

Shoreham and District
Ornithological Society
Spring Newsletter
2017



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EDITORIAL

This is another pleasing issue with a broad diversity of content to cater for all tastes. The ‘competitions’ announced via the mailing list have been successful in bringing in new contributors. I have held over the submissions for ‘silly bird photographs’ and ‘epic twitches’ until the next edition so if you sent me something you will not be left out. This issue includes the competitions for ‘best day’s birding’ and the ‘furthest collared dove’. Perhaps naming winners is slightly invidious so I will just point out that the first competition was called ‘best day’s birding’ and I will leave it to the readership to make a judgement. This ‘competition’, though, produced four really interesting entries so I will rename it ‘great birding experience(s)’ and I will make a call for further entries nearer the next publication date. I hope more members will join in to offer these short pieces in the future.

Finally a note about the large ringing tables in the articles by John Newnham and Val Bentley. These contain a lot of information and are difficult to reproduce in an A5 publication. To fit them onto one small page I could reduce them in a ‘photographic’ sense but they then become very difficult to read, especially in the print version where there is no zoom button available. The alternative is to fiddle with column widths and font sizes to get the best readable compromise that can be achieved. This is what I have done for this edition but on occasion the integrity of a large word or number in a column is unavoidably lost. I apologise for these problems but I think the data remains understandable.

Again I thank everyone for their efforts in submitting articles and photographs and I hope you all enjoy the publication.

Roger Smith

Widewater Report – Winter season 2016/2017

Tim Holter

From Summer 2016 through Winter 2017 until the end of February there has been little of exceptional ornithological interest to report. The usual winter visitors to the lagoon have been the Little Grebes and Teal with the regularly present Little Egrets and one or two Redshank. In September a relatively rare visit was made by a Whimbrel. Of greater interest in the recent past winters has been Red-breasted Mergansers and, in some winters Goosander. This season there have only been a couple of isolated sighting of Mergansers in early winter, and then in January a few Mergansers were fleetingly seen with a report of a male Goosander for just one late afternoon visit in early February.

On the 11 February a Sussex Ornithological Society posting notes four Egyptian Geese flew in and remained for a while during the morning.

An over-wintering Greenshank will have been seen occasionally. This bird has



been present all winter in the nearby RSPB Adur Nature Reserve, most often seen foraging in the mud at the west end of the houseboat channel near to Flood Arch. When it has been flushed out by particularly high tides it has temporarily taken refuge at Widewater.

Generally wader activity has been minimal as water levels have remained high and covered the usual mud patch.

The resident pair of Mute Swans had successfully bred five offspring in 2016. During February a group of interloping Swans had appeared but by the end of the month the resident adult pair had chased away both this group and their own juveniles as the 2017 breeding season gets under way and a new nest is built.

In September a swathe of grass east of the main causeway and adjacent to the lagoon was strimmed. The intention was to provide an area of short grass with new shoots which may be attractive to passing wildfowl. Occasionally a Brent Goose has grazed on short grass in previous years but the new area failed to be tempting this season. A larger area of unmanaged grass west of the causeway may be cut this coming summer subject to feasibility. The possible restriction is the risk from trampling if it is waterlogged, a criterion set by the West Sussex County Council ecologist.

World of Widewater, the friends group caring for this local nature reserve, are aiming to erect five natural history information panels at strategic points around the lagoon. A flower panel has been erected, initially by the information kiosk. SDOS is involved with two bird identification panels. Our society will fund the cost of one panel and the second will be funded from donations made in respect of our former President, the late Stanley Allen. 'Stanley's' panel, by agreement with his family, will replace the flower panel by the kiosk with the SDOS panel positioned next to the central causeway. The flower panel will be re-sited on a new plinth being built further west. Subject to fundraising there will be a panel for insects and animals and another for marine life. A number of SDOS photographers have provided material.

New 'Public Safety Protection Order' at Widewater Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Tim Holter

Unfortunately interference with wildlife is an ongoing problem at Widewater due to the open nature of this local nature reserve where the lengthy adjacent seaside footpath and cycle route is a popular public recreational facility. Interference can take several forms but the issue of greatest concern is the exercising of dogs. This can be an emotive issue and many SDOS members are dog owners. I trust I will not cause any offence in reporting the up to date situation in respect to dog control. Most members birding here will have observed loose dogs, many running into the water, often chasing birds and on at least one occasion a swan was bloodily injured. A local by-law has been in place requiring dogs to be kept on a lead whilst in the reserve or car parks. Regrettably this has been ineffective and difficult to enforce. Related signage is haphazardly positioned, an issue I have raised at the LNR steering committee meetings. Also there is no 'Local Nature Reserve' sign at the west end of the lagoon. Signs at other boundaries contain a dog control reminder.

In the latter part of 2016, following a public consultation exercise, Adur and Worthing Council sought to strengthen legislation in public locations by introducing 'Public Safety Protection Orders' (PSPOs) at all appropriate sites across the Borough including Widewater. The orders state that non-compliance is an offence. The orders cover issues such as fouling, sites where dogs are not permitted and sites where they must be kept on a lead. The latter is applicable around Widewater. This could be a step in the right direction but initial observation shows no change in dog control habits. This is not helped by three ongoing problems:

- I. The existing haphazard signage is now augmented by a limited number of new PSPO notices that could easily be overlooked and are not present in a number of strategic positions. The Adur and Worthing Council Dog Warden

submitted a plan for signage but this has not been implemented due to lack of Council funds. The boundary of the area covered is not obvious unless reference is made to the council's web-site. The southern boundary is along the bank top on the lagoon side of the pathway for the entire length of the LNR. Thus, as before, the car parks are subject to the PSPO in addition to the reserve.

2. The Dog Warden is rarely present to educate or enforce as there is only the one warden for the entire Adur and Worthing Council area.

3. The nature reserve and car parks are owned by Lancing Parish Council but the footpath is owned by West Sussex County Council who, I am told, have declined the inclusion of the path within the area covered by the Widewater PSPO. Bearing in mind the length of the reserve this makes signage along the boundary of the PSPO area difficult and potentially costly. Furthermore, if dogs are allowed to be off the lead on the footpath it is inevitable that some that are not sufficiently controlled will cross the invisible PSPO boundary towards the lagoon. If WSCC can be persuaded to alter their stance, with all dogs that are on the pathway and lagoon side of the sea defences required to be kept on leads, this could considerably aid the signage problems and cost, education and enforcement.

These are issues which I will be pursuing at forthcoming LNR steering committee meetings. There may be cause for optimism as a Lancing Parish Councillor and also a County Councillor living locally have both joined World of Widewater, the friends group and, I believe, may become involved with the LNR steering committee. I hope to enlist the Councillors' assistance to challenge WSCC's PSPO stance and press for the funding of adequate signage.

