



# NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015

www.glamorganbirds.org.uk  
Registered Charity 1129684



IN THIS EDITION	Page
Editorial notes	2
Recent bird sightings	3
Ty'n-y-Caeau Farm	4
Club news/Committee update	5
Birding in your local community	6
Photo Gallery	7
Tidal lagoons on the Severn Estuary	8
Confusion species - Curlew & Whimbrel	11
Reserve spotlight - Parc Penallta	12
Swifts need your help	13
Trip reports	14
BTO News	17
BTO Garden Bird Watch	18
Future events/Contacts	19



Dunlin at Portobello © Paul Roberts



Water Rail at Forest Farm © Cliff Woodhead



A stunning shot of the Great White Egret at Kenfig © Jeff Slocombe



Robin in Pant Norton © Gary Light

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** for the next newsletter is **Wednesday 30th December**

Follow Glamorgan Bird Club on Facebook and Twitter





## EDITORIAL NOTES

Welcome to the autumn edition of the GBC newsletter. There have been some interesting birds seen in our area recently, as you can see in Paul Roberts' regular feature on pages 3 & 4. I presaged the arrival of Wood Sandpipers in my "confusion species" article in the summer edition. Perhaps I should buy more lottery tickets.

Ceri Jones has been undertaking research in to the proposed tidal lagoon in Cardiff. He has written an article to keep the membership abreast of developments. (see page 8). If it gets the go-ahead, it is likely to have major implications for the bird life of the area. In a similar vein, in the last edition I reported on the rejection of the Nant Lesg open cast proposal by Caerphilly Council. As expected, the developers are exploring an appeal. Watch this space.

In August, I spent a lovely day at one of SEWBReC's bioblitz events. The venue was the Darwonno Field Centre in Llanwonno. We spent the day investigating the flora and fauna of the site. It was good to meet up with fellow wildlife recorders and to be able to add "new" species to the site list. The bird list was actually not particularly spectacular but Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher were welcome finds and nesting Grey Wagtails were a surprise. We had hoped to find Crossbills in the conifer belt but without success. If you get the chance to join in with one of these events, by all means go along. You don't need to be an expert and you will undoubtedly learn a lot from the other participants, as well as contributing to some citizen science.

Julia Barrel and Linda Newton have a passion for Swifts. They are the local representatives for the Swifts Local Network. BBS data has shown an average decline in Swift numbers of around 3% per year, which equates to a halving of their numbers over a 20 year period. As a result they are now amber listed. Julia has contributed an article on page 13 that highlights some actions that YOU could take to help this species.

It is not only Swifts that are declining. Large organisations such as the RSPB, BTO, WWT and WTSWW are actively involved in the conservation of both species and habitat. How can smaller organisations such as GBC help? The committee have been discussing various strategies that could be taken to help in this regard. One example has been the sowing of a sacrificial crop on Ty'n-y-Caeau Farm. Dave Carrington has provided an update on page 4. Elsewhere we have provided bird boxes to several schemes in our recording area.

Many thanks to Paul Seligman for his article on bird walks and to all the photographers who have submitted photos for the newsletter. I always get more photos than I can use, so I've included a "Photo Gallery" on page 7. Should this be a regular feature? Let me know what you think. As ever I'm always on the look out for articles. Have you got anything that you could contribute?

**\* Footnote : Apologies if you've received a rogue email from me or the bird club recently. My email was infected with malware. I hope that it hasn't infected your system. I have taken steps to clean things up my end and hope it has cured the problem**

*Alan Rosney*



## RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

### July 2015

An adult Rose-coloured Starling was seen at Porthcawl (25th) and may have been the individual that was found a few days later at nearby Aberavon, West Glamorgan. A Great White Egret flew over Lamby Lake (3rd) and later the same day this, or another, turned up at Kenfig, subsequently remaining throughout the month. Wood Sandpipers were at Ogmores Estuary and Llanilid. Three Avocets flew past Sker Point.



Wood Sandpiper and Black-tailed Godwit on the Ogmores © Jeff Slocombe

Little Egrets occurred at Kenfig and Ogmores Estuary. Waders included Little Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit (4), Bar-tailed Godwit and Greenshank at Ogmores Estuary, Greenshank and Knot at Kenfig and up to five Green Sandpipers at Llanilid. A Hobby was at Parc Slip. The first returning Whinchat was at Rudry Common. Choughs bred successfully on the Heritage Coast. Marsh Tits were recorded at Kenfig for only the second time.

### August 2015

Kenfig: A Great White Egret lingered until late in the month. A wing-tagged juvenile Marsh Harrier was found to have originated from near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. Unusual records concerned a Sandwich Tern at the pool and a Marsh Tit trapped for ringing. Five Knot were at Sker and 10 Black-tailed Godwits dropped in at the pool.

Ogmores Estuary: A Marsh Harrier (juvenile) was a first site record. Waders included Black-tailed Godwit, eight Bar-tailed Godwits, three Knot, Greenshank, three Green Sandpipers and two Whimbrel. An unseasonal Shag was off the rocks at Ogmores-by-Sea. At least four Kingfishers were around.

Other Sites: Sightings from Lavernock included Marsh Harrier, Willow Tit (first and third site records, respectively) and Hobby. A Marsh Harrier was found at Rhaslas Pond; it was a good month for the species.



