

Shoreham and District  
Ornithological Society  
Spring Newsletter  
2018



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## EDITORIAL

I don't do much longer distance twitching any more, largely because of the awful traffic in the south-east, but last autumn a couple of American waders turned up at Lodmoor near Weymouth and it seemed too good to miss - like a buy one get one free! By the time I got there the Stilt Sandpiper had flown off, which was irritating, but there was also a Great Egret strolling about. The interesting thing, I thought, about this bird was that it was clearly in the also ran category – the bird had become just a regular feature of the avian scene for the twitching community.

This brings me to some of our illustrations in this Newsletter – appearing in this edition are a couple of Glossy Ibis and a Cattle Egret, birds once very rare in the U.K. but now encountered relatively frequently on the south coast. In our island isolation, however, there is a danger that we fail to appreciate how common some of these birds have become in continental Europe. Twenty years ago there were a few pairs of Glossy Ibis in southern Spain: now there are thousands of pairs in Spain and France. In terms of observations and new breeding species we are starting to benefit from the increase in numbers of water birds in Europe. Climate change may be playing a part but we should probably also appreciate the effective conservation measures now being undertaken both in the U.K. and Europe that particularly benefit 'larger' species of bird such as water birds and raptors.

Moving on to the rest of the Newsletter, yet again I thank everyone for their efforts in submitting articles and photographs and I hope you all enjoy the publication.

Roger Smith

Brianne Reeve steps down

Bernie Forbes



After many years as Chairman of the SDOS, Brianne decided to step down in 2017. Her aim is to take a back seat in the running of the society although she will stay on the Council as an ordinary member. Brianne has been connected with the Society since the mid-sixties and from then has taken an active role.

In the early nineties she was elected to be Honorary Secretary and then became our Chairman in 2001. Never one to sit back where there is a job to

be done, she has contributed in so many different ways. She has frequently been involved in local issues where they concern not just birds, but the loss of habitat and its detrimental effect on all wildlife. Always putting the Society first she has had an eye on any proposed development that may be detrimental or have an adverse impact on the countryside. She has eagerly represented our Society and has kept the members informed. In fact you could say that Brianne has widened the horizons of many of our members with her vast awareness of wildlife and her deep love of all things connected with nature.



In recognition of her sustained contribution to the Society over many years the SDOS Council decided to commemorate her work by commissioning a picture by John Reaney, a local wildlife artist. In the autumn John Reaney had completed the painting and I had the pleasure of the first view. It is a magnificent collage of images.

Brianne did not want a public presentation. Thus, with her consent, we made the presentation at our last Council meeting in January this year. Brianne was

duly thanked for her massive contribution to the SDOS and was extremely pleased with the painting. Looking forward to the future we all hope to continue to benefit from her wise counsel and advice.

## Widewater Lagoon Local Nature Reserve – Nature Information Panels

Tim Holter

**Widewater Lagoon**  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

**Birds**

Black-billed Gull - *Larus delawarensis* - breeding season  
 Kingfisher - *Alcedo v. cyanoptera*  
 Great Egret - *Ardea herodias*

Red-breasted Merganser - *Mergus americanus*  
 Goldeneye - *Cluella melanotos*  
 Sandwich Tern - Spring & Summer  
 Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Little Grebe - *Colymbus nanus*  
 Great Black-back Gull - *Larus marinus*  
 Herring Gull - *Larus argentatus*

SDOS  
 ADULT WORKSHOP  
 WILDLIFE COUNTY  
 WILDLIFE COUNTY

The project to create five nature information panels at Widewater Lagoon Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was finally completed during the latter part of 2017. The initiative was led by SDOS member Jo Procter on behalf of the friends group 'World of Widewater' (WOW).

It has taken a couple of years of research, planning, photography, illustration procurement and fund raising to finish the work. The new information panels have been installed using four renovated plinths around the lagoon and one new one. The panels show -

Flowers and Plants – compiled with advice from WOW and SDOS member Marion Wood.

Insects, Reptiles, Mammals and Molluscs – a panel dedicated in memory of WOW committee member David James who ran educational nature activities for children and members of the public.

Underwater Life – shows some of the specialist species living in the hyper-saline habitat together with some of the rare species found in the past. This panel is dedicated in memory of David Wood, a former Widewater resident and WOW and SDOS member.

Two Bird Panels – showing some of the birds which may be seen around the lagoon area.

One Bird panel, by the information kiosk, is dedicated in memory of Stanley and Peggy Allen. Stanley served as an SDOS officer for many years, latterly as President, and also served on Widewater committees. A solicitor by profession, he was involved at the time the LNR status was obtained.

To fund this panel the Allen family donated contributions from Stanley's funeral collection with further money contributed by SDOS members. This panel faces a small island in the lagoon which has been named 'Allen Island'. The second panel, by the central causeway, was financed by a donation from our society.

