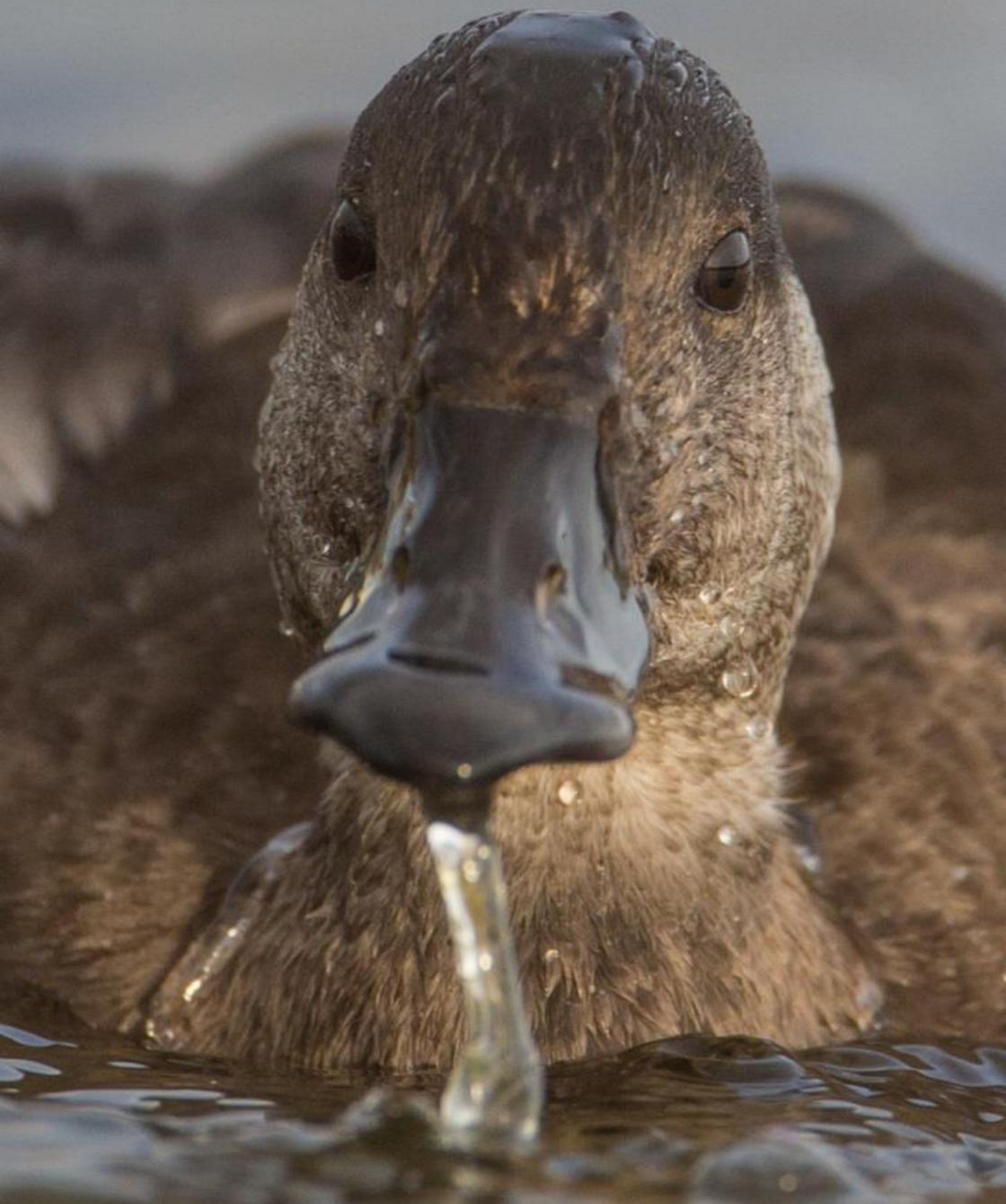


Shoreham and District Ornithological
Society: Spring Newsletter 2015



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EDITORIAL

Roger Smith

Our contributors have again produced a varied collection of interesting articles and I hope you will enjoy reading them.

It is always nice to get away for some winter sunshine and escape the leaden skies of northern Europe. Peter Whitcomb has written a tempting report about his visits to a little known part of the coast of southern Spain where a range of Mediterranean species can be enjoyed without the need for a lot of driving.

We are hopeful that the yew trees at Cissbury Ring have now been 'saved' and an additional benefit of the discussions that SDOS and SOS have held with the National Trust has been to highlight the importance of the site for migrating birds generally, as well as the Ring Ouzels in particular. Brianne Reeve has provided us with an update on the discussions about Cissbury and also with a report on the progress of the Rampion offshore windfarm.

Audrey Wende has written about one of her achievements as Sussex Swift Champion and there are updates from Widewater by Tim Holter and Ladywell by John Newnham. Stephen Simpson has assembled an abridged systematic list for 2013 and also a record of some local bird highlights since the last newsletter. Finally I have written a short piece on wintering Chiffchaff which have been widespread over the last winter.

Please don't be shy about writing something for the next newsletter if you feel your contribution will be of interest. The deadline for the next newsletter is 31st August 2015 and I look forward to your contributions.

Birding Spain's South-western Coast

Peter Whitcomb

Spain has a number of outstanding birding areas. The dehesa woodlands and steppe grasslands of Extramadura and the marshlands of the Coto Donana offer world class birding but are large areas and often require extensive travel. This article focusses on a less well known site where local walks and trips offered by wildlife guides can provide a good range of species, even in the winter months.

Punta Umbria is a small coastal resort towards the western end of the Spanish coast near to the border with Portugal. It is across the mouth of the RioTinto from the industrial city of Huelva. A few kilometres up-river is Palos de la Frontera from where Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492, and there are various local sites to visit associated with his 'discovery' of the New World.

We visited the area in February 2014. This was our second trip in February to this excellent birding area and accommodation was in a hotel right next to the Enabrales Nature Reserve which is partly on a dune system and partly on sandy soil, and has Umbrella Pine as the main tree, with underlying Broom and two species of Juniper. Nearby are the Odiel Marshes.

