks to farmer John Evans for all his effort. The crop will be left standing to providing winter feed. Photos © David Carrington and Cedwyn Davies. The photo on the right is of Cedwyn strimming the ringing ride.*

## **CLUB NEWS**

### **Members' News**

We have several new members to welcome : Barbara M Brown and Chris Sutherland from Cardiff and Clive & Christine Jones from Gwaun Miskin. Welcome one and all.

Sadly we heard of the death of Dave Glanville back in July. Dave was a stalwart of the club (in the CNS days), attending many of Ken Lloyd's field outings. He moved to Pembrokeshire several years ago, becoming an active member of the birding scene there. His wit and good nature will be missed.

Some good news. Following the appeal for help topping up the feeders at Ty'ny-caeau Farm, two volunteers have stepped forward to help with this very worthwhile project. (see the photos on page 5)

The majority of members have now renewed. However there are still some outstanding memberships. Please renew a.s.a.p. as we need as many members as possible to keep the club viable. This will be the final reminder.

### **Committee News**

The Committee has met on three occasions since the last newsletter:

- The production of the local Bird Atlas has moved on apace. Jake Gilmore (the County Bird Recorder) attended one of our recent meetings. It was decided that we produce an on-line version incorporating the data gathered from the 2007-11 National Atlas survey work plus the club database and several other BTO surveys. Watch this space
- Planning for the October Big Birding Day at Kenfig was undertaken. It will take place on Sunday 12th October. Please see the advert on page 3. Helpers are needed!
- The club is forging good relations with WTSWW. We have been pleased to support the Wildlife Trust in their ambitious plans for Parc Slip. The two scrapes that the club sponsored have now officially been named "The Steve Moon Scrapes". Interpretation boards are in preparation.
- Committee (& ex-committee) members continue to attend LBAP meetings. If you have any issues to discuss at a local level, please get in touch.
- Graham Powell has now set up the email reminder system. If you would like to be part of the scheme, details are on page 20.
- John Wilson has almost completed the 2013 Bird Report. The aim is to have it finished/printed by the end of the month.

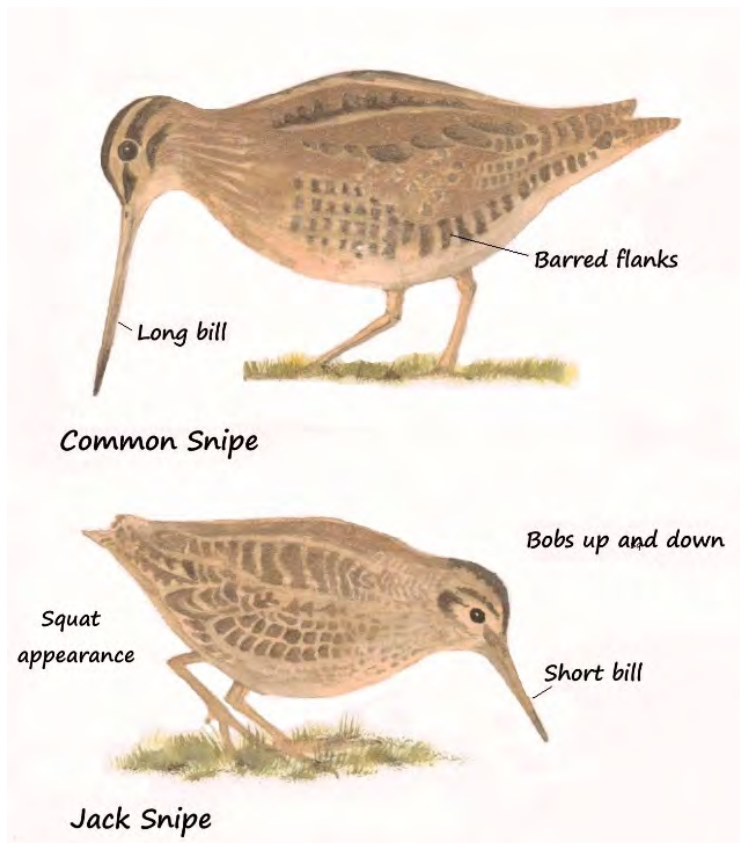
Alan Rosney & Graham Powell

## CONFUSION SPECIES – SNIPE

This time we're looking at Snipe. Realistically only two species are likely to be encountered – Common Snipe and Jack Snipe (Great Snipe has occurred on the east coast of England in recent years).

Common Snipe are widespread and resident, although numbers are swelled by continental birds in winter. Jack Snipe are winter visitors. The Jack Snipe is a very secretive bird, usually found in boggy areas. Unlike Snipe it avoids muddy ground and doesn't wade in to open water. They wait until almost underfoot before taking flight. Their flight is usually low and straight, dropping down quickly. Common Snipe, on the other hand, take off with a towering zig-zag flight, often calling as they do. In flight, note the Jack Snipe's shorter bill, rounded wings, pointed tail and prominent back-stripes. Common Snipe have a distinctive white trailing edge to the wing and the flanks are barred.

If you get decent views, the small size of the Jack Snipe is evident (Common 23 – 28cm, Jack 18 – 20 cm). Note the Jack Snipe has a strong head pattern with a split supercilium. The Jack Snipe has the peculiar habit of bobbing up and down as it feeds. Common Snipe rarely do this and tend to feed with a sewing-machine action.