In addition to the SDOS and Allen family funding WOW also obtained support from the WSCC Community Initiative.

Lancing Parish Council arranged for the renovation of the original plinths and Helen Plant, Clerk of Lancing Parish Council, helped with various other issues.

Tim Holter acted as intermediary between SDOS, WOW and the panel designer in respect of the Bird Panels. The majority of the bird photographs featured were provided by SDOS members, with selection and panel proofing assistance by Brianne Reeve.

On the SDOS web-site, [www.sdos.org](http://www.sdos.org) a link has been provided to a new 'tab' providing additional photographs and information about the panel birds. Thanks are due to Peter Wyld for the superb presentation.

To celebrate the completion of the panel project, the installation of a western 'gateway' to the LNR by Lancing Parish Council, the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of the reserve and the renewal of the LNR status, WOW are holding a celebration event at the LNR starting at 2pm on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> of April. Panel photographers, SDOS members and the general public are welcome.

## The Collins Bird App for Android Phones

### Bernie Forbes

Until recently the Collins Bird Guide App was only available for an iPhone or iPad. In the past few months, however, a new App has been developed for Android Phones. After reading the reviews on the BirdGuides website I took the plunge and downloaded the Collins Bird App onto my Android phone. The cost was £12.99.

Is it going to replace my battered, much loved and extensively used four copies of The Collins Bird Guide that are dotted around my house and car? Well, over the past few weeks I have used the

App on my phone constantly in the field. I have found it relatively easy to use. It brings the art work into your hand with surprisingly good results. For example, using the screen, I selected Spectacled Warbler and at the same time had the page open for this species in my Field Guide book. The phone showed the same bright image as depicted in the field guide. You are able to increase the size of each bird thus filling your screen with each painting if you wish. The annotation notes (the pointers on each page to aid field ID) which appear for every species can be removed by a flick of a button on the screen. By touching the round symbol on the screen you are able to view each species distribution on the map of the Western Palearctic. This includes all of Europe.

Virtually every species occurring in the Western Palearctic is there at a scroll of the phone. When you open the App there is a search function at the top of the screen where you can search for an individual species by its name or family group. I found the text search was more accurate than the voice search feature that is on my phone. One of the biggest benefits of using this App is that you are able to listen to the song and call for nearly every species at a touch of the screen. This is a massive aid to anyone whose song and call knowledge is a little fuzzy. You are able to loop the audio which enables you to listen to calls and songs as you hear them.

Many of the bird call and song recordings are not reproduced at the same quality as say from a CD or when downloaded from a PC. They can sound a little tinny or thin with less volume control, although still audible. Nevertheless this will be a real bonus when you are out in the field and hear the call of a bird flying over. You can rapidly browse through a selection of calls and hopefully find what you have heard. I think this app is a great learning tool and will be of great value to anyone who wants to learn more about how to identify birds.

# Intelligent corvids

## Wendy Ball

It is well known that corvids are very intelligent birds, and this personal story just illustrates how clever they can be. Last winter I noticed that we had a Rook lingering around our bird feeders. Gradually, it developed a really clever technique to extract some fat from the fat feeders. By sitting in a certain place on a nearby branch it swung back and forth on the branch till it eventually could snatch a beakful from the feeder. It became very adept at this and would also 'hoover' up any goodies that were displaced to the ground.

After a while another Rook joined the first and eventually it learnt the same technique. This continued until we had up to six Rooks assembled round the feeders taking turns. I decided that I would try to capture an image of this unusual behaviour.

The feeders are strategically situated near our lounge windows so I set up the camera on a tripod, opened up one of the windows and left the equipment up to allow the birds to become familiar with it. Nevertheless when I finally sat behind the camera, even though I was dressed in subdued clothing and sat very still, none of the birds would approach the feeders. My next tactic was then to close the curtains around the lens just leaving a small crack so that I could still observe the activity. Again the birds were very cautious and it just revealed how sentient they are. My final attempt was to resort to securing the curtains around the lens with pegs so that I was completely concealed from the birds. The drawback with this was that the only way I could observe the activity was through the viewfinder which after a long period of observation becomes very tiring and is conducive to neck ache!



Eventually I resorted to 'live view' which allows the photographer to see the image on the larger screen on the back of the camera. One major drawback of using 'live view' is it results in rapidly drained camera batteries. My final ploy was to attach an intervalometer to the camera which enabled me to take photos remotely. This is a shutter release mechanism which is attached to the camera by a wire. The image above is just a sample of many that were taken using this method.

It was very interesting to see at first hand the evolution of intelligent bird behaviour over a period of time.