Crested Tit, Serin, Chiffchaff, Sardinian and Dartford Warblers, Black Redstart and Azure winged Magpie could all be seen in the Enabrales reserve on every visit. There were no Crested Larks on the dunes nearest to the beach, but Sanderlings and Kentish Plover were along the tideline, and visible were a single Sandwich Tern, Lesser Black Backed Gull and Gannets. Local birds around the hotel included Sardinian Warbler, Serin, Spotless Starling and viewed out to sea with scope there were Gannets, Bonxies and Yellow legged Gulls.

A possible walk is through Enabrales to the marshes of Salinas del Astur. In the woodland there are Dartford Warblers, Crested Tits, Long tailed Tits, Hoopoe and lots of Azure winged Magpies. On our last visit to the

Salinas a fine assortment of species included Water Pipit, Stonechat, Spoonbills, White Storks, Osprey, half a dozen Marsh Harrier, three Egret species, Zitting Cisticola, Crested Lark and on the river Black necked Grebe and Red breasted Merganser. Waders included Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Whimbrel and Curlew.

Nearby the El Portil urbanisation has a Lagoon that we visited in 2013 on one of the trips, but this year we decided to walk it, partly through Enabrales, partly on the beach. All the usual species mentioned earlier



Azure-winged Magpie

were noted and on the lagoon were a few dozen Red crested Pochard, Shoveler, Dabchicks and a single Black necked Grebe. Amongst the pochard was a Ferruginous Duck.



Ferruginous Duck and Red crested Pochard

A local company (Spoon Trips) offers wildlife watching trips to nearby areas of Andalucia. These provide an opportunity to see a wider range of species. We went on two birding walks led by Manu Mojarro, their chief guide. The first of these was to the Palos area across the eastern side of the river and Manu's enthusiasm for showing the birds, familiar or unfamiliar, made it all very worthwhile. Wet areas beside the river gave the group two Osprey, five Marsh Harrier, Great White Egret, Black winged Stilts, White Storks, Spoonbills and waders galore including about a dozen Little Stints, Greenshank, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Ruff, Green Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper. Also present were a couple of Iberian Yellow Wagtail and a Water Pipit. A little further along at my request we looked for a Bluethroat, and sure enough we had a glimpse of one along a muddy ditch. Crested Larks and a Zitting Cisticola were on the other side of the track. A private lake gave us an assortment of wildfowl and a Glossy Ibis.



Kentish Plover

The second of Manu's bird walks was up country to farmland, and wheat fields. A brief stop at a roadside wetland gave us Great White Egret, Black winged Stilt, Spoonbill, Kentish Plover, Little Stints, Crested Lark and Pallid Swift. Then we saw farmland where they breed fighting bulls.

The countryside was completely different from the coast and river with Corn Buntings, Linnets and Kestrels. Manu took us across a field to view the remaining Common Cranes in one of their wintering areas. Fifteen remained from about a hundred earlier. At the same spot we had three Red Kites, two Common Buzzard and two Ravens and returning down the same track excellent views of a Short toed Eagle. Then we went to a viewpoint bridge where a Hoopoe sat on top of a pylon and on the next pylon a preening Black shouldered Kite! There were three more Red Kites here, a singing Cetti's Warbler and two Ravens. The last stop was a rough track along the Rio Tinto river where we saw Crag Martins gathering mud for their nests under a bridge. A small flock of Spanish

Sparrows was seen before we returned to the main road. This was an excellent trip.

Strange as it must seem to UK birders there were a number of common birds which we take for granted and but not seen during the week. These included Jackdaw, Common Crow, Starling, Dunnock and Wren. They are of course present, but quite scarce. The sea was strangely quiet too with just Sandwich Tern and a couple of Scoter, plus some Gannets. I totted up 100 species over the visits which included a few lifers. Out of interest the record day count in this general area was 163 species in April when migration is in progress and summer visitors arrive from Africa.



Fighting bulls

The Yew Tree saga at Cissbury: July 2014 - February 2015

Brianne Reeve

In July last year Bernie Forbes was alerted to the fact that the National Trust Warden for Cissbury Ring was proposing to fell the two Yew trees within the Ring that are so important for migrating Ring Ouzels. Bernie contacted Nigel Hiscoke of Natural England and Jane Cecil of the National Trust. Jane told us that fencing the trees would involve gaining scheduled ancient monument consent from English Heritage and would be an additional maintenance cost and she indicated that any financial help towards fencing would be much appreciated. As a result of this Bernie approached both SOS and SDOS and it was agreed we would offer funding for the fencing. It did seem that we had won the battle to save these two Yew trees.

In early January, however, Val Bentley happened to meet Vic Oliver (the NT Warden) on the Ring and asked him when the fencing was going to be done. He told her that it was still proposed to fell the trees. A site meeting to discuss the trees had been held before Christmas but unfortunately neither SOS nor SDOS had been informed of this meeting.

As soon as Val told me what Vic Oliver had said I contacted Jane Cecil and she agreed to another on-site meeting on January 21st. Bernie was away but Val Bentley, Tim Holter, Roger Smith, Clive Hope and Dorian Mason joined me to meet Charlie Cain and Jane Cecil on a very damp, overcast morning. We discussed a number of issues and it seemed that the most difficult problem was the possible damage to archaeological remains posed by fencing and we were told that English Heritage would not allow any digging within the flint mine area. There is no doubt Cissbury is a complex site, where it is not easy to serve all conservation interests.

Val summarised the problem facing the National Trust as follows.

(1) The site is an SSSI mainly for its chalk grassland, but this is degraded and requires grazing to reinstate good quality grassland

(2) They have found a grazier willing to put cattle on the site, but he will not do so while cattle would have access to the yews, which are poisonous (deadly in quantity) to cattle

(3) English Heritage do not want disturbance caused to the archaeological site, which would be the case if fencing was put in around the yew trees

We explained our case for the retention and fencing of the yew trees due to their regular use by Ring Ouzels in autumn migration, and made the point that the species is a Red-listed Bird of Conservation Concern. We also pointed out that there is existing fencing around the trees, but agreed that this is now inadequate because the trees have grown since it was erected. We looked at the trees and discussed the boundaries where fencing would have to go if this could be approved.