Where can you see them in Glamorgan? Common Snipe can be encountered in many locations. Try Forest Farm, the Snipe paddocks at Cosmeston or Kenfig. OOC Goldcliff is a good spot. Jack Snipe are trickier. They can be encountered at Kenfig and have been observed from the Arthur Morgan Hide. Another location to explore is Green Point on the Rhymney Estuary. On Gower, Whiteford Burrows can be fruitful. The best spot here is just beyond the conifer belt. Wellies are essential. They are undoubtedly under-recorded.

## RESERVE SPOTLIGHT - BRYNGARW COUNTRY PARK

Tucked away just North of Bridgend, you'll find Bryngarw Country Park. With its wonderful diversity of habitats, it's the perfect spot for any wildlife enthusiast or just a casual stroll around this tranquil green space. Woodland, grasslands, wetlands, river, formal garden and lake, we have everything you could ask for and more.

Our latest addition to enhance the visitor experience is our Keeper's Trail, ([Funded through the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.](#)) Carved from oak that has fallen in the park, the Keepers are a unique, interactive scheme which uses sculpture, music and themes from Welsh mythology to bring the story of Bryngarw's wildlife and landscape to life. Details can be found in the Visitor Centre at Cedars Tea Rooms.



*Sculptures on the Keeper's Trail*



*GBC Nestboxes*

For the bird enthusiast, there is plenty to see. Apart from the usual woodland birds you are likely to see Kingfishers and Grey Herons at the lake, Dippers and Grey Wagtails along the river, plus Spotted Flycatchers, Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers in the wooded areas. The Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers that formerly used to frequent the park haven't been reported for some time. Similarly Wood Warblers have been seen here in past years but they too are becoming rather scarce. Winter may bring good numbers of thrushes to the meadow areas in the north of the park.

We were lucky to have bird boxes donated by the Glamorgan Bird Club back in February 2013. They have been put up around the park and seem to have been readily adopted. The two boxes erected behind the visitor centre were immediately occupied by pairs of nuthatches, which successfully raised good clutches of chicks in each. Visitors to the café loved having the opportunity of observing these elusive birds as they set about modifying their new homes – first by pecking and enlarging the entrance holes, then building them up with wet mud until things were exactly to their liking.

The Rangers, Keith and Dan, look after the park with help from two Seasonal Rangers through the Summer months, plus a small, but active group of volunteers. They meet on the first Saturday of each month and undertake whatever tasks are required. From coppicing in the Winter, to cleaning up the River Garw in Spring, Balsam Bashing throughout the Summer and pond clearing in the Autumn and everything in between.



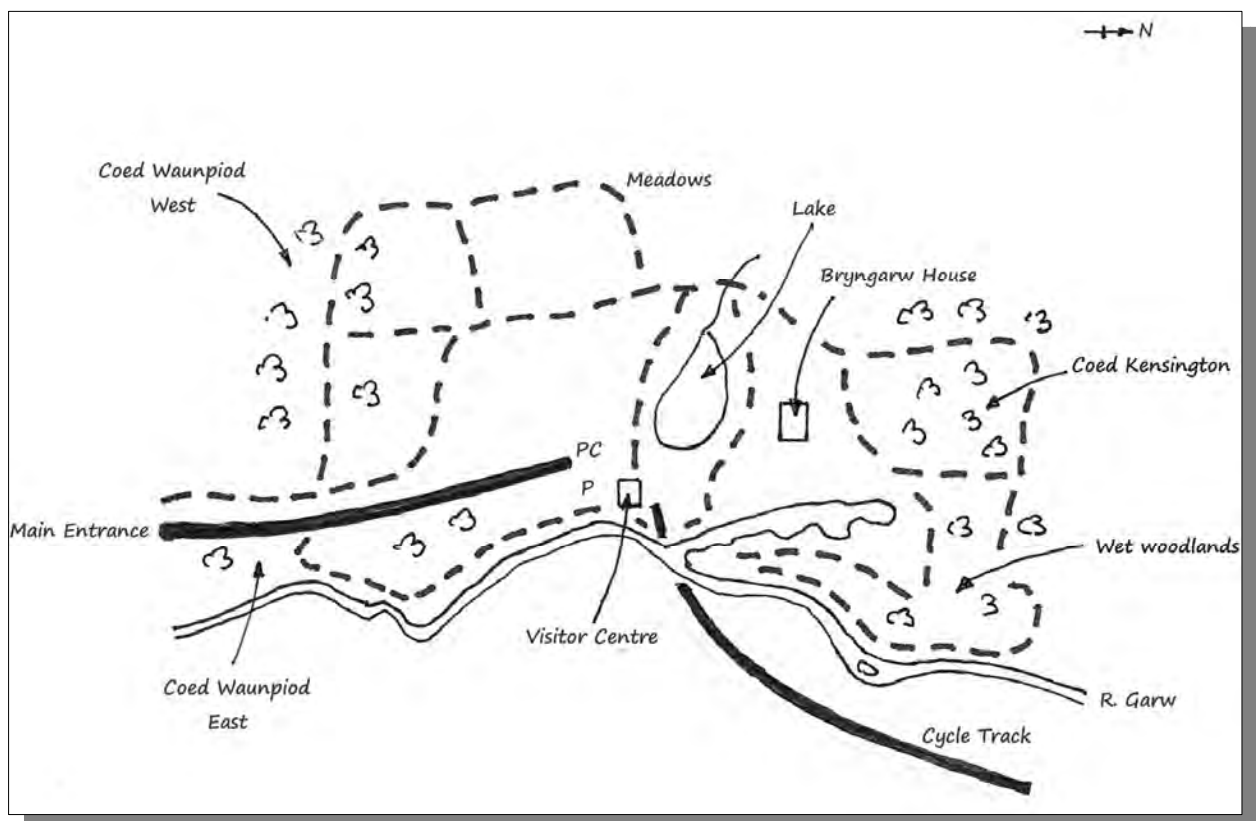
After a walk around, you'll need some refreshment. Priding itself on homemade cakes, freshly made food and a delightful mix of nostalgia, Cedars Tea Room is set in the heart of Bryngarw Country Park offers seasonal locally sourced good food all year round and well worth a visit before you leave.