## September 2015

Kenfig: A Cattle Egret arrived (30th), the sixth species of heron to be recorded on the reserve this year. A Great White Egret was around until early in the month. A Red-throated Diver was off Sker. Notable raptors comprised two Ospreys, a Hen Harrier and two Hobbies. Waders included a Ruff, two Grey Plovers and 11 Knot. An Arctic Skua was offshore and two Black Terns were at the pool.

Other Sites: A Glossy Ibis overflew Lavernock Point (29th), where three Red Kites, an Arctic skua and a Ruff were also recorded. A Wryneck was in a Bridgend garden (12th & 14th). A probable Black Kite was near Tonyrefail (8th). A Red-throated Diver and a Storm Petrel were seen from Southerndown. Three Pale-bellied Brent Geese were at Aberthaw. Ogmere Estuary held two Shovelers, three Pintails and two Little Egrets, with another Little Egret seen at Cardiff Bay. Hobbies were observed at Llanishen, Pontyclun and Porthcawl. A Greenshank was heard at night over Whitchurch. Gamebirds of interest were a Quail at Cogan and a Grey Partridge at Rhoose. Black Terns were at Caerphilly Castle Moat and Lisvane Reservoir (2). Six White Wagtails were at Rhaslas Pond. A Cetti's Warbler turned up at Tirfounder Fields, Aberdare. A migrant Pied Flycatcher dropped in at Llanilid. Both Reed Warbler and Redstart passed through at Radyr Floodplain. A Marsh Tit was a scarce sighting for Roath Park. At least 10 Choughs frequented the Heritage Coast. Some good visible migration reports were received from coastal locations, most notably at Cardiff Barrage, where a huge movement of 44,000 Swallows occurred (16th), and at Dunraven, where 620 Crossbills passed by during the last three days of the month and where Siskin migration was also much in evidence, maximum 470 (28th). Scarcer species from these sites during 'vis mig' watches were Hobby and Ring Ouzel at Cardiff Barrage, and two Merlins at Dunraven.

*Paul Roberts*

## TY'N-Y-CAEAU FARM

As most of you are probably aware, we have an arrangement with local farmer, John Evans, to sow a strip of sacrificial seed crops (see photo below) as a winter food source for farmland birds. A couple of Conquerer feeders are on site to provide additional food. We have volunteers, who regularly top up the feeders, however there is still room for further help. If you think you can help, please contact David Carrington. The sacrificial crop, combined with self-seeding plants, has proved a great success in attracting species such as Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Yellowhammer. In addition, scarcer species, such as Grey Partridge, have been seen. The area is monitored by the Kenfig Ringing Group, who have been ringing birds here for several years.



The field is situated alongside the Marcross to Monkton road (SS9169). Look for the barn conversion and the field is directly opposite. Please don't go in to the field. Viewing from the road is quite easy. The crop has been growing well this year. We have noticed that the self-sown Chicory isn't as vigorous as in past years. Perhaps some fresh seed is needed next year.

Photo © David Carrington (Kenfig Ringing Group)



## CLUB NEWS

### Members' News

We have only one new member this time - Janette Watkins from Caerphilly. Welcome Janette. We hope to see you at a club event in the near future. Membership has fallen somewhat, with ten members not renewing this year. The current membership stands at 250 (which equates to around 350, if family memberships are taken into account). Many of our new members are recruited via recommendations from current members - please spread the word.

Sadly, we learned that former club member, Kevin Oates died in July. He was actively involved in environmental matters, working as a Countryside Ranger for RCT. He helped the club by erecting nest boxes on local reserves. A true gentleman.

### Committee Update

The Committee has met four times since the last newsletter:

- David Carrington (per Neil Donaghy) reported that the sacrificial seed crop at Ty'n-y-Caeau Farm had been planted and was growing well (see page 4)
- Reciprocal arrangements with WOS (Welsh Ornithologist Society) were discussed
- Ceri Jones has corresponded with other organisations re. the proposed tidal lagoon in Cardiff
- Several small project grants were considered. A potential project partner was visited
- John Wilson has been putting the finishing touches to the 2014 Bird Report
- Paul Parsons represented the club at a Llynfi Community Woodland Project meeting
- A collection of the late Maurice Chown's bird books has been donated to the club. These need to be catalogued. Duplicates will be sold in aid of club funds
- Unfortunately Strinda Davies won't be able to lead the Kenfig walks for a couple of months. They will still go ahead however. Meet 9 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month
- We discussed how to best use the data in our local atlas. Recovery programmes for declining species were discussed. To date, Willow Tit, Kestrel and Swift have been considered. We can provide more nest boxes and are always on the look out for wood (particularly exterior plywood) to construct boxes. In the past we have received wood from local businesses, such as Topstak Chimneys from Cowbridge. If you can source any wood, it would be gratefully received. We hold regular workshop sessions building boxes. If you are able to help, please come along
- John Wilson, David Carrington & Alan Rosney helped out at the Guides/RSPB day at Kenfig

### Fundraising

Remember that funds can be raised for the club (at no cost to you) by using the Easyfunding and Easysearch websites. These can be found at the foot of the GBC home page. Just click on Easyfundraising for all your online purchases and on Easysearch for all your searches. Every time you do so, funds are raised for the club, depending on what you buy and from whom. Christmas is coming and I'm sure that many of you use online shopping for purchasing Christmas presents.