Following the meeting Roger Smith carried out an analysis of Ring Ouzel sightings as recorded by SOS and Birdguides, and the society sent this report to English Nature. In response Jane Cecil said she was impressed by the numbers of birds that could be present at the site. The Birdguides data also demonstrated the strong association between the Ring Ouzels and the yew trees. The tables from this report are shown at the end of this article.

As a result of our discussions Jane Cecil agreed to talk again to English Heritage, and to let us know the outcome. She has assured us that no felling will take place without further discussion with SDOS and SOS. We have also had further support, not only from Sussex birders, but as far away as Co. Durham, advice on whom to contact and an offer of more funds. At the end of February a journalist on the Worthing Herald told Bernie Forbes that he had been in touch with the National Trust about the yew tree issue, and that they had said that the South Downs National Park is finalising 'scheduled ancient monument consent' to allow fencing around the trees. They said there are no plans in place to remove the

trees. We hope this is correct and that we shall be informed of the decision in due course.

Appendix

The tables below are taken from the SDOS report to the National Trust in January 2015.

Table 1: Total numbers of Ring Ouzels records in the SOS database for selected Sussex downland sites

Cissbury Ring	Hollingbury, Brighton	Sheepcote Valley, Brighton	Seaford Head	Shooters Bottom, Beachy Head
121	92	82	78	115

Table 2: Numbers of published reports of Ring Ouzels at Cissbury ring as recorded in the Birdguides archive

20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02
10	3	8	6	2	2	1	7	1	5	0	1	1

Up-date on the Rampion E-ON Wind Farm Brienne Reeve

On November 24th E-ON announced the 72 square km wind farm 13 km off the Sussex coast will be set up with 116 turbines spaced at a minimum of 600m apart, each measuring 140m high. Subsea cables will carry the electricity for 19 km ashore making landfall at Brooklands, east of Worthing, from whence the underground cables will complete the route for 27km to the new substation south of Bolney. Onshore construction will begin in Spring 2015 over a two year period. Offshore construction will start early in 2016 over a three year period.

Since the original proposal for the Wind Farm off Shoreham I have attended Project Liaison Group meetings on behalf of SDOS. Initially a large number of societies with conservation issues were invited and I have

attended almost all the meetings but there have rarely been more than eight representatives from other organisations. We were told at the last meeting in November that the 'final project design and construction plans' would have a particular reference to birds. Unfortunately neither RSPB nor SOS were able to send anyone.

The presentations for Rampion Offshore Wind Farms by Chris Tomlinson, Eleri Owen and Paula Seager were extremely good: questions were answered efficiently and with confidence. It is easy to see how this contract has been won.

The project stages were recapped and we were told about the offshore geotechnical surveys, and preparing documents to discharge the requirements such as noise and landscape management plans, ecology, ground consents and crossings. E-ON is working with WSCC and the South Downs National Park Authority who are the discharging authorities.

There was a query about the working width for the onshore cable link. The 40m cable route in the original application contains a 30m. working width, 15m is for easement where the trenches are dug. Confirmation was given that these disturbed works would be restored to their original appearance. Seeds have been collected by experts from Kew and stored at the Millennium Seed Bank and once the cable works have finished, seed will be returned to the sites and they will be monitored to ensure the restoration is effective.

Some hedgerows are a key environmental consideration especially for nesting birds. Measures would include netting some areas to discourage nesting, using closed mesh netting and ticker tape. I pointed out that many birds return to the same nesting sites year after year. I was told that if the measures were unsuccessful the stages of reconstruction would have to be re-evaluated, possibly spread over two years to mitigate risks to wildlife.

When asked about the restoration of the hedgerows Eleri said important hedgerows were listed and specific requirements to restore them were

part of the Hedgerows Strategy with advice from Natural England. A tree survey has been done and where trees need to be removed compensatory planting will be done. Some Barn Owl boxes will be closed during construction. Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) will be used to go under both hedges and roads.

I queried the effect of 116 turbine blades on migrating birds and quoted SDOS and SOS records over sixty years in which birds are flying east/west and south/north on migration and that many thousands were killed every year in wind farms. We were told that the 'wind farm was not sited on a migratory route and the plan had been subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment relevant to European Designated sites for birds'. ... I reiterated this was, most definitely, a migratory route. It was not disputed that birds were killed by turbines but the figure was 0.2 fatalities per turbine per year. This figure does not equate with calculations for the proposed Dogger Bank wind farm where it is estimated that 40,000 birds may be killed in one year. We were told the issue of bird strikes was taken very seriously and that more funding is allocated into the impact of turbines on birds than any other environmental matter.

I continue to have concerns about the project. Consumers are estimated to already pay close to £2 billion a year in subsidies for onshore and offshore wind farms. Three offshore wind farms due to start generating in 2017 were awarded contracts in 2014 at £150 per megawatt-hour for the electricity they produce and this money is being spent on wind energy that is intermittent and unreliable. Experience is also showing that turbines have a much shorter working life than was originally anticipated. Research for the Renewable Energy Foundation shows that over 15 years, the effects of weather and salt corrosion reduce their output from 45 per cent of capacity to barely 12 per cent so they will either have to be refitted or removed at a huge cost on a relatively short time-scale. I also remain concerned about the impact of the project on the offshore migration of birds.

Saving a Swift Colony

Audrey Wende: Swift Champion for SOS

At the beginning of July 2013 a member from the Sussex Wildlife Trust contacted me to say that whilst she was doing a bat survey she had seen several Swifts entering the church of St. Botolphs between Steyning and Lancing College. Shortly afterwards the young fledged and no more could be done.



As this Church is a Grade I listed building with nationally important fabric, it had been handed over to the Churches Conservation Trust in April 2013 and by January 2014, the Church was covered in scaffolding with two large portacabins installed alongside to help the workers keep warm and dry. The project involved a 10 month contract to restore the stonework both inside and out to ensure this building was weather-proofed and safe for future generations.

I made contact with Nicola Westbury, the architect working on these plans, and with the co-operation of Brian Clark, Conservation Projects

Manager of Philbeam Construction Co. it was agreed that Swift nesting boxes be installed in the tower to ensure the colony could carry on using this building. I especially want to thank Brianne Reeve, Graham Roberts and all those specialists who were working on the St. Botolphs restoration for their expertise and help to conserve Swifts in Sussex.