**To find out more you can contact the Rangers on 01656 725155 or email:**  
[bryngarwpark@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:bryngarwpark@bridgend.gov.uk) or visit the website <http://www.bryngarwhouse.co.uk/>

**Bryngarw Park Volunteer Group**

<http://bryngarwparkvolunteergroup.wordpress.com/>  
<http://www.facebook.com/BryngarwParkVolunteerGroup>  
<https://twitter.com/BryngarwTeers>

Thanks to GBC member and Bryngarw Volunteer, Leigh Forman, for providing this article. The following map is reproduced from "Birding in Glamorgan" and shows some of the main features of the park. Bryngarw was formerly one of the few places where Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers could be seen in our area. Sadly they haven't been reported from here for some time.



Thanks to GBC member and Bryngarw Volunteer, Leigh Forman for contributing this article. The map is taken from "Birding in Glamorgan".

## **TRIP REPORTS**

### **Parc Slip – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

It was a glorious sunny day and prospects were good. There was a cracking turn-out with 20 participants. As expected, the focus was on butterflies and dragonflies, as many of the birds were skulking, having completed their breeding cycle. Nevertheless we did see birds. A juvenile Redstart was seen alongside the main pool and a Red Kite drifted overhead. Other species in evidence were Reed Buntings, Jays, Whitethroats and Bullfinches. A couple of Buzzards drifted overhead and two gull species were seen. We were hoping to see the Little Ringed Plovers from the elevated hide but they had apparently moved on. In all I logged 31 species.

Ten species of butterfly were observed, with Ringlet being the most abundant. Odonata included four species of dragonfly and three damselflies. Several of the photographers were taken with a very colourful Ruby-tailed Wasp which was seen on the hide wall.

### **Goldcliff & Uskmouth – 27th July 2014**

Ten participants gathered in the car park at Goldcliff. The start was timed to coincide with high tide. From the hide on the first lagoon waders of note were four Little Ringed Plovers, two Greenshank, two Snipe and a Common Sandpiper. A Raven was heard overhead.

From the platform we added Ruff, Dunlin and Avocet to our wader list. Little Egret and Grey Heron were observed on the far bank. Passerines were few and far between. A Reed Bunting was atop of one of the bushes. Eventually we picked out three Yellow Wagtails, following the cattle on the far bank, although the grass was rather long for great views. John (Thornhill) Duffy\* got a brief view of a Kingfisher as it flashed past but failed to get anyone else on to it. Matthew Binding spotted a Stoat as it scuttled along the path. Butterflies here included Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Green-veined White, Common Blue, Small Copper and Clouded Yellow.

On the sea-wall, Gareth (Tonteg) Jenkins\* found a Redstart, plus a couple more Yellow Wagtails. A cracking Whimbrel was found on the foreshore mud. From the sea-wall hide we had good views of breeding plumaged Black-tailed Godwits, which were joined by four Redshank. Several juvenile Starlings were in front of the hide and good numbers of Sand Martins skimmed across the reed beds. On our return to the car park a second Redstart and a juvenile Whitethroat were observed.

At Uskmouth we stopped off for coffee and watched the bird feeders. Remarkably, a juvenile Reed Warbler spent some time on one of the peanut feeders. (Apparently it was picking insects off the feeder). As birds were few and far between our attention turned to insects. Dragonflies included Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor and Ruddy Darter. John Wilson found Oak Eggar and Latticed Heath moths.

P.S. \* We had two John Duffys and two Gareth Jenkins's with us on the trip. What are the chances of that?

### **Kidwelly & Burry Port - 17th August 2014**

Six participants met up at Kidwelly Quay in time for the late morning high tide. Feeding in the creek there were around 200 Redshank, and a few Greenshank and a large flock of around 400 Curlew were roosting in the saltmarsh out in the main channel. Scanning around the main channel and its inlets, 23 Little Egrets were seen, and a couple of Grey Herons and on a distant sand bar was a huge flock of Oystercatcher. Black-headed, Herring, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted and also a couple of early returning Common Gulls. Marlay and Ken, who know the area well, suggested a walk along the opposite side of the creek to the Quay and here we were able to see that there were around 15 Greenshank resting up. Common land birds included a Stock Dove feeding in the creek-side grass.