*Anne Wilson*



## BIRDING IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

In September, I led two 'bird walks' in Fairwater Park in Cardiff (known locally as 'The Dell'). This was in response to public demand, in the shape of a request that I repeat the bird walk that I did a few years ago, under the auspices of the now defunct "Friends" group. I decided to try one "Beginners' Walk" on the Saturday, followed by an early morning walk on Sunday for the more experienced or committed.

The walks were publicised on Streetlife, where perhaps 20 people said they would like to attend one or the other. (If you haven't tried Streetlife, I thoroughly recommend it as an on-line community notice-board). I also put laminated posters in local shops and a church hall, and they appeared on the Cardiff Parks Wildlife page on Facebook. I've now thought of many more places to publicise any future walks (the library, free and paid for newspapers, community halls and other shops). Both days were clear and sunny, though the early morning walk was quite chilly.

Alec Stewart, in his role as Community Park ranger, joined me for the Beginners' Walk, along with four local residents. Not one of the latter was aware that their binoculars had a dioptre adjustment, so they learnt something from the start. I encouraged basic questions about birds and we had a very leisurely walk, seeing some 17 species. They may have been all common to an experienced birder, but the beginners delighted in seeing a Coal Tit well. I explained where and how you might see particular species in the different mini-habitats that the park provides at various times of year.

On the Sunday, there were four attendees, including my partner Janet and a visitor staying with her. As you'd expect, we saw more species as it was early morning— 27 in all (making 31 across the two walks). Heron, Treecreeper, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Chiffchaff, Great Spotted Woodpecker and two Swallows, flying south, were probably the pick of the bunch.

I enjoyed the walks, but for such small numbers was it worth it? Here are some messages posted subsequently on Streetlife (typos corrected):-

*Pat G: Just been for the bird walk in the Dell. It was great, the weather was perfect, and with binoculars (thanks Paul for the loan) and an ear for the birdsong it was an entirely new perspective on a familiar park. Thanks also Paul and to Alec the ranger for such informative and friendly leading. I was particularly thrilled to watch a little coal tit in the pine trees and catch a glimpse of a tree creeper on a big chestnut.*

*Juli P: Many thanks to Paul Seligman and Alec for sharing their knowledge with the four of us birders yesterday morning/early afternoon. They even managed to organise warm weather for us. More like this, please.*

*John S: Great walk and good company this morning. Thank you Paul.... We will have to do it again sometime.*

*Louise G: Lovely walk this morning - cold in the shade but brilliant sunshine illuminating tops of the trees. We saw woodpecker - the red one; I can recognise a goldfinch now. The others saw a bullfinch and I missed it... but on my way home, just over the bridge there he sat - a beautiful ball of bright pinky-red fluff with a suave black head (ok it might not have been the same one!). Let's organise another soon!*



That's four very satisfied customers, one of whom was interested in the Club (another had already attended a field trip at my suggestion). Janet and friend also enjoyed the walk. So it was definitely worth doing. Not everyone who said they'd come on Streetlife turned up but a couple of people messaged me with their apologies and said they hoped I'd do another one in future. I intend to repeat something similar in a few months' time and to continue in that vein if support continues or grows.

I'd like to suggest that other club members could do something similar on one of their local patches. You don't have to be a top expert; I don't consider myself the best at ID but I know I can name anything I'm likely to see well in the park. Ideally, have a second birder with you for moral and practical support. Make sure your publicity is clear about date, time and place to meet, what will happen if weather is poor, whether it's suitable for children, any clothing requirements, and whether binoculars are essential. Good luck.

*Paul Seligman*

## PHOTO GALLERY

Here are some photos submitted by local birders



Peregrine at Southerndown © Gary Light



Male Nightjar in the Lynfi valley © Jeff Slocombe



Turnstone on Sully beach © Hayden Lack



## TIDAL LAGOONS ON THE SEVERN ESTUARY

Earlier this year, Tidal Lagoon Power started the planning process for consent to build a tidal lagoon for electricity generation along the coast between Cardiff and Newport. Known as *Tidal Lagoon Cardiff*, the plan is for a 22km long breakwater wall starting to the east of Cardiff Bay barrage, going half way across the Bristol Channel toward Somerset, then running north-east to join the coast close to St Brides near Newport.



Tidal Lagoon Cardiff is just one of 3 tidal lagoons proposed for the part of the Severn Estuary designated as a Special Area of Conservation, a Special Protection Area for Birds and a Ramsar site. The other lagoons are along the coast from Newport towards the Severn bridges and in Bridgwater Bay.

Individually and together, these lagoons clearly have the potential to have a huge impact on the bird and other wildlife of the Severn Estuary and adjacent areas such as the Somerset Levels. Much survey work is now underway to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment for Tidal Lagoon Cardiff to inform the planning decision.



## Why Build These Tidal Lagoons?

In total, Tidal Lagoon Power is looking to build 6 tidal lagoons, 4 in the Bristol Channel, 1 in West Cumbria and 1 in Colwyn Bay. In total, they are claimed to be capable of supplying 8% of the UK's total electricity needs. On its own, Tidal Lagoon Cardiff is claimed to be capable of supplying the electricity needs of all homes in Wales. They are potentially a significant source of renewable energy for the UK. Once built, the tidal lagoons are intended to be operational for 120 years.