This work is now completed and the scaffolding taken away. The four specially made nest chambers can be seen in the tower facing the road, so please keep your fingers crossed that in 2015 the Swifts return and find their new nesting chambers and use them. Please let me know when you see Swifts flying around this Church: swifts@sos.org.uk.



St. Botolphs: Swift nest chambers installed below the eaves

Widewater Saline Lagoon LNR: Winter 2014/ 2015

Tim Holter

Why not take a bracing walk with lagoon and shoreline birding included. On a clear day the view sweeps around the bay to Seaford Head and, if

very clear, almost to Beachy Head on the far horizon. One day Jenny and I walked to Worthing and back. Our reward was a flock of two hundred Ringed Plovers and one hundred Dunlin revealing their presence by flying out over the sea to relocate on the foreshore.

So well camouflaged against the shingle, tight flocks of Ringed Plovers often require a meticulous search over some distance hoping a movement will catch the eye whereas Dunlin and Sanderling seem unable to keep still for long. The many Turnstones are often spread thinly along the shore and on the groynes. They also can be difficult to see at first glance when amongst the pebbles.

Just offshore during winter, until the end of their migration in spring, Common Gulls can be seen. In early spring migrating Little Gulls may be spotted followed later by incoming Terns which might take refuge on posts within the Lagoon in rough weather. Over the New Year there was an unconfirmed report an Iceland Gull roosting within the Lagoon. Whilst this sighting may not have complied with County recording criteria for rarities I refer to it as an indication of the possibilities at this location where a Glaucous Gull was confirmed last year.

2014 to 2015 winter season highlights have been:

A single Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), staying for some while from September to October, drew in many observers. Whilst not a rare wader it was a rare appearance locally, previously seen at Widewater in 2002 and 2010. The size of a sparrow it made a diminutive Dunlin appear quite large!

Single Shelduck and Coot have regularly appeared this winter. Wintering Teal numbers have varied, up to thirty, as they move between other local wintering sites such as the Adur Nature Reserve which often holds sixty to eighty.

Little Grebes are an ever increasing feature each winter with maximum counts of 36 this season, up from 28 last year. Not easily counted they constantly dive or lurk around bushes and landings.

In January a Common Scoter, usually barely discernible in a large black raft of birds offshore, provided excellent close views on the lagoon.

The 'resident' Kestrel has been frequently photographed. Posing on its preferred bush near the main causeway it enabled Dorian Mason to achieve 'Bird Photo of the Week' on 'Bird Guides' in January.



Several members have also contributed their photos to the User Group Gallery.

Once again Red Breasted Mergansers with their 'spiky' crests and thin red beaks have been an interesting winter presence as the males chase each other with headlong ferocious splashing attacks.

On 4th January SDOS members led a bird identification walk here for World of Widewater friends group (WOW) and Friends of Shoreham Beach members (FOSB). The general public also latched on. Fearing a dearth of species on the day the leader was relieved all the regulars were present topped up with a marvellous bonus of the arrival Goosanders. These mainly freshwater Sawbills could be compared with their smaller relative the saltwater Mergansers. The two handsome male Goosanders were resplendent with apricot flush on cream bodies beside the beautiful

'red-head' and silvery greys of the single female. Then a further bonus, giving the impression of wide open spaces, were two skeins of Brent Geese, one skein calling constantly as they flew low overhead.

The Goosanders have continued to grace Widewater with frequent appearances. It was a shame the ornithological spectacle was diminished for the public one busy weekend due to canoeists frightening them away.



This adds to the list of unhelpful disturbances faced by this LNR which is heavily used for public recreation. The management committee/steering group, on which the author is the SDOS representative, are fighting an uphill battle trying to resolve these problems which are at odds with the LNR status.

Boating is a tricky problem to resolve. Many years ago West Sussex County Council sold the land along the Brighton Road as building plots with the right to launch boats; hence the landings along the water's edge and moored boats. Residents' boats are not often used but give the impression the lagoon is a boating lake resulting in members of the public launching canoes via the carpark.

After proposal by WOW and planned by Countryside Ranger Martyn Burkinshaw, a project is in hand to improve the 'bird island' in the eastern end of the lagoon. This island was man-made many years ago. It will be re-profiled to a lower level by removing most of the sharp flints, soil, common flora and chicken wire. Sea Heath will be retained and the island topped with shingle. This should improve roosting for wetland birds and ornithological observation. The family of the late Stanley Allen, a past SDOS President, has offered his funeral collection funds towards the cost. Lancing Parish Council have agreed to the family's request to name the island 'Allen Island' as a memorial to Stanley who, in the past, was actively involved with conservation at the Lagoon.

Martyn Burkinshaw was serving on a temporary contract. Peter Hogan has replaced him on a permanent contract which we hope will provide continuity to move projects forward. Perhaps to our advantage, Peter is a birder. He commenced his role with a Widewater Birding Event for the general public on Saturday 28th February. Several SDOS members volunteered to support this alongside WOW and FOSB members. Dorian Mason provided fifty laminated photos of local birds. Unfortunately the event did not serve the intended educational purpose as miserable wet and windy weather kept people at home. The event team enjoyed a sociable morning sheltering under a gazebo. It was Peter's first opportunity to meet many of us and he was impressed by the enthusiasm of the organisations taking part. With wintering birds soon to depart for their breeding grounds elsewhere we are keen to run another event when they return.

Final thoughts: Who will make the first 'User Group' report of incoming Wheatears at Widewater or passing Terns? Will the Magpies nest be in the same bush as last year? How many Cygnets will survive this year? One has survived from 2014 and will shortly be driven away by the parents who, at the end of February, have already mated.

A Systematic List for 2013

Stephen Simpson

Here is a reduced systematic list for 2013 including accounts of selected records for selected species. These records were sourced from the Sussex Ornithological Society database and thank you to all SDOS members whose records on that database have contributed to this report.

Bewick's Swan

Thirteen were at Henfield Levels on Jan 1st with six there the next day. Four were at Steyning Levels on Jan 3rd and nine were there on Feb 4th. In December a family party of five was seen at Henfield Levels on 18th and 26th.