After our picnic lunch we headed east to old Burry Port. The tide had fallen quite a lot but we still found 10 Sandwich Tern, 50 Ringed Plover, around 2000 Oystercatcher, a couple of Dunlin, 2 Great Black-backed Gulls, 2 Stonechats and a good variety of other common birds. Not a huge tally but a very pleasant day out nonetheless.

### **Blackpill & Gower - 14<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

A disappointing turn out for this one with only seven participants. We gathered in the Woodman car park at Blackpill. On the foreshore were a good number of Oystercatchers but disappointingly no other waders were seen at all. The main interest was the gulls. We clocked up six species, including a nice second summer Mediterranean Gull. Just offshore was a female Eider, which eventually waddled out on to the beach.

We next went on to Mumbles and Bracelet Bay. Here we saw good numbers of Kittiwakes (surprisingly no juveniles were present) plus more Mediterranean Gulls. Passerines were limited but a Wheatear was on the rocks.

Our next port of call was Worm's Head. It was extremely busy. We were lucky to see six Chough on the grassy slopes above the cliffs. A Kestrel was patrolling the cliffs but not surprisingly there were few passerines near the path, due to the human throng. Five Raven were heard (and seen) over the fields. We decided to head over to Fall Bay to escape the crowds. The weedy fields were full of birds. A roaming flock of Linnets was joined by good numbers of Meadow Pipits. Stonechats seemed to be everywhere. Colin Stevenson eventually spotted a Whinchat on a fence post. We estimate that there were three or four of these little beauties in the area. Next, Matthew Binding caught sight of a Spotted Flycatcher, which gave good views. Warblers were represented by both White-throat and Willow Warbler. A rather skulking Sylvia warbler was unfortunately not identified. We were hoping it was a Dartford Warbler but ....

On our way home we stopped off at Crofty in north Gower. The tide was a long way out but we did see many Oystercatchers, Curlews and Redshank. Thirty Black-tailed Godwits were in the channel and there were half a dozen Little Egrets present. Signs of approaching winter were evident with five Brent Geese in the distance. Time was pressing so we had to set off home – a good day's birding in an idyllic location.

All reports by Alan Rosney except Kidwelly, which was contributed by John Wilson

## ALASKA May 26 - June 12, 2014

This was my second visit to Alaska. On this trip, I was hoping to find Smith's Longspur (a very rare USA breeder), Spectacled Eider (another very rare USA breeder), and Steller's Eider and to visit Denali National Park. I flew into Anchorage from Heathrow via Seattle. In case of any hold-ups, I planned a day's birding in the Anchorage area. Among the birds seen around Anchorage were breeding Red-necked Grebes, breeding Arctic Terns, Pacific Diver, Mew Gulls, Bonaparte's Gulls, White-crowned Sparrow, Hudsonian Godwits, Surfbirds, Lesser Yellowlegs, male Harlequin Duck & 30+ Bald Eagles. On Lake Hood, American Wigeon, Lesser and Greater Scaup, Green-winged Teal, Red-throated Diver and Barrow's Goldeneye were present. Flowers included Beautiful Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium pulcherrimum*), Tall Jacob's Ladder (*P. acutiflorum*), Nootka Lupine (*Lupinus nootkensis*), Watermelon Berry (*Streptopus amplexifolius*) and Cut-leaf Anemone (*Anemone multiflora*).

En route to Denali, breeding Common Divers, Trumpeter Swan & Lincoln's Sparrows were seen at Kashwitna Lake. Nagoonberry (*Rubus arctica*) and Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) were seen on route. I had a couple of days in Denali National Park where Gray Jays, Golden Eagle, Northern Hawk Owl, Say's Phoebe, Willow Ptarmigan, Grizzly Bears and cubs, Moose and calves, Caribou, Red Fox, Dall's Sheep, Red Squirrel and Snowshoe Hare were seen. Flowers such as Arctic Lupine (*Lupinus arcticus*), Lapland Rosemary (*Rhododendron lapponium*), Woolly Lousewort (*Pendicularis kanei ssp kanei*), Arctic Willow (*Salix arctica*) and Net-leaved Willow (*Salix reticulata*) were found. In the grounds of my accommodation Boreal Chickadee, Spotted Sandpiper and Steller's Jay were present.

Fairbanks proved to be somewhat disappointing as I was too early for the wildflower display in the Creamer's Fields Nature Reserve. On the reserve, there were nesting Cliff & Tree Swallows, Horned Grebes, Northern Waterthrush, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Solitary Sandpiper & Savannah Sparrows. 30+ Sandhill Cranes were feeding in the fields.

Tangle Lake was my next stop for a few days. I spent a considerable amount of time looking for the Smith's Longspur, but without success. This is the only published accessible area for the Longspur. Unfortunately, it was two years ago since it was last seen in the area. Suitable habitat (tundra) stretched as far as the eye could see in all directions. However, while walking the area, I found Snowdon Lily (*Lloydia serotina*) – which means that I do not have to clamber around Snowdon (the only place in the UK where it grows) to look for it. Lapland Longspur, L-t. Skua, L-t. Duck, Ring-billed Duck, Bufflehead, Whimbrel (*ssp hudsonicus*), American Golden Plover, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Wandering Tattler, Rock & Willow Ptarmigan, Yellow Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and Harlequin Ducks were also present.