Shoreham's Wall Lizards

Roger Smith

Last spring Dorian Mason put some pictures of Wall Lizards at Shoreham Fort onto the Society's mailing list. This resulted in a flurry of comment and, as it is spring again, I believe an article providing some context on this introduced species may be of interest. For a variety of good reasons the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) made it illegal to introduce non-native species into the United Kingdom but over hundreds of years prior to the Act, Britain acquired a considerable collection of introduced animals and plants, some of which have become a nuisance. The Rabbit, the Brown Hare, four species of deer, the Grey Squirrel, Canada and Egyptian geese, Rose-ringed Parakeets and many other species have all spread widely (sometimes assisted by further releases) but in contrast introductions of reptiles and amphibians have often failed to establish self-sustaining populations. In a broad sense our climate, particularly the cool summer, is not favourable for reptiles and amphibians and our native species of reptiles are often viviparous and / or confined to warm and dry sandy soils. This climatic limitation on reptiles and amphibians seems often to have resulted in introductions hanging on for a few years, or even decades, before dying out. Only the Marsh Frog, introduced to Walland Marsh in 1935, has spread rapidly and widely to occupy larger water bodies that are not much exploited by our native species. The Wall Lizard, as found at Shoreham and elsewhere, is perhaps the next most successful introduction.

In Europe the Wall Lizard is widespread and lives on rocky cliffs and slopes and large, often old, walls. The habitat requirement seems to be a warm substrate with crevices for hiding and egg laying and only a moderate vegetation cover. Wall Lizards are not steadfast hibernators and will often make an appearance on sunny days in winter. In France their distribution extends to the Channel coast and they live on Jersey in the Channel Islands, but they do not seem to have been native to Britain since the last ice age. The European Pond Tortoise, now restricted by summer warmth to central

France, was present in East Anglia after the last glaciation, so there have been periods in the last 10,000 years with sufficient warmth to support Wall Lizards but perhaps they just never got here – like snakes never made it to Ireland before the land connection was flooded by the rising post-glacial sea (assuming St Patrick wasn't responsible).



Two forms of Wall Lizards have been introduced to England. In simple terms brown ones are from France and green ones are from northern Italy. Shoreham's Wall Lizards are Italian and were introduced into the Shoreham Beach garden of Professor Geoff Haslewood, who was also Chairman of the British Herpetological Society. Twenty five lizards were introduced in 1975 and a further seven in 1976. They initially colonised the shingle beach and fence lines but have more recently spread out to live on the walls of Shoreham Fort. Wall Lizards have also appeared at West Worthing railway station and adjacent to the railway line in Lancing and it may be they are following the train tracks. Elsewhere along the south coast there are substantial colonies in the Bournemouth area on the soft rock cliffs, on the Isle of Wight, in old quarries on the Isle of Portland and in the Warren Cliff district just east of Folkestone. The Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group

(SARG) estimated about 20,000 animals nationally in those colonies surveyed about 10 years ago.

So what of the future? In Brexit Britain should we round up the EU colonists and repatriate them? This would require a substantial and coordinated effort so I suspect they are here to stay. The recent moderate climate warming can only help in this respect. Undoubtedly there will be some impact on native species but, like the Marsh Frog, they seem to be confined to a habitat that is quite distinct and often heavily shaped by human actions. If they have taken to the railway tracks perhaps they will disperse like the Oxford Ragwort that escaped from the University's Botanical Garden at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was spread around the country as the rail network developed. If you are interested the SARG Wall Lizard Project website describes the sites where the lizards are found and their numbers and status. Go to Shoreham Fort and have a look for them on a sunny day. The great thing about Wall Lizards is that they live in an open habitat where they are easy to spot – they are one of Europe's most visible reptiles.

September 2016 to January 2017 Highlights

Stephen Simpson

These records were sourced mostly from the postings on the SDOS User Group and the Recent Sightings pages of the Sussex Ornithological Society web site and therefore are not confirmed.

September 2016

A Grasshopper Warbler was at Cissbury on 1st. On the same day at Findon Gallops there were seven Spotted Flycatchers, five Redstarts and seven Wheatears. Three Greenshanks, a Common Sandpiper and a Knot were on the Adur at Shoreham also on 1st. A Grasshopper Warbler was ringed at Cissbury on 4th.

At Goring Gap on 3rd there were 78 Turnstones, 82 Ringed Plovers, 11 Sandwich Terns and a Wheatear.



At Sheepcote Valley on 5th there were a Grasshopper Warbler, five Redstarts, three Whinchats, five Sedge Warblers, three Wheatears and a Spotted Flycatcher.

By the Adur near the Cement Works on 6th there were two Green Sandpipers and three Common Sandpipers. A Common Sandpiper was at Widewater on 6th and a Honey-buzzard flew E over Hove on the same day. A Wryneck was at Cissbury on 8th.

Four Whinchats were at Beeding Brooks on 11th. There were around 20 Wheatears in the Ferring Rife area on 11th. At Highdown Hill on 11th there were three Yellow Wagtails, two Redstarts, three Wheatears, two Spotted Flycatchers and a Whinchat. Two Firecrests were at Lancing on 12th.

At Goring Gap on 11th there were six Wheatears, two Yellow Wagtails, two Bar-tailed Godwits, over 50 Turnstones and around 75 Ringed Plovers. One or two Tree Pipits flew over. Three Bar-tailed Godwits were there on 16th. Fourteen Wheatears and a Whinchat were recorded there on 17th. Six Brent Geese flew W on 19th.



Sixty-three Ringed Plover were on the Adur at Shoreham on 14th and a Curlew Sandpiper was also there on 14th and 16th and a Knot on 16th.

A Pallid Harrier was recorded near Chantry Hill on 14th and again on 15th when there were also 12 Ravens and four Golden Plover. An Osprey flew over Widewater on 18th. A Brent Goose was in Shoreham Harbour on 22nd.

Two Curlew Sandpipers were on the Adur at Shoreham on 24th and there was a Whimbrel at Widewater on 28th and 30th.

October 2016

Yellow-browed Warblers were recorded at Cissbury on 2nd, 7th and 8th and at Goring on 8th.

On 2nd there were two Siskins at Cissbury, an Osprey flew over the Adur, 10 Sandwich Terns were at the Adur at Shoreham and a Whimbrel was at Widewater. On 3rd two Arctic Terns and two Sandwich Terns were at Shoreham Harbour and a Wheatear was at Shoreham Fort.

On 5th four Redwings flew over Southwick and three flew over Cissbury where there was also a Merlin and House Martins and 14 Stonechats.



There were four Ring Ouzels on 5th at Mill Hill, eight there on 8th and one on 15th. At Cissbury there were five Ring Ouzels on 5th, nine on 6th, 16 on 14th, four on 17th and one on 24th. Also, two Ring Ouzels were at Hollingbury fort

on 7th, two were at Steyning on 7th, one was at Truleigh Hill on 20th and two were at Lancing on 30th.

On 7th two Fieldfares were at Steyning and a Rose-ringed Parakeet was at Hollingbury. On 11th a Short-eared Owl was at Ferring Rife. On 13th there was a Yellow-legged Gull on the Adur at Shoreham. 20 Swallows flew E at Mill Hill on 15th. A Dartford Warbler was at Cissbury on 15th.

On 16th a Sooty Shearwater and a Great Skua were seen flying W from Widewater. A Wheatear and a Rock Pipit were at Goring Gap on 16th. A Firecrest was at Worthing on 19th. An Osprey was seen being mobbed by a Crow over the Adur at Shoreham on 23rd.

Yellow-browed Warblers were at the Adur at Shoreham on 20th and Lancing on 21st and 24th. Two Goosanders were at Cuckoo Corner on 20th, Brooklands on 21st and on the Adur at Shoreham on 24th, 27th and 28th. Three Black Redstarts were at Truleigh Hill on 28th.