## How does it work?

It's a man-made breakwater wall in the sea, generating power from the rise and fall of the tides. The tallest/deepest parts of the wall contain turbine houses, which generate electricity when water flows past the turbine blades. This flow is managed by wicket gates. When the flood tide starts to come in, the wicket gates are closed and the sea outside the wall is held back and rises around the lagoon. This creates a difference in water levels on either side of the seawall, which is known as 'head'. Once a sufficient head height is reached the wicket gates are opened and water flows through turbines into the lagoon to generate electricity.

The wicket gates are then closed and this process occurs in reverse on the ebb tide: the water is held back inside the lagoon, creating a head height relative to the receding tide. The sluices are then opened, releasing the lagoon waters through the turbines.

The main sluice gates are used towards the end of each generation cycle to both increase energy yield and match the natural tidal cycle as closely as possible. The area of the sluice gates (which are completely submerged or drowned) allow high flow rates into or out of the lagoon in order to either empty or fill the last layer of water. This in turn maximises the head difference on the return tide and increases energy yield.

High and low tides occur inside the lagoon approximately two hours after they occur outside the lagoon. Electricity generation will happen on both the flood (in-coming) tide and the ebb (out-going) tides for approximately 14 hours per day.

## Planning Process

Energy infrastructure projects such as Tidal Lagoon Cardiff have not been devolved to the Welsh Government for development consent. Instead, the planning process is run by the Planning Inspectorate, the UK government agency responsible for examining planning applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects. The ultimate decision on whether or not to approve the Tidal Lagoon Cardiff project sits in London with the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

The timetable published by the Planning Inspectorate for Tidal Lagoon Cardiff envisages that after substantial consultation with interested parties, a formal planning application will be submitted by Tidal Lagoon Cardiff in the third quarter of 2017, with the Secretary of State required to give a decision within approximately 15 months of submission.



## RSPB's view

The RSPB was strongly opposed on environmental grounds to historic (and now abandoned) proposals for a Severn barrage. It has been cautiously supportive of Tidal Lagoon Power's Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, on the basis that it was relatively small in scale, was not located in the SAC/SPA/Ramsar area of the Bristol Channel and, in construction and operation, could provide very useful data on the actual (as opposed to modelled) impact of a tidal lagoon on its environment.

RSPB is very keen that the planning process for Tidal Lagoon Cardiff (and the other proposed lagoons) is informed by the actual monitoring data from an operational Swansea Bay lagoon rather than rushed through before this new data becomes available. It remains to be seen whether RSPB will get its wish in this regard.

## Will Tidal Lagoon Cardiff happen?

It's too early to say. The final design of the lagoon has yet to be determined and will inevitably be shaped by the pre-application consultation process over the next 2 years. It's heavily dependent on subsidy in the form of a guaranteed (and likely quite high) electricity price, which the government may or may not be willing to commit to.

Like any technology, it's exposed to other technologies coming along in the meantime. For example, there's a recent proposal to build a tidal fence across the Bristol Channel, which is claimed to have less environmental impact than the tidal lagoons.

It also has to comply with the EU's Habitats directive, and the compensation costs for environmental damage caused by the lagoon could be substantial.

## Want to know more?

Dr Jeanette Reis of Tidal Lagoon Power is giving a talk entitled 'Tidal Lagoons and the Environment - Challenges and Opportunities' to the Cardiff Group of the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales at 7.30pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November. More details at [www.wtswwcardiff.org.uk/programme.html](http://www.wtswwcardiff.org.uk/programme.html).

*Ceri Jones*

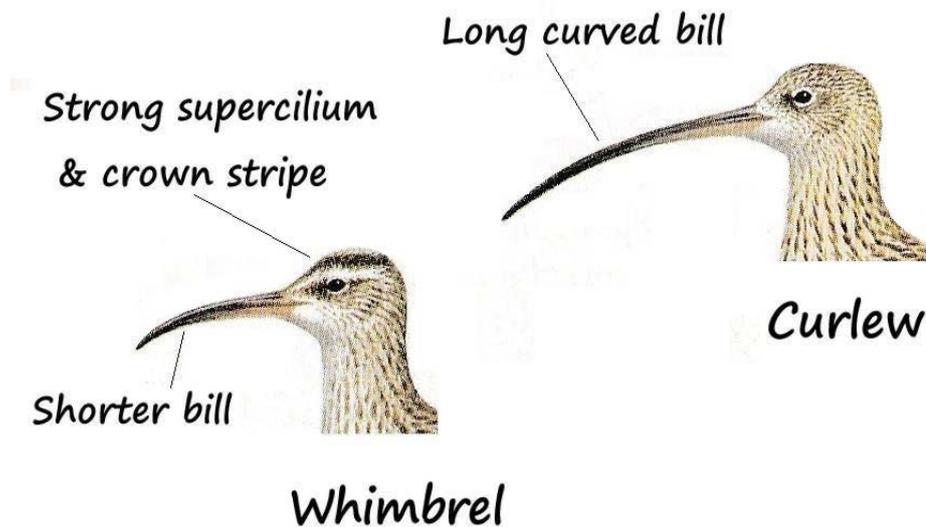
### **GBC MERCHANDISE**

Christmas is coming. Don't forget that club polo shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies and zip fleeces are available. They come in bottle green with a gold badge. Prices are: polo £10, sweatshirt £14, hoodie £17.50 and fleece £20. Add £3 if p & p is required. Contact Alan Rosney if you are interested.