I then returned to Anchorage to fly to Barrow – the northernmost city in the USA – not the most beautiful place in the world!! Temperatures were below freezing point with the wind making it feel much colder. Unfortunately, the amount of open sea was limited, because during the previous week the sea ice had been blown against the shore. At this time of the year, birding Barrow has to be done entirely from the rutted dirt roads. It would have been foolhardy to walk off road – many pools, deep snow and ice, and permits are needed to walk certain tribal lands. The Freshwater Lake had several areas of open water and had a pair of Spectacled Eiders (only two pairs breed in the area), four King Eiders, Steller's Eiders, Tundra Swans and three Sabine's Gull.

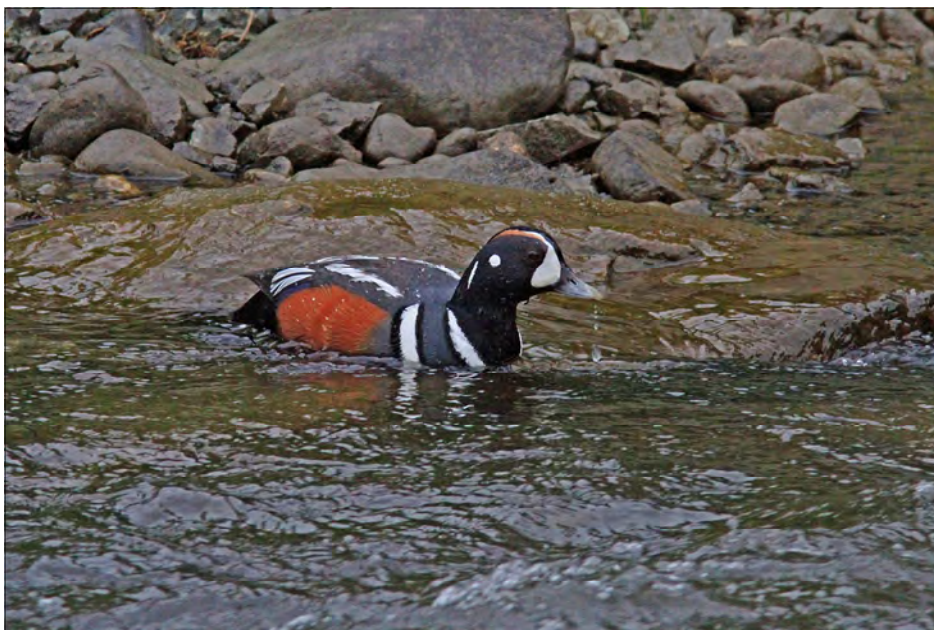
In the general area of Barrow, and even in the town, where there were large melt pools between the houses, Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Glaucous Gulls, Pacific Divers, Red-throated Divers, 3 species of Skua and Snow Buntings were common.

Others included Rough-legged Hawk, White-rumped Sandpipers, Snowy Owl, Long-billed Dowitcher and American Golden Plover. It was a complete surprise to find a pair of Varied Thrushes as their usual habitat is dense, moist woodlands – the nearest being several hundred miles to the south! Barrow does not have a single tree!

Mourning Glory and Green Comma were the only butterflies I saw on the trip. I have not given all the bird species (total seen was 98) or flowers that I found on the trip. Weather was fine throughout – about 18°C in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Tangle Lake, colder in Denali, freezing and windy in Barrow.

As some of you know, I have birded extensively in the USA. Spectacled and Steller's Eider were the only new ones for the USA, being number 666 and 667 respectively.

David Rich



*Above: Harlequin Duck*

*Below: Red-necked Phalarope*



## **THE OUTER HEBRIDES - 2012 and 2014 (with Oriole Birding)**

The Outer Hebrides is a chain of islands approximately 150 miles long on the west coast of Scotland, and I have been fortunate to visit twice in the last three years, staying on South Uist at Lochboisdale on both occasions. This is reached by ferry from Oban, where bird watching begins as Black Guillemot nest in the harbour. On the ferry crossing Puffin, Razorbill and Guillemot were observed together with close views of Manx Shearwaters. Other birds seen were Kittiwake, Iceland Gull and Fulmar. The ferry passes close to Mull and on all outward and return trips, White tailed Eagles were observed.

My visits were timed for the first week of May, because this co-incides with the arrival of the Corncrakes. This is when they are most vocal, as they set up their territories in the patches of Yellow Iris, which are still quite short at this time of year. Most of my sightings have been of head and neck but I have been fortunate to have had full views as they run from one patch of Iris to another. Another reason to visit at this time of year is when the Skuas are on their migration. This is weather dependant, because it requires a south-westerly wind to bring them close to shore. I did dip on Long-tailed Skua on my first visit but made up for it on my second visit, when 9 flew close in. Other skua species were Pomarine (120 plus some with full tail feathers) Arctic and Great Skua. Another visitor has been a Snowy Owl, which seems to stay for a short while on North Uist. Although Corncrakes were heard on other islands, my best views were at RSPB Balranald on North Uist and the headland just north of the reserve was where the four Skua species were seen. Also on North Uist I was fortunate to observe a Lesser Yellowlegs and on the last day news reached us that a Red-necked Phalarope had returned to breed. The reserve is also noted for many wader species and Corn Bunting.