November 2016

A Blackcap was seen at High Salvington on 2nd. A total of 375 Brent Geese were seen moving W from Ferring on 3rd. Thirteen Red-breasted Mergansers were on the sea off Ferring on 6th. A Long-tailed Duck was seen moving W from Goring beach on the same day. Also on 6th a Swallow flew N above Mill Hill. A Black Redstart was in Brighton on 7th. 15 Oystercatchers were at the Adur at Shoreham on 9th and a Swallow was at Widewater on 16th.

High counts at Goring Gap in the month included two Mediterranean Gulls on 6th, 97 Turnstones on 11th, 34 Sanderling on 11th, 24 Ringed Plover on 11th, 100 Dunlin on 13th and nine Grey Plover on 11th.

17 Brent Geese and six Shelduck were on the sea off Goring Gap on 11th. Two Purple Sandpipers were at Shoreham Harbour on 12th, rising to four on 20th. A Great Northern Diver flew W at Shoreham Harbour on 15th. 58

Redshanks and one Greenshank were at the Adur south of Norfolk Bridge on 15th and a Goosander was at the Adur at Shoreham on 23rd.

There were 19 Little Grebes at Widewater on 26th and an Eider was seen on the sea from there on 30th.

December 2016

A Snow Bunting was at Goring Gap from 3rd to 6th. There were three Purple Sandpipers at Shoreham Harbour on 5th and 12th. Around 30 Kittiwakes were seen from Widewater on 6th. A Great Northern Diver was seen from Goring on 11th. A Red-breasted Merganser was at Widewater on 25th. Blackcaps were seen at Steyning on 17th and Upper Beeding on 28th. 18,500 Starlings were at Brighton Pier on 31st.



High counts of selected species at or from Goring Gap were seven Mediterranean Gulls on 10th, 93 Ringed Plover on 18th, 416 Dunlin on 18th,

100 Sanderling on 25th, 35 Grey Plover on 3rd, 37 Great Crested Grebes on 18th and six Red-breasted Mergansers on 31st. A Bar-tailed Godwit was there on 31st.

January 2017

At Shoreham Harbour there was a Rock Pipit on 1st and 11th and a Black Redstart on 11th and 15th. There were Razorbills offshore from Shoreham Harbour and Widewater on 15th. At least 90 Teal were on the Adur at Shoreham on 4th.

High counts at Goring Gap included 11 Mediterranean Gulls on 12th, 63 Sanderling on 1st, 70 Grey Plover on 15th, 330 Dunlin on 15th and 91 Ringed Plover on 1st. 45 Great Crested Grebes, around 30 Red-breasted Mergansers, 20 Red-throated Divers and a Long-tailed Duck were offshore from Worthing/Ferring on 8th. Four Gadwall were at Brooklands on 20th and a Hen Harrier was at Steep Down on 21st.



There were four Purple Sandpipers at Shoreham Harbour on 29th.

Best day's birding

Carn Ban Mor and Glen Feshie - 25 May 1991

Peter Whitcomb

A holiday in Speyside with birding friends was always going to have potential with many of the Scottish specialties not far away from our base at Newtonmore. Safe weather was the key for a hill climb but we still eventually set off with the conditions looking unpromising. We detoured to see Black Grouse at a lek and at 9.00 am there were a dozen displaying until disturbed by a small herd of Red Deer.

With the weather improving rapidly we started the long haul up Carn Ban Mor. Red Grouse were first sighted about half way. Nearing the tops, was our second lifer of the day – about a dozen Ptarmigan. Right on the summit plateau were four pairs of Dotterel, all very tame and in splendid plumage. Superb! Here too were Dunlin and Golden Plover. We sat overlooking Cairn Toul for lunch, and were extremely lucky to see a rather distant, but our first, Golden Eagle, and a Raven. The views across the Cairngorms were amazing.

On the descent into Glen Feshie we could see a second Black Grouse lek, rather disproving the theory that they can only be viewed in the early morning. Scrub and pine copses produced Common Redstarts, Northern Wheatear, Siskin and Redpoll, and a Fieldfare was heard singing. On the river there were Red-breasted Mergansers, Goosander and Grey Wagtail.

On the return to Newtonmore we stopped off at a Loch Insh in time to see an Osprey glide over. Nearer our base, the nesting Redwings were singing, yet another rare privilege. On the moorland next to the house the sounds of nesting gulls, Lapwings and Curlews were an evocative sound that we don't hear in the south. Some Twite flew off the telegraph wires and a nesting Northern Wheatear flitted onto the stone wall opposite. All this and four lifers, and a quality day's birding.

Three days – Swallows and a host of Swifts.

Jenny and Tim Holter

Unplanned, unexpected and unforgettable birding experiences.

Often recalled are three memorable encounters with Swallows and Swifts. Birding may not always be the principle objective but good birders always carry their 'bins' when out in the countryside, just in case!

The 10th April 2014 was the first day of a week walking a section of the South West Coast path in Cornwall. High on the cliffs near Padstow, all afternoon we witnessed a continuous passage of Swallows over the headlands.

One early evening in autumn 2014 we were by the iron bridge where the South Downs Way crosses the Adur. By pure chance we found the sky was full of Swallows gathering for migration. It became a truly amazing experience when a constant stream of Swallows swooped down right by us to scoop a drink from the river.

On the morning of 30th July 2015 we walked the South Downs Way from Southease to Housedean Farm along the ridge high above Rodmell within a 'cloud' of Swifts whichever way we looked, near and far, soaring above, swooping down below and dashing across the downs. Thousands! And a marauding Hobby! All gone when we returned later, how lucky we chose that morning!

Home and Away

John Maskell

Thanks to my wife, Shena's, enthusiasm and organisational skills I have enjoyed a number trips around the globe that have featured birding. There have been many colourful highlights but perhaps the most uplifting was on 19th January 2000 hearing the organ-like song at dawn (yes, me!) and then

seeing an endemic and endangered Kokako in the Pureora Forest of New Zealand's North Island after we'd camped out to target this bird. It is a poor flier and prefers to hop and fly between branches. Having gained special permission to stay in the forest we duly reported back to the warden. "Oh, you saw it did you?" Apparently the forest only hosted a single male Kokako at the time! We were so lucky to see its distinctive blue wattles.

But if I am honest it is still our garden birds that continue to give me the greatest joy. Two particularly memorable days spring to mind.

In a 90 minute session on 8th September 2002, in addition to the usual garden species, we were treated to a fall of passerines in the form of a pair of Blackcaps, a singing Willow Warbler, three Spotted Flycatchers, two Pied Flycatchers and a Lesser Whitethroat. The whole garden seemed to be alive with a frenzied mass of feathers!

Then on Christmas Day 2010 I drew back the curtains and, as Shena commented at the time in a SDOS User Group e-mail, "My True Love called to me... a Waxwing in our hawthorn tree." Actually it was two. What a Christmas present!

Starlings in Lancashire

Tony Bullock

I have always found the massing of species far more exciting than the individual bird. Take for example the Knots performing in Morecambe Bay or the Bewicks and Whooper Swans coming into roost on the Ouse Washes. But for me it will always be the murmuration of Starlings. Forget Brighton or Aberystwyth piers. Who has had a murmuration on their own patch?