## CONFUSION SPECIES - CURLEW & WHIMBREL

In this edition we are looking at two waders - Curlew and Whimbrel. Whilst Curlew is quite common on our coasts in winter, Whimbrel is more likely to be seen on passage in autumn and spring. Curlew is just hanging on as a breeding bird in our area, whereas Whimbrel breeds in Shetland, Orkney and the far north of Scotland.



Whimbrel is much smaller and stockier than Curlew (37-45cm cf. 48-57cm). The bill looks quite straight but curves down at the tip. Curlews have longer, evenly curved bills (beware male Curlews have shorter bills than females).

The most obvious difference is the head pattern. Curlews have a rather plain head, whilst Whimbrels have a marked supercilium and a crown stripe. Another word of caution, some Curlews can have a hint of a pale crown stripe.

In flight, the Curlew has dark outer primaries and primary coverts. It has a slow languid flight. A Whimbrel's wings are darker and more uniform. They are also more triangular producing quicker wing beats than Curlew.

The calls are very different. Curlew has its familiar *cur-lew* call or it can produce a long drawn out bubbling call. Whimbrel has a seven note rippling call.

Curlews can be found on most of our coast. The best places to find Whimbrel are Kenfig (Sker and sometimes on the golf course) and Ogmores. In the east try Rumney Great Wharf.

Recent UK occurrences of Hudsonian Whimbrel are worthy of a mention. The North American race of Whimbrel has a brown lower back and rump with brown underwings, grey upper parts and a mottled chest.

The pictures have been adapted from The Macmillan Bird Identification Guide.



## RESERVE SPOTLIGHT - PARC PENALLTA (ST1395 / CF82 7GL)



This article was prompted by the recent club trip to Parc Penallta and Nelson Wern. Situated just north of Ystrad Mynach, this reclaimed coal spoil area is well worth a visit. To get there from Ystrad Mynach, follow the signs to Penallta Industrial Estate. The entrance to the park is located midway between Ystrad Mynach and Gelligaer (look for the brown tourist sign). By bus, take the C16 Caerphilly to Nelson or C17 Bargoed to Caerphilly service. The National Cycle trail 47 runs through the site. The main car park is some way in to the park and is now pay and display. There is an alternative car park midway along the Nelson road. There are three waymarked trails around the site (the Sultan trail, the Skylark trail and the Woodpecker trail) plus many other footpaths. You can pick up a leaflet in the main car park or at the education centre.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature is the 200m long earth sculpture of Sultan, the pit pony. Much of the upper part of the site is made up of grassland with scattered bushes. Look for Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and finches. In summer, warblers can be found in the bushes. Lapwings have bred in this locale in recent years. The plant life is interesting with orchids being present and butterflies are abundant.

As you drop down to the lower part of the site there are some excellent viewpoints from which raptors may be seen. At the base of the slope are several reed fringed pools, which are worth investigating. Both Little Grebes and Kingfishers are regular. In summer, Reed Warblers may be seen and several dragonfly species have been recorded.

A winter visit is worthwhile. Alongside the railway line, Redwings and Fieldfares may be seen stripping the bushes of their berries and Siskin and Redpoll are likely. This area is one of the few sites in Eastern Glamorgan where Willow Tit may be seen. Follow the cycle trail up to Nelson Wern to increase your chances of seeing one.



## **SWIFTS NEED YOUR HELP!**

A third of British Swifts have been lost since 1995 (BTO). The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but it is thought that the loss of nest sites is probably an important factor. Swifts nest in the eaves of houses and in holes in brickwork. They are only here between May and August during which time they breed. They then fly back to Africa for the winter. The renovation and replacement of roofs, soffits and fascias often means that access to their nest sites is lost. Swifts tend to nest in colonies and are loyal to their nests, returning to the same one year after year. There are a number of ways that we can all help.

### **Find and record your local swift nest sites**

This can be quite tricky! The best time to do this is dusk. You'll need to keep your wits about you as they are very speedy and fly straight into their nests - so they're really easy to miss. The other way of finding the nests is to wait until it's dark (from early June onwards) and then walk along the street where you think they're nesting. If they are, you'll hear a soft chirruping sound coming from the roof.

Please log the address of the property and record your findings on these websites -

<http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/recording-form.page>  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/applications/swiftsurvey/>

Keep your county ecologist informed. The importance of this is that if planning applications are made for the buildings in which swifts nest, the Council can require the applicant to retain the nest site or build a "swift brick" or two into the building. This should help to preserve nest sites and hence swifts.

### **Install swift nest boxes on your property**

There are now a number of swift nest box suppliers. In order to attract them to your boxes, you will also need to play swift calls. Further details about where to buy and site the boxes and how to broadcast swift calls can be found here - <http://www.swift-conservation.org/> If you haven't got a suitable site (or even if you have!), are there any buildings in your area, such as schools or churches, that might be suitable? How about asking if they might be interested in helping swifts? You could also ask your Council to include provision for swifts in new buildings as part of the planning process. This will help to ensure that swifts continue to have nest sites in the future.