The most noticeable thing about South Uist is the lack of hedges and trees and how the houses are randomly sited giving an open landscape with lots of water. On my last visit there wasn't time to unpack as 3 Golden Eagles were seen over the mountains to the rear of the Hotel. At the same time a Kestrel was hovering over a fence line Other raptors seen were Peregrine, Buzzard and Short-eared Owl. A Cuckoo was seen perched nearby and other birds seen around the hotel were Twite and Common Redpoll, which is slightly larger and more frosty looking than the Lesser Redpoll we see in Wales.

Barra is the only island not connected by a causeway and has to be reached by ferry. It is more vegetated than South Uist and more passerines were seen including Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Rock Pipit and Willow Warbler. Sea watching was productive with summer plumaged Great Northern, Black-throated and Red-throated Divers seen, together with Shag, Gannet, Eider and Red-breasted Merganser. On my first visit a pair of Surf Scoter was seen from the ferry. Summer plumaged waders included Turnstones, Purple Sandpipers, Golden and Grey Plover and Sanderling, which are very different from the drab birds we see in winter. Other waders included Snipe and Curlew displaying and newly arrived Whimbrel. Towards the end of the last visit, news came in of a pair of Dotterel, which had been seen on MoD land. We were rewarded with good views, using the van as a hide. As expected, many species of wildfowl were seen including Whooper and Mute Swan, Pink-footed and Greylag Geese, together with Scaup and Garganey. Other summer migrants included Swallow, Wheatear and Sedge Warbler. Corvids are rare on the Islands with the exception of the Hooded Crow.

Barra produced Both Golden and White-tailed Eagles with Hen Harrier seen on North Uist. Some of the passerines on the Outer Hebrides are sub-species which generally look little different from their mainland cousins, one exception being the Hebridian Wren, which appears slightly browner and a little larger. Eight species of gull were seen including Iceland and Glaucous Gull. Over 105 bird species were seen on each trip.

Adrian Murch

## HOUSE MARTINS IN CARDIFF BAY

### Adventurer's Quay

In 2008, I noticed that there were **House Martins** nesting in Adventurer's Quay, a gated development opposite the office where I worked. Subsequently, I managed to gain access during the nesting season at least once each year.

My criteria for counting a nest as 'this season' are that it looks in good repair and preferably has fresh droppings, feathers or faecal sacs underneath. Of course, if one sees birds entering or leaving or can see or hear the young, then it's certain (and I separately record the number of definitely occupied nests). But you can't wait by each one till this happens on dispersed sites of this size. The maximum number of current nests each year is shown in the following table:-

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
7	21	8	15	13	10	11

**Maximum 'current season' nests at Adventurer's Quay**

The annual figures are not strictly comparable because the survey was not conducted at a fixed time of year. For example, in 2008 and 2010, I only visited in April when a number of nests were still being constructed, which I didn't count. The final numbers were probably closer to the other years. Conversely in 2012, I found 13 nests on a first visit, but later in the season there were only 8 left, almost certainly due to deliberate removal of nests near windows.

I persuaded Cardiff Council, through the Biodiversity Partnership, to produce a "Love your House Martins and leave their nests alone" leaflet, which I delivered to every address in Adventurer's Quay in 2013. It's hard to measure the effect of this, but one hopes it does some good.

### Other Sites

Walking around the Bay earlier this year, I recorded a few House Martin nests in Penarth Marina and Windsor Quay. Judging by the number of birds flying around, I was sure I would find more if I surveyed these two sites in detail.

Having checked that there were no known records of the numbers of nests at these sites, I surveyed them in August. Both areas take a long time to walk round every side of every building, as far as is possible (the nests can be on sides facing any direction). On both developments, residents have been offered the option of having artificial nests put under their eaves. I saw quite a number of these but only two I could say were definitely in use, and a couple more in possible use (which I didn't record), for example showing some slight marks of droppings. Some evidence of nest destruction or removal was seen at both sites and in 2015 I will try to ensure leafleting of all the residents, although this will take thousands of leaflets.

Individual nests could be quite isolated, perhaps 50m or more from the next, or they could be close to or touching others. 'Double' nests are quite common, triples occasionally seen. In Penarth Marina, there were 7 nests on one short stretch of roof (mostly over one window - showing house-holder tolerance). One building had 16 nests.

At Penarth Marina, I found 78 nests that were in good condition, 13 of which I saw being actively used.

In the Windsor Quay – Seager Drive development in Grangetown, I found 19 nests, and saw 3 being used. At both sites there were enough martins flying around to suggest that the number of nests I recorded was realistic. I would estimate that the numbers of nests I recorded are a slight underestimate as some dwellings with steep roofs overhanging the eaves could not be fully examined.

I haven't checked every possible building around the entire bay but I think these are the main sites. If anyone knows of more, please get in touch.

## **Conclusions**

Recording similar data each year is useful. It's even better if the methodology is consistent (time of year, criteria for recording). Recorders deciding to make any survey should consider such details in advance!