In the early 1980's I bought a cottage one mile north of Great Harwood, a town halfway between the famous football towns of Blackburn and Burnley. Coming back from work one day I noticed a gathering of birds over my route home and at the weekend I decided to investigate further.

The wood concerned is between Blackburn Old Road and Dean Clough Reservoir. As the sun went down over Blackpool in the far distance a trickle of Starlings flew in and eventually small parties arrived from different directions. The groups then merged into Starling masses and made wonderful patterns over the wood. Eventually about 1000 birds would dive into the wood followed by thousands more. There could have been 10000 birds at least in the roost. Eventually, after a lot of twittering all became quiet – what a memory on my own patch. Not a day's birding but certainly as good as.

Eurasian Collared Dove Competition

Roger Smith

The competition was to find the furthest Collared Dove observation from Shoreham. Here is the result!

The Eurasian Collared Dove is a strongly dispersive species that has expanded from an original Indian heartland westwards over several centuries. Its colonization of Europe was particularly rapid in the last century arriving in Hungary (1932), Germany (1945), France (1952) and Britain in 1955. The rate of movement at this time has been calculated at 44km (27 miles) per year. In 1995 I saw one from a car ferry in the middle of the Bay of Biscay. Like the ferry it was headed for Spain and we first saw Collared Doves on our annual field trips to south-eastern Spain in 2000. Collared Doves make it to Iceland regularly (first in 1971) but it seems that they cannot successfully colonize the island. I didn't see one in a chilly Reykjavik on a recent visit but I saw one in Oulu, Finland in 2004 (this is a seriously cold place – the car parks are equipped with electric sockets to keep car engines warm enough to start in the winter). According to Wikipedia by the end of the 20th century Collared Doves had colonized North Africa and the Canaries and certainly I saw them in Tenerife in 2005 and the Moroccan desert, well south of the Atlas Mountains in 2007.

So who has won the competition? Well in late 2015, following a gruelling cultural tour of Mexico, my wife and I went bird watching in Rio Lagartos,

150 km along the northern coast from Cancun on the Yucatan peninsula. It is a sleepy village with a resident bird guide so we went out birding in the mornings and stoged around in the hire car in the afternoon when it got too hot. One day we finished up in a nearby coastal village for which fly blown would be a fair description – it was the sort of place where Clint Eastwood chewed on cigars in the Spaghetti Westerns. I looked out of the car window and there, amidst the tumbleweed and drifting sand, were a pair of Eurasian Collared Doves disconsolately pecking at the Mexican earth. I was a bit surprised but maybe one shouldn't be with Collared Doves.



Pan American Highway – turn left to look for Collared Doves

Eurasian Collared Doves escaped from captivity in Nassau in the Bahamas in 1974 and the species has swept across North America and down into Mexico. It isn't yet everywhere in Mexico, we only saw it in Yucatan. As in Europe it is associated with suburban locations and some agricultural areas.

The rate of spread in North America has been calculated at 110km (62 miles) per year. Worldwide urbanisation, and particularly sub-urbanisation, was a 20th century global phenomenon that continues and maybe that is what these birds are about.

There weren't many entries for the competition but I received two from Jeremy Campbell and John and Shena Maskell for New Delhi, India. This is within the species original range but conforms to the competition rules. Shoreham to New Delhi is 4164 miles (6704 km) but from Shoreham to Rio Lagartos is 4989 miles (8028 km). So I have won but not with Rio Lagartos. The most distant Collared Doves I have observed were sitting on wires on the outskirts of Chetumal on the Mexican border with Belize. This is 5156 miles (8297 km) from Shoreham. Yucatan is hot and steamy with tropical forest – I cannot see any obvious reason why they won't advance further towards South America. We went birding in Panama in 2010 and they weren't there then so maybe I should just take a drive along the Pan American highway and look at the wires!

Eurasian Collared Doves sent me birding

Tony Bullock

Some years ago Angela and I decided to take a holiday in Sardinia at a small hotel in the centre of the island. It was a bit hot for walking so we sat by the pool directly under a tree occupied by Collared Doves. I tried reading but my concentration was disrupted by constant repetitions of STA--Y, STA--Y, STA—Y that persisted all day. It was so irritating that we hired a car and found Flamingoes, Slender-billed Gull, Black-winged Stilt and I had my best ever view of Cirl Bunting. It must be a first – forced to go birding by Collared Doves.

Behind the scenes

Brianne Reeve

Over a year ago I was approached by a man who reminded me that he had come on one of my dawn chorus walks which I led every year in the Saltings area of Bramber and Upper Beeding. He had only joined the group out of curiosity and was amazed that 42 species of birds were recorded in about two hours. He told me that Upper Beeding was now proposing 'A Walk for All' along the Adur riverbank, one that would be a flat, firm surface suitable specifically for pedestrians with pushchairs, for those with impaired mobility and those with wheelchairs and mobility scooters; safely away from cyclists and equestrians. I was asked to advise on photographs and text for the four information boards that would be along the route, the first in the car park opposite the Castle Pub in Bramber, the next near the caravan park by St. Mary's House, then out to the river where the third one would be close to the bridge where the A283 crosses the river and the last one at the junction of the Downslink - South Downs Way, just west of the footbridge where St. Botolphs church can be seen in the Coombes road.

It seemed to be quite straightforward but it took a great deal of patience and diplomacy: a grant was given but with a deadline, the land owners' permission was required, a designer was appointed for the panels and a woodworker for the frames. Meanwhile I had approached Dorian Mason, who was delighted to donate some of his fine photographs and Roger Smith, to set up the initial ideas for the panels. These were sent on to a designer. We had to choose many more photographs than were actually used because the designer might need a bird to face left or right. Also the plumage had to be right for the season illustrated, and a portrait view might be better than landscape. This involved a lot of people, all giving their time and expertise. It did seem, as though the deadline might be exceeded but we had no choice if the grant was to be held on to. With three days to spare, in mid-February, in snow and a biting wind, the indefatigable team of Dorian Mason and Bernie Forbes, with the help of two of the men who had instigated the 'Walk for All', dug deep

holes to take the three beautifully constructed wooden frames housing these most attractive and informative panels. The first panel faces into the car park at Bramber, (opposite The Castle Pub), and directs people to the 'Walk for All' past St. Mary's House and out to the riverbank at Upper Beeding and then south to St. Botolphs.



Widewater also is to have five new information boards and once again SDOS is willingly involved. This time WOW (World of Widewater) has a small committee steering the project with advice from experts in the different

fields: these are Tim Holter, Marion Wood, Peter Hogan and Dave Fawcett . Funding has been raised by members of WOW and SDOS. The family of Stanley Allen, who spent many happy hours at Widewater, is sponsoring one panel in his memory and finally there is a CIF grant supported by Councillor Mick Clark of Lancing Parish Council.

It is hoped these panels will be in situ by mid-April and will enhance the area by giving useful and interesting information. The 'Flowers and Plants' panel is finished and will be followed by 'Insects and Small Mammals', 'Underwater Species' and two 'Bird' panels with helpful identification suggestions. They will be near the Information Booth and then spread out along the Widewater in prominent locations.

Some birds are not easy to illustrate as many people do not realise that their plumage changes from winter to summer, and many birds, not all, have great differences between male and female at any time of the year. Gulls are particularly difficult as they have different coloured legs and plumages as they mature, so you might hear the experts discussing whether it is a juvenile or first or second winter bird.....and there just is not sufficient room to show all these possibilities on our panels. The other essential is not to have too much information so that it looks too cluttered and people cannot be bothered to read them, and of course the text needs to be concise and factual.