## September 2017 to February 2018 Highlights

### Clive Hope

#### September

On 3<sup>rd</sup>, an hour and a half's seawatch at Worthing produced two Arctic and one Great Skua plus a few ducks and 20 Gannets. A surprise in the shape of two White Storks appeared on the roof of ASDA at Ferring on 4<sup>th</sup> and remained in the area west to Kingston Lane until 8<sup>th</sup>. One was the free-flying bird from the Knepp Estate introduction programme. Spotted Flycatchers were in several localities on 6<sup>th</sup> and Ferring Rife hosted a Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher with a Peregrine in the nearby fields. The ringers at Ladywell enjoyed a good catch on 7<sup>th</sup> with six species of warbler with 76 Blackcaps, 53 Chiffchaffs and 20 Willow Warblers dominating. A Tree Pipit flew over. There was a big easterly passage of Swallows and House Martins along the coast on 16<sup>th</sup> involving hundreds of birds. On 17<sup>th</sup> at Ladywell a Spotted Flycatcher and Lesser Whitethroat were trapped accompanied by nearly 100 Chiffchaffs. Next day a Cattle Egret was found on Widewater, the first in our area for many years. The ringers at Ladywell and Cissbury maintained a high turnover of birds through the month and at the former a Tree Pipit was trapped on 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Spoonbill was on the Adur estuary on 25<sup>th</sup> when Brent Geese appeared moving west offshore. Wheatears were still in evidence with nine between Brooklands and Lancing on 26<sup>th</sup> and three at Goring Gap next day. A strange grey Willow Warbler was trapped at Cissbury on 30<sup>th</sup> (photograph and further details in Val Bentley's article below).

#### October

On 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Brooklands held c.30 Chiffchaffs with a handful of Goldcrests plus two Spotted Flycatchers and a female first winter Pied Flycatcher. Also noted were two Grey Wagtails and a Kingfisher. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> there were 75 Chiffchaffs. 43 Brent Geese went west offshore on 8<sup>th</sup> when 99 'Chiffs'



were trapped at Ladywell; at Chantry Hill, a walk west to the Dew Pond produced at least 25 Ravens and 10 Red Kites many of them around Lee Farm and Harrow Hill. Around the dew pond were four Stonechats and 12 Corn Buntings. The Ladywell ringers scored on the 14<sup>th</sup> with a Yellow-browed Warbler, the first to be trapped there, as well as a Firecrest and Cetti's Warbler, and by 17<sup>th</sup> Goldcrests were outnumbering Chiffchaffs (22 to 18). A Lapwing on the beach at the Gap on 15<sup>th</sup> was an unusual record for the site when 75 Meadow Pipits passed west. The autumn peak of 80 Ringed Plovers were there on 25<sup>th</sup>.

At Ferring Rife on 28<sup>th</sup> a male Ring Ouzel was present with several continental Blackbirds, two Stonechats and a Grey Wagtail. Small flocks of Goldfinches continued passing east most mornings along the coast. At Cissbury 29 Goldcrests and five Lesser Redpolls were handled. At Goring Gap on 31<sup>st</sup> a Dartford Warbler was found associating with 2 Stonechats, all 3 birds frequenting the fence and the adjacent weedy field. A late Wheatear was also seen. The hedgerows to the north of the gap produced 2 Firecrests and a Ring Ouzel was seen briefly.

## November.

Three late Swallows moved over Ladywell on 6<sup>th</sup> when eight Lesser Redpolls were trapped. A female Goosander appeared on the Adur on 10<sup>th</sup> and three flew north at Cuckoo Corner on 12<sup>th</sup>. On 14<sup>th</sup>, a Goldeneye, Red-throated Diver and other wildfowl and waders passed west off Ferring as well as, unusual for the site, a party of seven Redshank. Next day, a Red-necked Grebe and a Black-throated Diver were on the sea off Goring. The wader roost at the Gap comprising Grey Plovers, Ringed Plovers and Dunlins and a few Sanderlings and Turnstones was shared with a Dark-bellied Brent Goose and nine Mediterranean Gulls. Offshore there were 46 Red-breasted Mergansers, five Red-throated Divers, 26 Great Crested Grebes, four Razorbills, five Guillemots and two Gannets. A Hawfinch flew over Ladywell on 16<sup>th</sup> – a new bird for the valley – and a Dartford Warbler was at Cissbury near the 'yew tree'. On 21<sup>st</sup>, a Knot was with the other waders at Goring. A female Goosander that had been first seen on the Adur moved to



Widewater on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and remained into February. At Ladywell on 25<sup>th</sup> the ringers trapped their one thousandth Chiffchaff of the year as well as one bearing a Spanish ring. On 26<sup>th</sup> at Beeding Brooks, Fieldfares in one flock exceeded 400 plus a few others making 500 in all. A Merlin flew towards Small Dole, 2 Water Rails called and there were 350 Jackdaws at The Priory.