### **Join the Swift Local Network**

There is now a network of swift enthusiasts across the UK which allows the many small groups and individuals working on swift conservation to share experiences and expertise, and work together closely. To find out more email [swiftslocalnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:swiftslocalnetwork@gmail.com)



In Cardiff, we have been logging swift nest sites for 4 years now. This has proved to be extremely important and has resulted in a swift nest colony in a Cardiff University property being saved. We reported that we had found the colony to the University, who had no idea that it was there. They then contacted us to explain that they needed to do some refurbishment work to the roof. With the help of Swift Conservation, we were able to advise the University how they could undertake the work, whilst successfully retaining access for the swifts. The University has also installed dozens of swift boxes on their estate this year.

If you'd like to get involved or want to know more, do please get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards -

Julia - email [jsbarrell@hotmail.com](mailto:jsbarrell@hotmail.com)

Linda - email [wyeverne.lin@gmail.com](mailto:wyeverne.lin@gmail.com)

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

In each edition of the newsletter I include a brief summary of the various events that the club has undertaken, not least of which are the accounts of recent outings. The numbers participating in these have been rather inconsistent of late. I did a quick count of the number of species seen on club trips in the last year and it came to a total of 188. Other wildlife, such as mammals, butterflies, dragonflies and plants are regularly seen as well. Why don't you come along? The walking isn't too arduous and you'll have the chance to meet other people with similar interests to yourself.

*Ed.*

### **Parc Penallta & Nelson Wern - July 8th 2015**

There were only five for this one. We began at the main car park of Parc Penallta. (Note that the council have just installed pay & display boxes here). One of the rangers had scattered some seed in the car park, which was attracting quite a few birds, such as Robin (with juveniles), Chaffinch, Dunnock, Blackbird, Magpie etc. Overhead there was a steady stream of Swallows, House Martins and Swifts and in the distance a Buzzard was hanging in the stiff northerly breeze. In the bushes below the car park a Whitethroat was singing but out of view and a Green Woodpecker was heard yaffling. Here we saw a roving flock of Long-tailed Tits, plus Great Spotted Woodpecker, Song Thrush, Goldcrest, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler. As we watched the last named, we realised there was a family party of at least five birds present. We descended to the lower part of the reserve, skirting around the horse sculpture. There are several ponds at the base of the slope, where we added Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Reed Warbler, Bullfinch, Moorhen and Mallard to our day list, plus dozens of tiny froglets hopping across the path.

After lunch we headed for Nelson Wern, hoping to see Willow Tit. Unfortunately we were out of luck but we did add Sparrowhawk and Mistle Thrush to the day list. There were plenty of butterflies on the wing with Small Skipper and Ringlet being the most numerous.



### **Parc Cwm Dare - July 19th 2015**

A much better turn out this time with nineteen participants. Following early rain, the weather cleared, resulting in a glorious summer's day. Birding wasn't easy (as is typical of mid July). Over the town of Aberdare there were plenty of Swifts and House Martins present. On the walk up to the lake we saw Mistle Thrush, Greenfinch, Blackcap and heard both Siskin and Nuthatch. On the lake there were four Little Grebes, a dozen Mallard, a juvenile Heron, plus both Coot and Moorhen. The star here was undoubtedly the Kingfisher that posed on a dead branch for all to see. (another was seen later on the small reservoir).

In the upper part of the park we added Goldfinch, Bullfinch and Jay to our day list. Here there were several Lesser Redpolls picking seeds from the Alder trees. In the base of the cwm several Redstarts were present, with at least one juvenile bird amongst them. The sheep fields proved to be the best place to see Green Woodpeckers, with at least five present. On the cwm Kestrel, Buzzard, Raven and Peregrine were seen.

The butterfly count was quite impressive with ten species seen, including quite a few of the striking Dark Green Fritillaries. A couple of Common Lizards were also seen. At the end of our walk we opted for a cuppa in the courtyard, where several Swallows were swooping over our heads. We found several occupied nests in this area.

### **The Bloreng - August 5th 2015**

There were ten participants for this trip, on an overcast, blustery day. The wind meant that most of the birds were keeping their heads down. But we were soon on to a couple of Wheatears and a Stonechat. Our quarry was of course Red Grouse, so we headed for the heather-clad areas. A group of five Ravens were using the wind to soar over the mountain but there was no sign of Grouse. Eventually Andrew Bevan saw a couple of heads pop up from the heather - Grouse at last. There were probably four birds, that immediately disappeared over a ridge. Few other birds were seen. A few Meadow Pipits and Stonechats were showing. Around Keeper's Pond a group of Starlings and Goldfinches kept us on our toes. The weather was closing in so we decided to call it a day, but not before Andrew got on to a couple of Whinchats, close to the Foxhunter car park.

### **Portland Obs weekend - Sept 25 - 27th 2015**

Sadly, John Wilson was unwell and was unable to lead our annual visit to Dorset. Undaunted, sixteen club members set off for our stay in the Obs lighthouse. The forecast was for good weather (but not good for blowing in many migrants). We stopped en route at Maiden Castle, to look for Corn Buntings. Only Tim Adcock and Howard Driver managed to get a view. The rest of us were however treated to excellent views of three or four Whinchats here. The Valleys boys (sorry Steve) decided to go to Dorset via Devon (their geography has always been suspect!). They did however see six Cirl Buntings at Labrador Bay.