Once again this project has taken a very long time to come to fruition and involved a large number of people getting together and sorting out the problems which inevitably arise. The common theme has been that they have been doing this for the community, to try to see that all those who enjoy visiting Widewater will work together to make it a better place for both people and the huge variety of wildlife found in this comparatively small area. There is no doubt there has been a great improvement recently in terms of cooperation and agreement about what we need to do to protect this local site. (Websites www.lancingwidewater.com and www.sdos.org with thanks to Jo Procter for the extra information about Widewater.

Ringling in Ladywell 2016

John Newnham

This was the tenth season and yet another successful year for this study of birds in Ladywell valley. A total of 37 ringing sessions were undertaken which, as Table 1 shows, is comparable to previous years.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number netting session	22	29	33	34	39	31	37	25	38	37

Table 1:- The numbers of ringing sessions in Ladywell in each year (2007-2016).

Like last year the ringing effort was not spread evenly across the year with few or no sessions in the early months and a concentration of effort during the productive autumn season. This is clearly shown in Table 2 which also demonstrates that more birds were trapped in each session during the autumn months (August-October) than the average of the previous nine years.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2007-15 sessions	16	12	17	29	22	24	26	31	36	34	23	18
Average catch (2007-15)	52	43	34	34	46	34	40	61	79	64	62	59
2016 sessions	0	0	1	3	3	2	3	5	8	6	3	3
Average catch (2016)			46	40	40	47	53	90	109	98	50	50

Table 2:- The number of ringing sessions in each month and the average monthly catch (2007-15 and 2016).

The effect of a good autumn passage on the annual totals is clearly shown graphically in Figure 1. Few new birds (blue) are ringed in the early months of the year with a small increase as the locally fledged young join the population in the late spring but it is not until the post breeding dispersal and autumn migration that significantly larger numbers of new birds are found in the valley. Between December and March retraps (red) outnumber unringed

birds caught; interesting July is the month with the fewest retraps as the resident species have completed breeding and whilst undertaking their annual feather moult remain fairly sedentary and therefore less likely to encounter a mist-net.

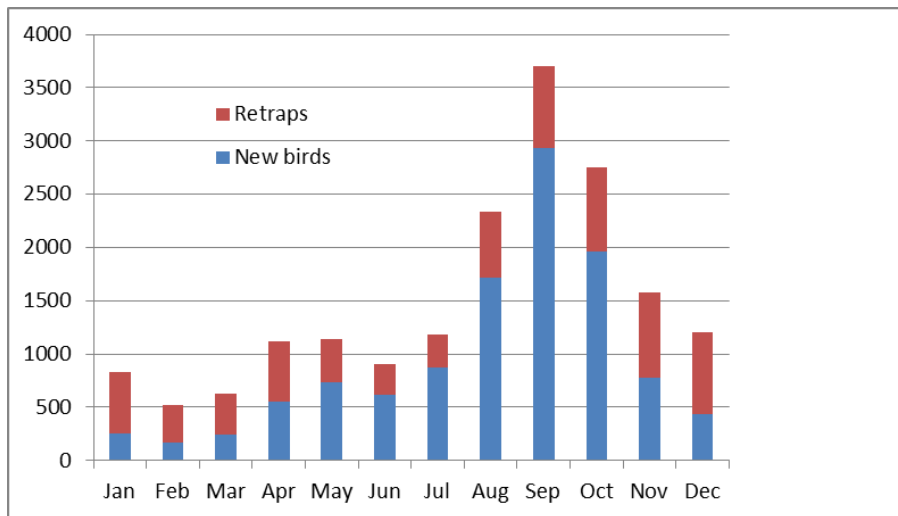


Figure 1:- The number of birds trapped in each month in Ladywell (2007-2016).

The ringing totals for 2016 were 2057 new birds, 696 retraps and seven controls (birds ringed elsewhere and subsequently caught in Ladywell) giving a total of 2760 handlings. The details for all year's handlings are shown in the large Table 3. Record figures in 2016 are marked in yellow which, of course,

Species	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTALS	Ring ed 2016
Sparrowhawk			2	3		2	6		2		15	
Kestrel		3	1	1		1		2	1		9	
Water Rail										1	1	1
Stock Dove				2			1	1			4	
Woodpigeon	5	4	4	6	3	1	5	2	7	4	41	4
Tawny Owl				1						1	2	1
Kingfisher	1	2	5	2	6	1	8	12	12	18	67	7
Green Woodpecker	5	12	12	7	19	9	6	5	3	4	82	2
Great Spotted	4	12	12	14	24	16	18	10	11	7	128	3

Woodpecker												
Swallow						1	18				19	
House Martin		2	34	29	12		62		1	4	144	4
Meadow Pipit							4				4	
Grey Wagtail				1			1		2		4	
Wren	42	50	55	67	93	74	60	58	84	114	697	64
Duncock	58	84	98	123	140	74	101	67	108	89	942	34
Robin	61	63	103	90	110	78	125	79	116	146	971	77
Nightingale									1		1	
Redstart	1				1	1	1				2	6
Stonechat								1			1	
Blackbird	80	52	108	110	119	78	91	47	108	137	930	79
Song Thrush	9	15	31	23	48	18	37	19	33	57	290	43
Redwing		2	6	3	1	6		8	6	18	50	18
Mistle Thrush				2	3						5	
Cetti's Warbler					4			4	3	10	21	4
Grasshopper Warbler					3		3			1	7	1
Sedge Warbler		1		2	6		2			4	15	4
Reed Warbler	25	33	37	76	85	41	68	31	102	112	610	71
Lesser Whitethroat		3	2		4	3		2	6	5	25	5
Whitethroat	6	3	5	23	48	17	17	3	21	19	162	18
Garden Warbler	1	1	2	2	3	1	1		10	12	33	12
Blackcap	31	34	56	167	323	90	134	86	384	358	1663	329
Wood Warbler									1		1	
Chiffchaff	17	30	76	221	215	73	181	150	725	713	2401	679
Willow Warbler	19	9	15	39	65	30	57	4	158	274	670	274
Goldcrest	1	42	21	29	34	23	22	38	242	98	550	70
Firecrest		2	1	7	3	2	5	2	11	5	38	4
Spotted Flycatcher	1			2	3	3	3		2	2	16	2
Long-tailed Tit	47	116	140	127	152	63	64	57	88	83	937	30
Coal Tit									1	1	2	1
Blue Tit	189	288	343	430	615	399	449	174	276	215	3378	85
Great Tit	71	154	152	162	308	200	345	155	151	176	1874	67
Nuthatch		15	5	3	14	21	15	3	1		77	
Treecreeper	17	4	12	33	58	18	18	9	8	12	189	6
Jay	2	3	2	5		4	1	1	4	1	23	1
Magpie		1	1	1	2		2	1			8	
Jackdaw				1	3	1		15	9	1	30	1
Rook				1							1	
Carrion Crow				1							1	
House Sparrow	1										1	
Chaffinch	12	50	50	38	96	77	92	26	50	36	527	30
Greenfinch	5	15	10	23	64	28	16	2	8	6	177	6
Goldfinch	13	30	9	7	43	7	4	4	15	9	141	9
Siskin						1			3		4	
Lesser Redpoll						1			8	6	15	6
Bullfinch		2		3	1	3	1	3		1	14	1
Reed Bunting			1	4	7	3				2	17	2
TOTALS	724	1137	1411	1891	2738	1469	2044	1081	2782	2760	18041	2057

Caption for Table 3 (pages 27 and 28 above):- The annual totals of handlings in each year (2007-2016) for each species ringed in Ladywell (grey column – 10 year total; plum column – 2016 ringing total for each species).

includes the Water Rail (photograph below), a new species ringed in the valley. Additionally exceptional numbers of Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and Goldcrests were caught but for each of these the previous year (2015) was better. Whilst some species appear to be flourishing others were trapped in fewer numbers than previous years, notably some woodland species like the tits, Treecreeper, Nuthatch and woodpeckers. Likewise, despite providing winter seed, the numbers of finches and buntings trapped remain low.