Garganey

Two flew E at Worthing beach on Apr 9th. Two pairs were at Henfield Levels on Mar 26th and one pair was seen there on Apr 12th and 15th.

Greater Scaup

Two were seen on the sea off Goring Gap on Dec 1st.

Long-tailed Duck

One was seen on the sea off Widewater with scoters on Jan 26th and one flew E with four Common Scoters at Worthing beach on Mar 3rd. One was recorded from Widewater on Nov 25th.

Goldeneye

A female was on the Adur at Coombes from Jan 21st to 28th. One flew E at Worthing beach on Nov 20th.

Goosander

Two flew W at Worthing beach on Jan 1st. There were records of one bird at Widewater from Nov 4th to 27th. One was at Brighton Marina on Nov 24th and three were on the Adur at the Tollbridge on Dec 14th.

Great Northern Diver

One was offshore from Shoreham beach on Mar 4th with two there the next day. One flew E at Worthing beach on Apr 30th. Later in the year there were records of single birds between Widewater and Worthing beach from Nov 27th to Dec 17th.

Manx Shearwater

One was seen at Southwick beach on May 13th and at Worthing beach there were two W on Jun 8th and three W on Jun 13th. One flew W at Hove on Aug 3rd. In October at Worthing beach two flew W on 20th and one flew W on 22nd.

Balearic Shearwater

At Worthing beach one W on Jul 29th, two W on Sep 2nd, two W on Sep 18th and two W on Oct 20th.

Storm Petrel

At Worthing beach there was one W on Jun 16th and one W on Jun 23rd.

Eurasian Bittern

One was at Steyning on Jan 21st and 22nd and one was at Woods Mill on Feb 1st and Mar 19th. At Beeding Brooks there was one on Feb 18th and 26th and two were recorded there on Mar 3rd.

Glossy Ibis

One was at East Worthing on Feb 20th.

Spoonbill

Two were recorded at Southwick on Apr 9th and single birds flew E at Worthing beach on May 1st and 5th.

Red-necked Grebe

There were records of single birds from Worthing beach from Feb 23rd to Mar 2nd, Goring beach from Mar 2nd to 3rd, Ferring on Mar 3rd and Widewater on the 4th. Single birds were recorded off Worthing beach

from Nov 17th to Dec 10th and two were seen from Widewater on Dec 9th with one there on 12th.

Black-necked Grebe

One was at Shoreham on Mar 29th and one was at Brighton on Apr 10th. At Worthing beach one was offshore on Apr 5th and 9th and there were seven there on 10th, two on 14th and three on 19th. In November one was recorded at Ferring on 17th and Worthing beach on 17th and 18th.

Honey-buzzard

One flew W at Beeding Cement Works on Oct 6th.

Black Kite

One was seen in Angmering Park on Apr 28th.

Hen Harrier

In the early part of the year one was seen at Beeding Brooks on Jan 23rd, Feb 20th and Mar 28th. Also one flew over Keymer Burnhouse Bostall on Mar 5th. Several early records in the autumn. In August one was at Cissbury on 27th and one flew over Steep Down on 28th. There was a record from Brighton on Sep 1st and further records of single birds at Ditchling Beacon on Sep 2nd, Lancing on Oct 30th and Steyning Levels on Nov 7th.

Osprey

Single birds were seen at Brighton on Aug 28th and Lancing on Oct 20th.

Merlin

A male was seen flying E near Devil's Dyke on Feb 24th. Later in the year there were sightings of single birds from Cissbury on Sep 1st, Truleigh Hill on Oct 6th and Shoreham Harbour on Oct 10th.

Avocet

Two birds were at Widewater on Mar 24th. Single birds were seen around the Adur area on Mar 12th, flying E at Goring Gap on Apr 1st, flying E at

Worthing beach on Apr 11th and later in the year at Widewater on Dec 7th.

Ruff

In January single birds were reported from Broadwater on 19th and Brooklands on 21st. In the Adur area four birds were seen on Feb 10th and two were at Shoreham Airport on Dec 12th.

Jack Snipe

One was on the Adur at Shoreham on Jan 18th and there were three at Widewater on 21st and also one there the next day. At Ferring Rife one was recorded on Jan 27th and Apr 11th. One was at Coombes on Feb 24th.

Pomarine Skua

At Worthing beach one E on May 6th and May 14th were the only records in a very poor year for the species.

Yellow-legged Gull

Single birds were at Shoreham Beach on Mar 6th, West Tarring on Aug 2nd and Goring Gap on Dec 15th.

Little Tern

21 flew E at Worthing beach on May 5th and five were seen from the beach on May 6th.

Black Tern

At Worthing beach there were records of just one bird on May 6th, one W on May 12th and one E on May 17th.

Turtle Dove

One was seen at Woods Mill on Jul 11th and one was seen at Wild Park on Sep 10th and 11th.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

One was at West Tarring on May 29th and one was at Cissbury on Sep 3rd.

Short-eared Owl

In the first part of the year there were records from Beeding Brooks and Steyning Levels including two at Beeding Brooks on Jan 6th and Mar 3rd. One flew W at Worthing beach on Apr 8th and also there two were seen from there on Sep 30th. In November there were records from sites including Long Furlong, Henfield Levels, Beeding Brooks and Mill Hill.

Wryneck

One was at Sheepcote Valley on Aug 25th and there were records of single birds in the Cissbury and Findon Park area from Sep 1st to 5th.

Great Grey Shrike

One was reported from Worthing on Nov 4th and 7th and one was at Chanctonbury Ring from Nov 30th to Dec 6th.

Woodlark

Three were on snowy grass at Brooklands on Jan 21st and three were at Shoreham Airport on Jan 21st and 22nd. Five were at Goring beach on Jan 22nd and six were there on 23rd and 24th. Later in the year one was at Cissbury on Oct 6th.

Yellow-browed Warbler

One was ringed at Cissbury on Oct 5th and one was heard in Goring on Oct 9th and 11th.

Radde's Warbler

One was at Sheepcote Valley on Oct 12th.

Wood Warbler

One was at Sompting on Aug 27th.

Grasshopper Warbler

One was near Shoreham on Apr 25th and one was near Mill Hill from Jul 12th to 15th. Three were found at ringing sessions at Ladywell on Aug 6th, 20th and 27th.