Other stops en route were Radipole and Lodmoor. There was little of note at Radipole. Mediterranean Gulls seem to be taking over at this site. On to Lodmoor, where Peregrine (carrying Pigeon prey) Common Sandpiper and Black-tailed Godwit were added to our trip list.



On arrival at the Obs, a Little Owl was very vocal in the quarry.

The following morning, we were ready for some sea watching. Sadly there wasn't much on the sea. A few auks (Steve Howcroft got on to a couple of Puffins) and Common Scoters flew past the Bill and there were plenty of Gannets flying by.

Around the Obs, both Wheatear and Yellow Wagtail were logged. After breakfast, we did a walk around the top fields, Several Kestrels and a Sparrowhawk were patrolling the area. Both Hobby and Merlin were also in the area. Probably the "best" bird here was a Woodlark, that was keeping company with some Skylarks.

As there were few migrants around, we decided to go to RSPB Arne after lunch. Here, we were delighted to see Great White Egret, Marsh Harrier and Spoonbill, plus celebrity birder, Simon King (not the Hairy Biker).

Sunday morning followed a similar pattern. Graham Powell managed a view of a Great Skua and Wayne Strong saw three Brent Geese, the first of the winter in this area. In the Obs garden, I was lucky enough to get a brief view of a Turtle Dove.

We were discussing whether to stop off to do some bird watching on our way home, when news came through of two Cattle Egrets at Goldcliff - decision made, we stopped off there. Excellent views were had. We also added Greenshank, Ruff and Curlew Sandpiper to our trip list here. I made the group tally 110 species, which was pretty good considering few migrants were passing through.

Other sightings included Red Fox, Sika Deer and numerous insect species. Several of the group are "in to" moths and helped investigate the moth traps in the Obs garden.

### **Irish Sea pelagic**

John Duffy and I recently went on a day trip across the Irish Sea from Fishguard to Rosslare, to do a recce for a potential club trip. (Day trip fares are very cheap at the moment). The aim was to do a spot of sea watching for sea birds and Cetaceans. We fared quite well with 3 Great Skuas, 2 Arctic Skuas, 1 Red-throated Diver, plus thousands of Gannets, Kittiwakes, Manx Shearwaters, auks and terns. Our Cetacean spotting was a little disappointing but we did see a pod of Risso's Dolphins with a calf in tow. The ferry timings weren't ideal but it may be feasible to run a club trip next year.

### **PROPOSED TRIP TO THE OUTER HEBRIDES**

Some years ago the club ran a very successful trip to North Uist. We are hoping to run a similar trip next May for one week. The main species on offer are likely to be Corncrake, Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Short-eared Owl, skuas, divers, petrels and terns. Last time we saw plenty of Otters too. To keep costs down, we would stay in hostel type accommodation (similar to Portland Obs) with self catering facilities. Pub meals would of course be an option. The plan is to drive to Oban or Uig (Skye) by minibus, then take a ferry to Lochboisdale or Lochmaddy. It is limited to eight. If you are interested, please get in touch a.s.a.p., as we will need to book accommodation etc. Cost will depend on numbers participating but will probably be around £300 pp (excluding food and drink). Contact Alan Rosney



## BTO NEWS



### Non-estuarine Waterbird Survey 2015 - 16

The Non-estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS) will take place over November and December 2015 and 2016. This survey will be run as part of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and will be organised locally by our WeBS Local Organiser, Dan Jenkins-Jones. This will be an online survey, and site selection will be made through the BTO website. High and Low priority sites have already been identified and we hope the online system will be up and running during November. Contact Dan for details.

### New membership category for under 18s

BTO has recently launched a 'Young Birders' membership. It is aimed at 11-18 year olds to encourage youngsters to learn more about the science of ornithology & birds generally, their work and how to take part in our surveys. Members will receive regular newsletters with content that will inspire them, signposting them to other opportunities and providing advice about starting a career in science. Cost is £12 per year. Further details may be found on the BTO website, <http://www.bto.org>.

### House Martin Survey 2015 & House Martin Nest Study 2016

Visit 1 results have now been input for over 2,300 squares across the UK (nearly 70% of the allocated squares). This represents good progress so thank you all for your efforts. A further 6% of allocated squares have been marked as having no colonies but the Visit 1 screens remain incomplete –we will need this information when we carry out our analysis so please chase up the Visit 1 data for these squares (shown with an orange clock against Visit 1 on the online progress report), as well as those with no data at all. BTO plan to shut down online data entry at the end of October in order to begin the analysis. Volunteers should therefore input any outstanding results to the online system or to submit them on paper by mid-October at the latest. (Contact: Dan).

The planned House Martin Nest Study will go ahead in spring 2016 after the well supported House Martin Appeal. The 2016 survey will focus on regular observations at one or more House Martin nest. We will be looking at timing of arrival at the colony, timing and duration of nest construction phase, whether they build new nests or repair old nests, timing of fledging and how many breeding attempts they make. (Contact: Dan).