The most productive day was 2nd October when 187 birds were trapped and the poorest catch of 25 occurred on 14th April. There were eight other sessions, all between August 1st and October 17th, when more than 100 birds were trapped. Eighteen different species trapped on August 12th was the most diverse day but there were two sessions when 17 species were caught and five with 16 different species. The only day with more than 100 of a single species trapped occurred on October 2nd when 148 Chiffchaffs were ringed. Overall Blue Tit (3378 handlings) remains the most trapped species with Chiffchaff (2401), Great Tit (1874) and Blackcap (1663) the only others with a four figure total. Sixteen species which have been ringed in previous years were not trapped in 2016; perhaps the most surprising of these is Nuthatch which had been ringed in each of the previous eight years.

Seven birds were caught in the year carrying rings applied elsewhere (controls) and the details are given in Table 5. Little can be learned from this small collection but it is interesting to see JAR436 had moved from Wraysbury to Ladywell in one day (presumably overnight).

To date, and despite over 2000 birds ringed in each of the past two years, five birds ringed in Ladywell have been recovered elsewhere this year and these details are shown in Table 6.

One can only wonder where JEB854 spent the summer and perhaps returning to winter in the same part of the UK. JYJ509 another winter recovery of a bird which moved north-west – it was caught at a water treatment works; a habitat favoured by wintering Chiffchaffs in Sussex. S570196 demonstrates that Cetti's Warbler is not a completely sedentary species and movements of this kind will be fuelling the spread of this species in southern England.

Ring No.	Species	Date	Age/ Sex	Ringing date	Age/ Sex	Ringing site	Distance	Interval
HPH 486	Chiff chaff	23/07/ 2016	3J	19/06/ 2016	3J	Cissbury, Worthing, West Sussex	6km SE	34 days
HYY 118	Chiff chaff	17/10/ 2016	3	26/08/ 2016	3	Wicken Fen, Cambridge	168km SSW	52 days
JAR4 36	Chiff chaff	09/10/ 2016	2	08/10/ 2016	3	Wraysbury, Windsor & Maidenhead	71km SSE	1 day
JTR0 67	Chiff chaff	17/10/ 2016	2	03/10/ 2016	2	Tidmoor, The Fleet, Dorset	157km E	14 days
Y937 016	Black cap	28/09/ 2016	4M	25/07/ 2013	3J	Icklesham, East Sussex	70km W	1161 days
HXJ0 59	Chiff chaff	24/09/ 2016	3			no information		
S181 457	Black cap	14/09/ 2016	3M			no information		

Table 5: The details of birds caught in 2016 and ringed elsewhere.

Ring	Species	Ringing date	Age	Recovery date	Age	Recovery location	Distance	Interval
Z378 803	Reed Warbler	22/08/2 015	3J	18/06/20 16	4F	Steyning, West Sussex	6km N	301 days
JEB50 8	Chiffchaff	08/10/2 015	3	25/03/20 16	4	Highfield, Southampton	77km W	169 days
JEB85 4	Chiffchaff	08/11/2 015	3	17/12/20 16	4	Steyning, West Sussex	6km N	405 days
S570 196	Cetti's Warbler	26/10/2 016	3F	14/12/20 16	2F	Litlington, East Sussex	34km E	49 days
JYJ50 9	Chiffchaff	02/11/2 016	2	29/12/20 16	3	Upton upon Seven, Worcester	190km NW	57 days

Table 6: The details of birds ringed in Ladywell and recovered (both controlled) elsewhere.

When bird ringing started over 100 years ago the main objective was to investigate the route and destinations of our migratory birds. Although this aspect is still of great interest it requires the amalgamation of many ringers efforts to gather sufficient information to be of value. Furthermore in this modern age new technologies such as satellite tracking can provide much detail about individual birds. However, handling birds and ringing provides considerably more information about population size and structure, species longevity and other aspects of their biology. Each of the session reports detailed many of the birds retrapped and during 2016 a total of 410 individuals were retrapped. Most, as expected, were ringed either in 2015 or 2016 and Table 7 gives the year of ringing of each of the individuals retrapped in 2016.

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
0	0	0	1	12	4	33	32	105	223

Table 7: The year of ringing of birds retrapped in Ladywell during 2016.

A dozen species accounted for the 50 birds trapped in 2016 which had been ringed prior to 2014, in descending order these were Blue Tit (15), Great Tit (9), Dunnock and Reed Warbler (5), Blackbird (4), Robin and Wren (3), Long-tailed Tit (2) and singles of Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Song Thrush and Treecreeper. The individual with the longest duration between ringing and retrapping was a Great Tit (L036914). Multiple retraps are a common occurrence in Ladywell and have frequently been described over the years. The current record holder is also Great Tit (L674455) which has now been handled on 24 occasions since July 2011. Additionally a Wren has been caught on 19 occasions and two different Blue Tits seen on 18 ringing sessions.

Each time a bird is trapped as much useful information is recorded as time permits. Most birds trapped have their age, sex, wing length and weight recorded but additionally full moult details were recorded on 75 individuals of 16 different species. Long-tailed Tit (20) and Blackbird (12) had the most moult records; the former leading the way as both young and adult birds undergo a full moult of flight feathers whereas in most species the young only

undergo a partial moult involving body feathers, coverts and perhaps tertials and tail.

During the autumn the session reports mentioned the estimates of stored body fat and the pre-migratory development of the pectoral muscle. During 2016 1236 migratory species had fat and muscle scores recorded with the top three predictably Chiffchaff (658), Blackcap (303) and Willow Warbler (183).

For nine of the past seasons nest-boxes sited in the Lancing College side of the valley have been carefully studied and the details of inspections were recorded for the BTO's Nest Recording Scheme. Some boxes had fallen from their trees and several boxes had been damaged by Great Spotted Woodpeckers since the 2015 breeding thus only 21 boxes were available this year. Thankfully all the 'deluxe' models crafted by the college students had survived. However, 16 of the remaining boxes were occupied giving one of the best occupancy rates since the project started. Fewer eggs were laid but 47 young were thought to have fledged from these.