Waxwing

From Feb 3rd to 24th, there were a number of records of between 15 and 32 birds at Worthing in the Durrington and High Salvington areas. Elsewhere, one was at Brooklands on Jan 6th and from the Shoreham area 37 were reported on Jan 9th and 22 were there on 19th. Other reports included 20 from Brighton on Jan 9th, 20 from Portslade on Jan 22nd and 10 from Hove on Apr 22nd.

Ring Ouzel

One was at Goring Gap on Apr 11th. All the other records were from Sep 22nd to Oct 26th including four at Cissbury on Oct 6th, eight at Truleigh hill on Oct 8th, 15 at Sheepcote Valley on Oct 12th and five at Edburton Hill on Oct 26th.

Pied Flycatcher

In April one was at Brighton on 17th and 18th and one was at Cissbury on 26th. In August there was one at Cissbury on the 8th and two on 27th. Also in August single birds were at Shoreham on 11th, Wild Park on 26th, Sheepcote Valley on 28th and Ferring Rife on 28th and 29th.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit

A Rock Pipit of the Scandinavian race was at Goring beach on Apr 11th.

Brambling

Two were in a maize field by the Adur at Shoreham on Jan 19th and five were near Lower Standean on the same day. An adult male was at Brighton on Apr 10th. Later in the year one was at Sheepcote Valley on Oct 18th and one was at Wild Park on Oct 24th.

Common Redpoll

One was at Steyning on Mar 13th.

Common Crossbill

One flew SW at Brighton on Jul 20th, a flock of 16 flew E at Cissbury on Aug 12th, one flew NE at Worthing on Aug 17th and two flew W at Wild Park on Aug 27th.

Snow Bunting

One was on the beach in the Goring Gap area from Feb 13th to 16th and later in the year one was at Goring beach from Oct 30th to Nov 10th.

Other species recorded in the SDOS area in 2013:

Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Barnacle Goose, Brent Goose, Egyptian Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Gadwall, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Shoveler, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Common Eider, Common Scoter, Velvet Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge, Common Pheasant, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Fulmar, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Slavonian Grebe, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Hobby, Peregrine, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Common Snipe, Woodcock, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Curlew, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Greenshank, Common Redshank, Turnstone, Arctic Skua, Great Skua, Kittiwake, Black-headed Gull, Little Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Feral Pigeon, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Common Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Little Owl, Tawny Owl, Common Swift, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Raven, Goldcrest, Firecrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Skylark, Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Cetti's Warbler, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Robin, Common Nightingale, Black Redstart, Common Redstart, Whinchat, Eurasian Stonechat, Northern Wheatear (including Greenland Wheatear), Dunnock, House Sparrow, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail (including White Wagtail), Tree Pipit,

Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Corn Bunting.

Escapes and Feral birds: Black Swan, Red-tailed Hawk, Cockatiel, Zebra Finch.

August 2014 to January 2015 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.

August 2014

On the Adur at Shoreham there were 40 Redshank and four Whimbrel on the 12th, four Greenshank on the 15th, two Bar-tailed Godwits on the 27th and on the 28th, a Ruff, a Curlew Sandpiper and 40 Ringed Plovers. Thirteen Black-tailed Godwits flew E at Worthing beach on 10th.

Wheatears were seen in good numbers at a number of sites including three at Widewater on 15th, eight at Goring Gap on 20th, six at Steep Down on 22nd and 11 at Goring Gap on 27th where there were also three Whinchats. A good variety of migrants around Ferring Rife on 21st including 35 Willow Warblers, 12 Common and one Lesser Whitethroats, two Reed Warblers, three Wheatears and a Whinchat. On 28th to 31st there were two Spotted Flycatchers.

September 2014

Five Wheatears were on Southwick beach on the 2nd and two were there on 3rd. At least nine were at Goring Gap on 8th (with five Yellow Wagtails) and ten on 22nd. Seven were at Cissbury on 25th.

A Spotted Flycatcher was at Shoreham on the 2nd , two were at East Kingston on 7th and one was at Cissbury on 9th. A Pied Flycatcher was at Brooklands on the 5th.

Waders included a Little Stint at Widewater from 6th to 8th. A Curlew Sandpiper was on the Adur at Shoreham from 9th to 16th. A Knot was there on 13th and 16th and there were three on the 19th.

Sightings from Cissbury included 35 Yellow Wagtails on 9th, a Ring Ouzel on 21st, and on 25th there were 60 Corn Buntings, 600 Linnets, 500 Meadow Pipits and six Stonechats.

At Goring Gap on the 15th there were six Wheatears, 14 Sandwich Terns, 121 Turnstones, 25 Sanderlings and 82 Ringed Plovers. A Marsh Harrier flew in from the sea there on the 22nd. Hundreds of hirundines were on the move at this time.

Kingfishers were seen on the Adur, at Shoreham Harbour, Cuckoo Corner, Worthing beach, Ferring Rife and Widewater.

October 2014

A Great Skua flew E at Worthing beach on the 4th and a Caspian Gull was on the Adur opposite the airfield on the 5th. A Little Stint was at Widewater on 6th and 7th and on the Adur on the 8th and two Greenshank were at Widewater on the 11th. A Red Kite was seen near Chantry Hill on 2nd and also eight Stonechats. A further ten were at Cissbury on 14th with 16 there on 17th, when there were also 25 Yellowhammers.

Also, at Cissbury there were three Ring Ouzels around the southern Yew tree and surrounding scrub on the 13th and at least five there on 14th with two more in the area, and at least three in and around the southern Yew tree on 17th.

Migrating Brent Geese were seen, including 34 W at Worthing beach on 4th, approximately 30 S over Shoreham on 11th , approximately 150 S over

Cissbury on 15th and around 300 E at Widewater on 22nd and next day 180 flew W at Ferring followed by over 300 W off Worthing on 24th. A productive sea-watch on 26th at Worthing recorded three each of Arctic and Great Skuas, 190 Brent Geese, 45 Common Scoter, 40 Gannets and three Mediterranean Gulls.