Two events for your diary :

- 7th November 2015, The Welsh Ornithological Society National Conference, The Conference Centre, Carno, Powys SY17 5LH. *Inspiring the next generation* <http://www.birdsinwales.org.uk/activities/conference15.htm>
- 4-6th December 2015, BTO Annual Conference, Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire DE55 1AU. Booking contact <http://www.bto.org/news-events/events/2015-12/bto-annual-conference>

Wayne Morris - BTO Regional Representative in East Glamorgan, [eastglambto@gmail.com](mailto:eastglambto@gmail.com)

Dan Jenkins-Jones - Local WeBS Organiser in East Glamorgan, [eastglamwebs@gmail.com](mailto:eastglamwebs@gmail.com)



## BTO GARDEN BIRDWATCH

### Bird of the month: Jay

At this time of year there is generally plenty of natural food around. Birds only have themselves to care for – they have no dependants and generally, no territories. Mixed-species flocks of birds can often be seen foraging together. You won't see Jays among these as they prefer their own company – even established pairs spend much of their time apart. Jays are tree seed specialists with a passion for acorns. Although they favour woodlands, at this time of year you may spot them using your garden as an acorn larder, carefully burying their treasure in the lawn or borders. They find a different hiding place for every single seed! Birds can travel up to 2 ½ miles to find acorns, carrying up to nine in their bill and adapted gullet, although three is more usual. Part of the crow family, Jays have a pinkish-brown body and black tail; look out for the dazzling azure flash on their wings and bold white rump as they fly away. Jays are shy birds and tend to see you before you see them. To warn all other birds in the area they issue a loud, harsh screaming call.

### Did you know?

A Jay will stash up to 5,000 acorns during autumn. They have great memories but will inevitably forget the location of some, thus helping new oak trees to grow. Our Jays may be joined by cousins from northern and eastern Europe, if those countries have a poor acorn crop. The Welsh name is *Ysgrech y Coed*, meaning Scream of the Wood.

### How to attract them to your garden:

Jays are relatively infrequent garden visitors but may be tempted by peanuts and scraps. They are more likely to use gardens for storage of seeds. As well as seeds, they also feed on carrion and eggs.

**Conservation status:** Green (no cause for concern).

**BTO Garden BirdWatch data** show that, at this time of year, one in ten participants record Jays in their garden. In 2014 I saw a Jay during two weeks of the year, in 2013 it was ten weeks and so far this year, it's been six.

### Make Your Garden Count

If you enjoy watching birds and other creatures in your garden and want to help track their fortunes, then BTO Garden BirdWatch could be perfect for you. Please contact me for a free enquiry pack or to book a talk (Swansea and surrounding areas).

*Amanda Skull*, Garden BirdWatch Ambassador - 07952 758293 (evenings & weekends only)  
[gbw@hifi.co.uk](mailto:gbw@hifi.co.uk) [www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw) Follow me on Twitter @amanda\_skull



## FUTURE EVENTS

### Field trips

- Wednesday 21st October - Ogmore, Pant Norton & Dunraven
- Wednesday 4th November - Steart Marshes
- Sunday 22nd November - Slimbridge
- Sunday 13th December - Dryslwyn/Cilsarn Bridge & Tregaron
- Sunday 17th January - Whiteford Point
- Wednesday 27th January - Rhossili & Worms Head

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

### Indoor Meetings

 Held at Kenfig Reserve Centre at 7.45 p.m.

- Tuesday 3rd November - Birding in tropical Queensland by Paul Bowden
- Tuesday 1st December - Have camera will travel. Highlights from Richard Smith
- Tuesday 5th January - Members' Own
- Tuesday 2nd February - Alaska with Dave Rich

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** for the next newsletter is **Wednesday 30th December**

## CONTACT DETAILS

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

Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	Bird Report Editor/Field Trips
Adrian Murch 30, Lewis Avenue, Bridgend CF31 4JJ 01656 768155/0785156287	Ceri Jones 26, Smithies Avenue, Sully, VoG CF64 5SS 02920 531769	Anne Wilson 122, Westbourne Road, Penarth VoG CF64 3HH 02920 339424	John Wilson 122, Westbourne Road, Penarth VoG CF64 3HH 02920 339424/07999801645
Membership Sec/Newsletter	Indoor Meetings Organiser	Publicity Officer	Mapmate Hub
Alan Rosney 10, Parc-y-Nant, Nantgarw, RCT CF15 7TJ 01443 841555/07906558489	Paul Denning 17, Maes Maelwg, Beddau, RCT CF38 2LD 01443 202607	Position currently vacant	David Carrington Kenfig National Nature Reserve Tonkenfig, Bridgend CF33 4PT 01656 743386 07779978738
BTO Representative	BTO WeBS Organiser	Bird Recorder (East)/Chair of GRC	Bird Recorder (West)
Wayne Morris, 8, Hughes Street, Pen-y-Graig, RCT CF40 1LX 01443 430284 eastglambto@gmail.com	Daniel-Jenkins Jones 18, St. Margaret's Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 7AA 02920 621394 eastglamwebs@gmail.com	David Gilmore 116, Donald Street Cardiff CF24 4TN d.gilmore2@ntlworld.com	Mark Hipkin 6, Holly Road, Neath 01639 638475/07875431917 markhipkin1@gmail.com