	20 08	20 09	20 10	20 11	20 12	20 13	20 14	20 15	20 16
Number of boxes available	11	11	23	23	24	29	32	32	21
Blue Tit	3	3	8	13	11	10	9	9	10
Great Tit			3	5	2	4	7	6	6
Nuthatch					1	1			
Total occupied boxes	3	3	11	18	14	15	16	15	16
Occupancy %	27	27	48	78	58	52	50	47	76
Total eggs laid	19	28	89	149	107	103	126	114	95
Total pulli	19	25	78	130	83	44	88	69	67
Total young fledged	19	23	75	102	56	42	55	25	47
% survival egg to fledging	100	82	84	68	52	41	44	22	49

Table 8: Summary of the Ladywell's nest-box occupancy and success 2008-2016.



Figure 1: Water Rail trapped in Ladywell on 26th October 2016. (Mark Mallalieu).

On each visit, including some short visits for stocking feeders or maintenance work, a list of species recorded is logged onto the British Trust for Ornithology's Birdtrack recording system. On most ringing occasions between 30 and 45 species were recorded; a total of 79 species were seen during the year and these are listed, along with the first and last dates and the percentage of occasions seen in the appendix below. Only Woodpigeon, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Blackbird were recorded on each visit.

On one ringing sessions during 2016 we were joined by a group of students from the 'Forest' class at Downsbrook School in Broadwater (Worthing). Their enquiring minds and constant questions kept us busy.

My thanks go to the members of the ringing team Chrissi White, Sue Walsh, Mark Mallalieu and Dave Boddington for their regular efforts throughout the year. Towards the end of the year Clare Buckle joined us and has decided to take up her formal training in 2017. I would like to extend our continued gratitude and thanks to the college authorities and staff, particularly Jon Hutcheon the farm manager, and to Hugh and Christopher Passmore of Applesham Farm for their on-going interest, help and support with the ringing in Ladywell.



Figure 2:- Male Lesser Redpoll trapped in Ladywell on 26th October 2016. (Mark Mallalieu).

Henfield Garden Ringing

Val Bentley

Having moved to a more secluded garden in the village in 2014, it took me over a year to organise myself to buy two appropriately sized nets and to start ringing some local birds, and this activity started in April 2016. For a fairly small suburban garden, the list and number of birds have somewhat surprised me, with 231 birds ringed of 23 different species. While, predictably, the most numerous of these have been the 73 Blue Tits, (34 adults and 39 first year birds), there have also been seven Coal Tits, a pair of Firecrests on the same afternoon, five Goldcrests, four Chiffchaffs, three Nuthatches, one Great Spotted and one Green Woodpecker. I had never even seen a Green Woodpecker in the garden before! In addition, I caught a young Goldfinch in October which had been ringed in August on the Knepp Estate. An adult male Greenfinch I ringed in May was found dead in Heathfield in mid-July.





Ringling at Cissbury 2016

Val Bentley

Visits to the site during the first three months of the year were mainly spent removing the ever present ash and sycamore saplings which have such a phenomenal growth rate, cutting back the scrub layer, and removing brambles and other plants encroaching on the net rides. As in 2015 during some of these visits a single net was set and 12 new birds were ringed, including a Firecrest. Of 13 retrapped; one was a Firecrest ringed in autumn 2015 and another a Blackbird ringed as a juvenile over nine years earlier on 19th September 2006. There was one visit on 19th March using the eight nets nearest to the ringing table.

Between April and November there were 27 ringing sessions, one fewer than in 2015, but in only seven of these were the majority of the net rides used. Health issues kept Brian Clay away from ringing for most of the year, and it was only with the assistance of Sue Walsh and Mark Mallalieu from the team at Ladywell that we managed seven “full” ringing visits. The remaining sessions were carried out by Val Bentley and three different trainee ringers, and of necessity the number of nets set was restricted so they could be checked and cleared within safe time limits. Hence, as expected, the final total of birds trapped was lower than in 2015 though only a little less than in both 2012 and 2013.

During the year 1053 birds were trapped, of which 838 were new birds, 214 retraps and one control, that is a capture of a bird ringed elsewhere. Table 1 lists the species captured in 2016, and includes a column listing the new birds ringed in 2015 for comparison.

Table 1: Captures at Cissbury 2016

Species in **bold** were ringed in 2016 but not 2015. Species in *italics* were ringed in 2015 but not 2016.

Species	Total Captures	2016 New	2015 New	Retrap	Control
Blackbird	44	20	29	24	
Blackcap	323	288	406	35	
Blue Tit	22	11	20	11	
Bullfinch	38	23	29	15	
Chaffinch	11	10	6	1	
Chiffchaff	194	178	150	15	1
Duncock	53	24	30	29	
Firecrest	3	2	7	1	
Garden Warbler	8	2	4	6	
Goldcrest	44	37	87	7	
Goldfinch	9	9	7		

Grasshopper Warbler	2	2			
Great Tit	19	11	24	8	
<i>Green Woodpecker</i>			1		
Greenfinch	13	13	8		
<i>Jay</i>			1		
Kestrel	1	1			
<i>Lesser Redpoll</i>			2		
Lesser Whitethroat	6	4	1	2	
<i>Linnet</i>			1		
Long-tailed Tit	31	14	10	17	
Marsh Tit	1	1	3		
<i>Redstart</i>			1		
Redwing	1	1	10		
Reed Warbler	5	4	8	1	
Robin	67	48	54	19	
Sedge Warbler	3	3			
Song Thrush	33	28	22	5	
Swallow	3	3			
Treecreeper	2	2			
Whitethroat	25	23	53	2	
Willow Warbler	56	55	49	1	
<i>Wood Warbler</i>			1		
Wren	36	21	35	15	
Total	1053	838	1059	214	1

Returning Migrants

In April four new Chiffchaffs were trapped on the 3rd, and one re-trapped on the 17th had been ringed as an adult on 3rd May 2014. Also on 17th April the first Blackcap and Whitethroat of the year were found. On passage through the site during the spring were just four Willow Warblers, a species not seen again until the end of July. A Lesser Whitethroat had arrived by 3rd May, and was possibly the one heard singing. This bird was re-trapped a month later,

but no more were caught until the last week of August. Rather a surprise that same day was the appearance of a Sedge Warbler. In our 32 years of ringing at the site this is only our second spring individual, the previous one being in 1997, also on 3rd May. However the 1997 bird only weighed 10.3g, whereas this year's was a hefty 14g, and carried a full furculum of orange fat, enough fuel for it to head on much further.



Sedge Warblers above: note the worn plumage in the adult Sedge Warbler in May and the fresh colours and appearance of a first year bird in August.

The first Blackcap of the year was a male, ringed as a juvenile in 2014. Five new individuals were ringed on the next visit on 3rd May, and on the 17th a returning regular was a male ringed in 2009. There were eight females with brood patches, but only six young birds were trapped which were still in wholly juvenile plumage, hence definitely hatched on or near the site. After an absence of Garden Warblers during spring 2015, it was pleasing to find three different females with brood patches which remained on site. One, ringed as an adult in 2012, had returned by 17th May. A male was also heard singing that day, so it was disappointing that these were the only three trapped during the whole year. No first year birds were found, even later during autumn passage.

During the breeding season, when it is possible to determine whether the bird in the hand is male or female, there were at least four different male and three female Chiffchaffs on site, and 17 different individuals were trapped which had not started their post-juvenile moult. Arriving early in the breeding season and departing later than other migrants, Chiffchaffs can produce several broods. Although four new Whitethroats had been ringed by 3rd May, possibly only one pair stayed. No juveniles were found and none at all were trapped between 11th June and 24th July.