At Ferring beach on 15th, visible migration yielded 720 Goldfinches, 40 Linnets, 35 Siskins, 12 Pied Wagtails and 75 Swallows all flying E then on 22nd flying W were approximately 1600 Woodpigeon, 110 Stock Dove and an Eider. A Swallow was seen at Brighton on 27th. An influx of downland birds to the fields between Ferring and Kingston was apparent on 28th with 65 Skylarks, 15 Meadow Pipits, a Ring Ouzel and most surprisingly, five Grey Partridges, a species not seen here for many years.

November 2014



On the 1st two Red-breasted Mergansers were on the sea off Worthing beach and two male Velvet Scoters flew W. Two Little Auks flew W at Widewater on 6th and a Swallow flew E at Goring Gap on 7th. Two juvenile Pomarine Skuas flew W over Southwick on the 8th and a Long-

tailed Duck flew W at Ferring beach on 9th. A Grey Phalarope was near Henfield Levels from 10th to 13th.

Two Purple Sandpipers were seen in the Shoreham Harbour area on the 7th, 11th and 23rd with three there on 13th. One was at Brighton Marina on the 9th and there were eight in the area on 21st and 27th.

A number of Black Redstarts were recorded throughout the month. Three were at Brighton Marina on 9th, one was at Ferring beach also on 9th, one was at Old Shoreham on 14th, two were in the Southwick Canal area on 16th, one was on the beach at Widewater on 23rd and 24th and one was in the Splash Point area of Worthing beach from 26th to 28th.

A Ring-necked Parakeet was at Brooklands on 16th and one was at Worthing on 27th. From Worthing beach on the 20th there were ten Red-breasted Mergansers on the sea and seven E, also one Red-throated Diver E and two E the following day when 15 Greylag Geese flew E there. An Avocet was on the Adur at Shoreham on 28th.

December 2014

At Widewater between three and five Red-breasted Mergansers were seen from 3rd to 22nd. There were also Little Grebes there in good numbers, 35 on 3rd, 32 on 21st and 26 on 29th. Also, Teal, 18 on 13th, 16 on 21st and 12 on 29th.

A Tundra Bean Goose was seen in the area of Cuckoo Corner from 5th to 13th. Around Steyning Sewage Works there was a Siberian Chiffchaff on the 13th and two on the 20th. On these dates there were also between 9 and 15 Chiffchaffs in the same area. A Ring-necked Parakeet was at Brooklands on 24th.

On the 28th off Worthing beach there were 52 Red-throated Divers, 40 Red-breasted Mergansers, one Little Gull, two Long-tailed Ducks and on the beach one Knot. Two Goosanders were on the Adur on the 29th.

The Tundra Bean Goose in the Adur Valley: December 2014



January

A Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard drumming at Coombes on New Year's Day and there were 23 Little Grebes at Widewater and six Purple Sandpipers at the mouth of Shoreham Harbour. Also on 1st off Worthing beach there was a Great Skua, three Red-throated Divers W and a juvenile Pomarine Skua E. On the sea there were around eight each of Red-breasted Mergansers and Great Crested Grebes.

A Water Rail was seen in Ferring on 2nd and at Steyning Sewage Works there were two Siberian Chiffchaffs on 7th, 17th and 20th.

A Common Scoter was at Widewater from 5th to 11th. Also at Widewater there were three Goosanders on 4th, one on 12th and two on 15th. Three pairs of Red-breasted Mergansers were there on 11th, seven on 15th and nine on 18th.

Blackcaps were seen in the SDOS area on 1st, 5th, 10th, 16th and 27th. 16000 Starlings went to roost at Brighton Pier on 18th. Stonechats were recorded at Cissbury on 23rd. A possible Night Heron was near the Cement Works on 25th and 27th.

Ringing at Ladywell in 2014

John Newnham

The final analysis of the year showed this to be an average but nonetheless interesting year for ringing in the Ladywell valley. The total of 1081 birds trapped, comprising 652 new birds ringed and 429 re-traps, can be compared with the overall numbers achieved in the previous seven years in Table 1. In terms of new birds the total is not dissimilar to four of the previous seven years but clearly less than the number of birds ringed in 2010, 2011 and 2013.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
New birds	472	600	764	1202
Retraps	252	537	647	689
Total	724	1137	1411	1891
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014
New birds	1602	711	1069	652
Retraps	1136	758	975	429
Total	2738	1469	2044	1081

Table 1: The overall numbers of new birds and retraps in Ladywell: 2007-2014

During the year there were 25 mist-netting sessions and two additional brief ringing sessions dealing exclusively with the nest boxes. Table 2 shows the numbers of sessions in each month during 2014 with the number of new and re-trapped birds caught.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Sessions	1	0	2	2	1	3
New Birds	5	0	20	17	61	69
Retraps	24	0	41	27	30	31
Month	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sessions	0	0	5	6	2	3
New Birds	0	0	209	184	36	51
Retraps	0	0	60	113	27	76

Table 2: The 2014 monthly number of ringing session and birds trapped in Ladywell

Clearly September and October were the most productive months. Inclement winter weather reduced the potential for sessions at both ends of the year and the absence of ringing in July and August will have been responsible for the absence of some of the early migratory species, such as Garden and Sedge Warbler, from the ringing totals.

Species	New	Retrap	TOTALS
Kestrel	2		2
Stock Dove	1		1
Woodpigeon	2		2
Kingfisher	8	4	12
Green Woodpecker	3	2	5
Great Spotted Woodpecker	7	3	10
Wren	31	27	58
Dunnock	22	45	67
Robin	30	49	79
Stonechat	1		1
Blackbird	24	23	47
Song Thrush	19		19
Redwing	8		8
Cetti's Warbler	3	1	4
Reed Warbler	23	8	31
Lesser Whitethroat	2		2
Whitethroat	3		3
Blackcap	80	6	86
Chiffchaff	145	5	150
Willow Warbler	4		4
Goldcrest	27	11	38
Firecrest	2		2
Long-tailed Tit	28	29	57
Blue Tit	63	111	174
Great Tit	65	90	155
Nuthatch	1	2	3
Treecreeper	4	5	9
Jay	1		1
Magpie	1		1
Jackdaw	15		15
Chaffinch	19	7	26
Greenfinch	2		2
Goldfinch	4		4
Bullfinch	2	1	3