As the House Martin flies, these 3 sites are very close and they can certainly all be seen from each other's windows (or roofs). I therefore suggest that the three sites surveyed constitute a super-colony. In 2014, this comprised at least 108 nests. It would be great if we had ringing data to establish how much movement between the sites took place each year.

It is possible there would be more nests if some weren't deliberately removed each year, sometimes after eggs were laid. However, I don't know if birds that lose a nest early on simply rebuild elsewhere; there certainly appears room for more nests at all the sites.

The buildings themselves were mostly built in 1998-2002, demonstrating that House Martins will readily adapt to new locations if the construction is suitable and are comfortable nesting on uPVC, as well as more traditional materials.

I'll try to survey all these sites in future years close to a regular date, such as mid-July, to see how the trends develop. It seems to me that counting apparently active nests is a good way to estimate the actual number of breeding pairs of obvious colonial nesters like House Martins (compare the long running Grey Heron survey). A few years ago, I suggested to Glamorgan Bird Club that nest numbers of this species were reported in the Annual East Glamorgan Bird Report and this is now being done. Of course, this requires known nests to be counted and reported – can you help?

Paul Seligman

[pimms08-gbc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pimms08-gbc@yahoo.co.uk)

@PaulSeligNature

*Paul has created a map of the colonies. Visit :*

[www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zD5RtzWT4CKs.kGYUNVwCiBEk](http://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zD5RtzWT4CKs.kGYUNVwCiBEk)

Footnote : Paul has represented the club on the Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership for several years. However he has found attending meetings quite difficult recently. Is there anyone out there who would be able to take on this role? It involves attendance at three meetings a year and liaising with the club on bird related issues. Contact Paul if you can help. - Ed.



## Book Review

*Birds in a cage* by Derek Niemann (Short Books ISBN 978-1-78072-136-1)

This is a fascinating account of four British POWs who escaped the horrors of internment by setting up a bird watching society in their prison camp(s). Not only did they involve and educate fellow internees but they also managed to invoke interest amongst their German captors.

The names of these POWs may be known to you as three of them went on to become major figures in British ornithology after the war - Peter Conder, George Waterston, John (Edward) Buxton and John Barrett. The book follows their years of internment in various POW camps and their attempts to overcome hardship and boredom via a shared love of birds. The lack of binoculars/field guides/notebooks was no barrier as they embarked on detailed observations of the birds that visited their camps. Indeed many of their observations were later published in the *New Naturalist* and *British Birds*.

The text is well written and a lot of research was obviously undertaken. I found the inclusion of some of Buxton's poetry rather irrelevant although it did serve to give some insight into the character of the man. Overall an interesting read.

Alan Rosney

## BTO NEWS



### WeBS Update

September marks the beginning of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) <<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs/taking-part>> core count period which continues on until March. Having said that, most of us WeBS volunteers enter counts for our sites for some months outside this period too . . . we enjoy the survey so much! 35 volunteers now count 36 sites here in the recording area of 'Eastern Glamorgan' – varying in size from Rhymney Estuary and Cardiff Bay to Glamorgan Canal and Pentwyn Pond. I'm glad to say that, over the last few months we've welcomed some new volunteers to our local team.

Thanks to John Duffy, Peterston-super-Ely Moors is being counted for WeBS for the first time since 1985 and Cardiff University student, Sophie-Lee Williams is now the counter at Fochriw Reservoir. You can volunteer on more than one wetland site if you like and Craig Watson has done just that by taking on both Parc Tredelerch (Lamby Lake) and Pentwyn Pond – the latter site has never been counted for WeBS before. Another new site for WeBS, Pwll Waun Cynon, is now being counted thanks to Phil Hill. You might be surprised to hear that there's been a 20 year gap since Cyfarthfa Castle Lake, Merthyr last had a visit from a WeBS counter. I'm delighted to say that that gap has now been filled by Carys Solman.

We said some farewells too. Geographically, Cardiff Bay may be in Eastern Glamorgan, but it forms part of the Severn Estuary (Wales) WeBS area – an area managed by WeBS Local Organiser, Al Venables. The site has been counted for many years by Peter Ferns. Peter stood down this year and another Peter – Peter Howlett – has taken his place. Even though the Bay doesn't come under the Eastern Glamorgan WeBS area I'm sure you'll join me in saying a big 'thank you' to both of them.

A local hot spot under serious threat of ‘development’ is Rhaslas Pond. Mike Hogan has been visiting the site regularly and his records have shown how important it is, particularly for migrating wildfowl and waders. Sadly, Mike has now stepped down as a WeBS counter at Rhaslas, as has Neville Davies from counting Caerphilly Castle Moat and I’d like to thank them both for their efforts.

This leaves us with vacancies at two important wetland sites within ‘Eastern Glamorgan’. Rhaslas Pond has shown that almost anything can turn up there – it might be the only WeBS site in the UK with a Long-billed Dowitcher amongst its recent counts! It’s important that data continues to be gathered from there and let’s hope it’s spared from destruction. Caerphilly Castle Moat is important because it has been almost continuously counted for WeBS since 1991. That continuity of data is so valuable and so I’m really keen to find a new counter for the site. WeBS is a great survey if you’re new to bird surveys or an old hand at them. If you’re interested in taking on one of these two sites, or if you’d like to take on another site in East Glamorgan <<http://eastglambto.wordpress.com/surveys/webs/>>, I’d be delighted to hear from you. Please get in touch for a no obligation chat.