Residents

The British Trust for Ornithology website (www.bto.org) tells us that “information collected by (their) volunteers shows that 2016 was a poor breeding season for many bird species, in part due to periods of heavy spring and summer rainfall. In a reversal of fortunes from last year, conditions were better for populations in northern England and Scotland than they were in the south.” Results from our ringing activities bear out that statement for most of our summer migrants, as described previously, and for most of our residents, with only juvenile Robins trapped in reasonable numbers. BTO Garden Birdwatch results showed the lowest numbers of Blue Tits recorded

in August for eight years, a month when there should be a lot of youngsters around.

Table 2: Productivity of six resident species

Species	Number of juveniles and first year birds (to 30/9)						2016
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Blackbird	3	17	17	8	22	12	5
Blue Tit	41	32	10	19	14	12	5
Dunnock	13	30	18	24	29	19	11
Great Tit	43	28	4	10	16	14	9
Robin	22	40	35	24	43	28	24
Wren	13	24	12	13	22	22	13

Only juveniles and first year birds trapped until the end of September are included above as these are most likely to have been hatched on or near the site.

We are very fond of our Bullfinch population! In 2016 we caught four adult males and the same number of adult females, and between them they produced 17 juveniles, the first trapped on 8th August, only seven fewer than in 2015. No doubt Bullfinches benefitted from breeding later in the summer when the weather had improved. Unfortunately, on occasions we found Bullfinches and Chaffinches suffering from “scaly legs” caused either by mites or by *Fringilla* papillomavirus (BTO website information), and these cannot be ringed.

Another species of finch which did less well was Greenfinch, with nine males and four females trapped between 25th February and 24th July, but none thereafter and no juveniles or first year birds. It was a similar story for Chaffinch; eight females and three males, but no juveniles.

Autumn Passage

The first bird captured on its return south was a Willow Warbler which turned up on 24th July, but it escaped without a ring! However, more followed from the 30th, and continued to 18th September, with a maximum of 32 on 27th August. Blackcap numbers started to increase from the end of August. The maximum day catch was 46 on 18th September, and the last seen on 19th November, the final session of the year. Nine of these individuals weighed over 23g, the heaviest (25.5g) being trapped at 6.40 am on 4th September. Movement of Chiffchaffs began in mid-September, peaked at 40 on 2nd October, and the last was ringed on the 29th.

Table 3: Totals of Four Passage Species (as percentages of total number of birds ringed)

Years	Blackcap	Chiffchaff	Whitethroat	Willow Warbler
2000-2004	25.5	13.7	6.9	6.8
2005-2009	30.6	15.9	5.0	5.8
2010-2014	30.5	18.4	5.5	6.6
2015	38.3	14.2	5.0	4.6
2016	34.4	21.2	2.7	6.6

Common Whitethroat has recently been moved from the Amber to the Green category of conservation importance. Hopefully, the lack of juveniles produced this year at the site, and the lower numbers of birds on passage is just a one year “blip” caused by the weather conditions.

Survivors and Movers

While the majority of birds retrapped in 2016 were ringed that year, it is always a pleasure to see some which have survived over a longer time period, whether this time is spent in the UK or elsewhere.

Table 4: Selection of Re-traps 2014

Ring No.	Species	Ringed	Recaptured	Minimum Age
EHA 550	Wren	1 Oct 2013	11 Jun 2016	2yr 254d
CW118 86	Blackbird	19 Sep 2006	25 Feb 2016	9yr 159d - not re-trapped 2014 or 2015
Y317798	Garden Warbler	10 Jul 2012	19 Jun 2016	3yr 345d - an adult when ringed, not re-trapped 2014 or 2015
V945551	Blackcap	20 Jun 2009	17 May 2016	6yr 332d – re-trapped most years
Y317720	Blackcap	13 May 2012	30 Jul 2016	4yr 78d – only 2 nd recapture
EHA 673	Long-tailed Tit	11 Mar 2014	12 Oct 2016	2yr 215d – an adult when ringed, not re-trapped in 2015
X960188	Blue Tit	1 Aug 2010	3 May 2016	5yr 309d – not seen 2011-2015

There was just one control, a first-year Chiffchaff trapped on 12th October, ringed at Clavering Farm Fish Lakes, north of Bishop's Stortford, Essex, on 7th September. Birds found at other sites were a Willow Warbler ringed at Cissbury as a first year on 18th August 2015 which was at Barnacre Reservoir, Lancashire, on 20th April and a juvenile Chiffchaff which had moved from Cissbury on 19th June to nearby Ladywell by 23rd July. Following the same path, Long-tailed Tit DEJ506 from a brood raised at Cissbury in 2011, had moved to Ladywell by 2013 and was still there on 8th March 2016. At well over four years of age, it was by then a rather long-lived example of the species.

Autumn Arrivals

As Chiffchaffs departed, their place was taken by Goldcrests. Just one was ringed in the spring, on 3rd April, but another 38 were found between 21st September and 19th November, including one ringed in October 2015. Eight different Song Thrushes were captured to the end of September, but another 21 arrived between 12th October and 19th November. A single Redwing was in the net on 29th October.

The More Unusual and the Unexpected

Each year we look forward to seeing some of the less abundant species, or those that do not occur on site during the breeding season. Of the residents, we ringed two Treecreepers and one Marsh Tit, a first year bird. Two Firecrests were found in January and one in November. Passage birds were four Reed Warblers, two more Sedge Warblers and two Grasshopper Warblers, all first year birds. More surprising were three Swallows, the first ringed here since 2006, and only our eighth Kestrel, an adult male in moult, deftly extracted from the net on 27th August by Mark. Of the eight Kestrels seven were new birds but one, way back in September 1991, had been ringed as a nestling in Strathclyde in June the same year!

Summary

Despite the apparent poor breeding success for several species at Cissbury, the number of birds trapped on migration was not significantly lower, bearing in mind the more restricted ringing activity. As the BTO suggests, birds seem to have fared better in other parts of the country.

Mya Bambrick and Alex Brooks, both trainees, started ringing at Cissbury during the year, but James Dollow decided not to continue training for the time being. We very much appreciate the help given by Mark Mallalieu and Sue Walsh. However, we were unable to continue with our unofficial

“Constant Effort” ringing because, during the majority of sessions, we could not set the requisite number of nets.

We are very grateful to the National Trust for their permission to ring at the site, and to the owners of the track for allowing vehicular access, thus sparing us from carrying the heavy kit too far!

Kestrel number eight in the hand.



Note the contrast between new primaries and the bleached un-moulted ones.

Photograph acknowledgements

The source of photographs is sometimes clear from the text or other markings and those are not listed here. Note also that some of the bird photographs are illustrative; they may not be of the actual bird referred to in the account.

Front: Barn Owl: Dorian Mason

Back: Red-backed Shrike: Dorian Mason

Page 4 Common Greenshank: Ron Bewley

Page 9 Wall Lizard: Bernie Forbes

Page 12 Black-tailed Godwit: Dorian Mason

Page 13 Rose-ringed Parakeet: Roger Smith

Page 21 Pan-American Highway: Roger Smith

Page 24 Noticeboard: Brianne Reeve

Page 35 Firecrest: Val Bentley

Page 36 Eurasian Nuthatch: Val Bentley

Page 39 Sedge Warblers: Val Bentley

Page 45 Common Kestrel: Val Bentley

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