Table 3: The numbers of new birds and retraps for each species in Ladywell in 2014

The average catch over the 25 sessions was 42 birds with a range from just 14 on 15th April to 76 during a solo session on 10th September. So what were the final tallies of species caught in the valley during 2014? Each of the regular ringing session reports provide a table of totals and Table 3 is a composite of these and shows the numbers of each of the 34 species trapped:-

Hidden in the figures are a few stories; birds of prey are never easy to catch and following six Sparrowhawks ringed in 2013 only one remained in a mist net long enough to be retrieved this year. Sadly this occurred just after using the last D size ring on a Green Woodpecker and the bird was therefore released un-ringed. Two Kestrels were ringed together (after being caught in the same net) during the last session of the year. Eight new Kingfishers in a year is a site record clearly indicating that this species survived well during last winter and had a successful breeding season. A Stonechat ringed towards the year end was a first for the site and 15 Jackdaws trapped in one net in June was noteworthy. Amongst the common residents both Wrens and Dunnocks were ringed in similar numbers to previous years but, although 30 Robins seems a healthy number, this is the lowest annual total recorded. Likewise the number of Blackbirds ringed was the lowest of the eight years activity and Blue Tits, normally the mainstay of valley catches, were comparatively scarce with the total of 63 new birds being only 40% of the average number ringed for each of the previous seven years. As previously mentioned the lack of ringing in July and August contributed to low numbers of summer migrants although both Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps, both later passage species, were ringed in reasonable numbers. Finches have never been numerous in the valley, even with the provision of seed, but numbers were particularly low in 2014. Table 4 shows, in particular, a marked decline in the number of Greenfinches ringed, or even seen, in the valley.

Each of the sessional reports has a 'net productivity' table (Table 5). This has very little ecological value and is mainly of interest to those who know the valley well. The number of birds each net traps depends on numerous factors and for the ringers it is fascinating to see how some nets which are usually very productive go through periods of catching very little. Broadly 47% of the mist-netted birds in 2014 were caught in the Lancing College

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
Chaffinch	11	42	37	31
Greenfinch	5	15	10	20
Goldfinch	11	29	9	7
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014
Chaffinch	82	58	63	19
Greenfinch	55	23	14	2
Goldfinch	42	7	4	4

Table 4: The annual ringing totals for the three most numerous finches in Ladywell 2007-2014.

portion of the valley and 53% on Applesham Farm; all nest-box ringing was on Lancing College land. Table 5 gives the overall totals caught by each net site during 2014. The star performer in 2014 was P2 – a net set alongside the reed fringed pond in Applesham Farm. However, this net site comprises four 18 metre nets tagged together and is the longest run of mist-net we use whilst other locations merely hold a single 18 metre net and are, therefore, more productive per unit of net. Furthermore K3 was only set three times in the year and the L series of nets were not erected when either few ringers were present or during a period in the late autumn when netting sessions coincided with the woodland management work being undertaken by a team from Plumpton College.

Over the past years a number of small ‘tit’ style nest boxes have been made by college students and these have been monitored annually. There are currently 32 boxes erected in wooded area on the south side of the valley. Exactly half of these were occupied this year by either Blue or Great Tits and a total of 126 eggs were laid. From these 55 young tits fledged. Six boxes had been severely damaged prior to the nesting season, probably by Great Spotted Woodpeckers, rendering them uninhabitable this spring; all have been repaired and replaced.

On each visit to the valley a full list of birds encountered is recorded on the British Trust for Ornithology’s *Birdtrack* system and so contribute to

	Lancing College							
	K	K2	K3	L1	L2	L4	L5	L7
Number birds.	103	118	16	41	51	110	29	13
Length metres.	24	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Birds/metre	4	7	1	2	3	6	2	1
	Applesham Farm							
	P1	P2	P3					
Number birds.	174	251	116					
Length metres.	50	72	18					
Birds/metre	3	3	6					

Table 5: The productivity of each of the mist net sites in Ladywell 2014.

the recording of bird numbers, movements and detectability not only on a local scale but nationally. During the year 31 full lists, comprising 1056 records, were logged and 77 different species were noted in or flying over Ladywell. Just four species, Jackdaw, Rook, Blue Tit and Blackbird, feature on each list. Two species were added in the year, a Stonechat which turned up in net P2 in the early winter and a Great Grey Shrike which was intermittently seen by college staff members, and very briefly by me, between 11th and 20th December.

Probably the most significant event in 2014 occurred in the summer when both John Crix and Janet Derricott retired from ringing to follow other interests. Their contribution to the work in the valley was enormous and they were greatly missed in the latter part of the year. Both were major players in the ringing team; undertaking much of the organisation of both ringing and 'gardening' sessions in the valley, completely taking over during my long trips to Australia and researching new ways of assigning an age or sex to birds in the hand. Perhaps their most lasting legacy is the links they established with the college and the extensive work undertaken by them to organise and run the 'Field Ornithology' classes for small groups of college sixth formers. Hopefully the seeds sown in these classes will develop into a lasting interest in natural history.

My thanks not only go to John and Janet but also to other members of the ringing team, Sue Walsh, Chrissi White, Adam Webster and latterly Dave Boddington. 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.



The valley at Ladywell

Common Scoter at Widewater, January 2015



Wintering Chiffchaff: 2014 – 2015

Roger Smith

The last winter has been notable for the number of wintering chiffchaff in the County. Chiffchaff in the United Kingdom are typically short distance migrants going to the Mediterranean countries for the winter. They share this characteristic with some of our other summer visitors such as Blackcap and Ring Ouzel. In recent winters more Chiffchaff have overwintered and a favoured habitat is the filter beds of local wastewater treatment plants such as those at Steyning and Coldwaltham where the warm water results in abundant insect food. Amongst these wintering birds has been a small number of Siberian Chiffchaff. The image below of a bird at Steyning, captured by last December by Dorian Mason, shows the typical greyish plumage of this form. They also have a distinctive call.



Images of local birds by Dorian Mason



Grey Phalarope



Purple Sandpiper



Red Breasted Merganser



Goosander

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The image of a Common Kestrel on the rear cover was selected as Birdguides Photo of the Week in January 2015