Daniel Jenkins-Jones *WeBS Local Organiser for East Glamorgan*

h: 02920 621394; m: 07828 093613; e: [eastglamwebs@gmail.com](mailto:eastglamwebs@gmail.com)

### **International Golden Plover Survey, 11 - 12 October 2014**

On 11-12 October 2014 (WeBS Count weekend) there will be a coordinated census of Golden Plovers across Europe, repeating comparable surveys carried out in 2008 and 2003.

The majority of Golden Plovers are concentrated in northwest Europe in October making it the best time to assess the status of the population. As in 2008, the BTO will be collating all counts of Golden Plover within the framework of an International Wader Study Group project. For the UK, Golden Plover numbers provided through standard WeBS Core Counts will represent the key source of data in combination with records provided through BirdTrack. Volunteers are encouraged to submit counts of Golden Plover (and Lapwing) into BirdTrack <<http://www.birdtrack.net/>> over that weekend.

### **Winter Thrushes**

BTO staff has been busy checking the Winter Thrush data and following up queries with volunteers. The checking is very nearly complete. Through September work begins on analysing the Winter Thrush dataset with the aim of producing population estimates for the key species, looking for interesting patterns in behaviour throughout the winter and between winters, and producing some key statistics.

Wayne Morris *BTO Regional Representative for East Glamorgan*

h: 01443 430284; m: 07890 528926; e: [eastglambto@gmail.com](mailto:eastglambto@gmail.com)

## BTO GARDEN BIRDWATCH



### National Bird Vote

Do you think Britain should have a national bird? David Lindo (aka the Urban Birder) thinks so. You have until the end of this month to choose the six birds (from a shortlist of 60) that you think should go through to the final vote. For more information and to cast your vote, visit [www.votenationalbird.com](http://www.votenationalbird.com). Would any of the following garden birds get your vote? Whilst the vote is not being organised by the BTO, the data used below has been collected by their Garden BirdWatch survey.

**Blue Tit** A common garden bird that is recorded by over 90% of Garden BirdWatchers.

**Carrion Crow** A territorial species meaning gardens are most likely to be visited by a local pair and their young.

**Chaffinch** Lower than average numbers visited gardens last autumn, probably due to a poor breeding season and a bumper seed crop outside of gardens.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** Young birds are brought to feeding stations in the summer. 2013 was a good beech mast year resulting in a lower-than-normal autumn reporting rate in gardens.

**Greenfinch** Since the 2006 outbreak of the disease *Trichomonosis*, weekly counts no longer show much seasonal variation.

**Pied Wagtail** Usually only seen in 10% of gardens, the reporting rate doubled during the cold spell of January 2013.

**Song Thrush** Since 1967 the populations have fallen by 57%, a trend that's reflected in the garden reporting rate reducing year on year. This is a cold weather visitor to gardens.

**Starling** More birds visit gardens in May and June when adults have young to feed. Unfortunately this is a species in decline.

**Swallow** A summer visitor that peaks in gardens in August before migrating back to Africa.

**Wren** One of our most widespread birds, numbers took a knock during the long 2012/13 winter.

### Make Your Garden Count!

Do you enjoy watching birds and other creatures in your garden? Do you want to help track their fortunes? Then why not join BTO Garden BirdWatch! Please contact me for a free enquiry pack or to book a talk (Swansea and surrounding areas).

Amanda Skull, Garden BirdWatch Ambassador  
[gbw@hiafi.co.uk](mailto:gbw@hiafi.co.uk) [www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw)

07952 758293 (evenings & weekends only)  
Follow me on Twitter @amanda\_skull

## FUTURE EVENTS

### Field trips

Friday 24th -Sunday 26th October	Portland Obs weekend
Thursday 13th November	Penclacwydd WWT
Sunday 30th November	Labrador Bay & Dawlish
Sunday 14th December	Whiteford Point
Sunday 11th January	Bridgwater Bay
Wednesday 21st January	Cosmeston & Cardiff Bay
Sunday 1st February	South Gower Coast

Contact John Wilson at least seven days before the due date. Departure times vary but John will be able to give information for each trip. These trips are suitable for birders of all levels.

### Indoor Meetings Held at Kenfig Reserve Centre at 7.45 p.m.

Tuesday 7th October	Birding in the NAR - Paul Bowden
Tuesday 4th November	Birdlife from Finland - Cate Barrow
Tuesday 2nd December	Central India & Sri Lanka - Richard Smith
Tuesday 6th January	Members' Own
Tuesday 3rd February	ID night - Herons, Crakes & Rails

### Monthly walk - Kenfig NNR

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

To receive updates of club events, please send an email to the Secretary, from the email address that you wish to receive the updates. Emails should be sent to [glambirds@gmail.com](mailto:glambirds@gmail.com)

## CONTACT DETAILS

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

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Membership Secretary/Newsletter	Indoor Meetings Organiser	Publicity Officer	Mapmate Hub
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