## December

On 2<sup>nd</sup>, a Snow Bunting was found on the beach near Worthing pier and the sea off Goring was busy with birds feeding and moving offshore. A distant Avocet headed west, and the Red-necked Grebe and Black-throated Diver, first seen on 15<sup>th</sup> November, were there again. A Great Northern Diver passed west and at least 97 Red-throated Divers went through during the morning some landing on the sea. Also offshore was a drake Velvet Scoter among 49 Common Scoters, 60 Red-breasted Mergansers, 27 Dark-bellied Brent Geese, 90 Great Crested Grebes, 49 Wigeon, 17 Teal, 37 Shelducks, 17 Kittiwakes, 21 Razorbills, eight Guillemots and a Gannet. Another large movement of Red-throated Divers occurred on 4<sup>th</sup> with some 90 moving west off Goring/Ferring. The Red-necked Grebe was again on the sea before it flew east, as well as an eastbound Great Skua and on the 8<sup>th</sup> an adult Pale-bellied Brent Goose moved west. A Knot appeared on Widewater staying into January. On 17<sup>th</sup> at Goring/Ferring highlights were an eastbound Snow Bunting over Goring Beach Huts, a Brambling exiting a garden on the west side of the Gap and a female Blackcap in the scrub in the north-west corner. A Lesser Whitethroat and three Blackcaps were in a Worthing garden on 20<sup>th</sup> and 30 Redwings were feeding on a holly tree near Worthing football ground. On 21<sup>st</sup> at Goring in the morning one Black-tailed Godwit was on the shore and a flock of five Golden Plovers went west. 35 Greenfinches, including a flock of 27, were at the plantation there. An Avocet was near the houseboats on the Adur at Shoreham, also remaining into January. On 29<sup>th</sup>



and 30<sup>th</sup> five adult Bewick's Swans appeared on the floods at Henfield. At Goring Gap on the 30<sup>th</sup>, the strong tide and rough sea forced a good number of waders into the roost field, including 83 Grey Plovers, 97 Sanderlings (three of which were oiled), 355 Dunlin and 53 Ringed Plovers. 52 Turnstones and 38 Oystercatchers were counted on the shore once the tide started to drop. Small gulls amassing in the field north of the pumping station included 540 Common Gulls and seven Mediterranean Gulls (six adults and a second-winter), as well as 160 Black-headed Gulls.

## January

Four Bewick's Swans were still on the Henfield Levels on the 6<sup>th</sup> and the long staying Goosander and Avocet were on Widewater and the Adur respectively. A Black Redstart was found at Shoreham Fort on 9<sup>th</sup> and was spasmodically seen till the 14<sup>th</sup>. Seawatching at Goring this day produced a pair of westbound Velvet Scoters, 30 Red-throated Divers, 21 Red-breasted

Mergansers, nine Dark-bellied Brent Geese, six Gannets, a Kittiwake, four Great Crested Grebes and four Razorbills. Seven Mediterranean Gulls on the fields included a first-winter bearing a white darvic ring on its left leg with the black code '332H'. Few 'new' birds appeared in the remainder of the month.



## February

The long-staying Goosander was still at Widewater (until 18<sup>th</sup> when it was seen to fly out to sea) and three Purple Sandpipers were at the Harbour on 12<sup>th</sup>. A Red-necked Grebe was seen passing Goring on 14<sup>th</sup> when at Widewater a putative Kumlien's Gull was reported. At the former a Great Northern Diver was noted on 15<sup>th</sup>. An Iceland Gull was well seen at Shoreham Harbour near the lifeboat Station on this day and was probably the bird first reported at Widewater as a Kumlien's. At Henfield Levels on 19<sup>th</sup> there were about 40 Pintail (males & females) a few Shoveler, 20 or so Teal, a handful of Wigeon and 5 Grey Herons close to the little heronry with two more Herons sitting on nests with another above. About 140 Lapwing were

in the fields to the west with more displaying and calling in the fields to the east. A Green Sandpiper was at the overflow pit and a Cetti's Warbler near New Inn Farm. Teal were in evidence at Brooklands, Widewater and on the Adur at Shoreham with max. counts of 18, 8 and 51 respectively. Mediterranean Gulls in full s/p appeared on the Goring field roost. A dozen Chiffchaffs frequented Steyning treatment works. Two Black-tailed Godwits were at Widewater on 26<sup>th</sup> and one moved to the Adur on 27<sup>th</sup> when snow hit our area. Eight Snipe were in the meadows by Ferring Rife on this day. A Worthing garden held six Blackcaps (a County record for one winter site) and a Lesser Whitethroat on 28<sup>th</sup> when two showy Water Rails were seen at the Rife.

## Ringling at Cissbury 2017

### Val Bentley

There were 26 ringing sessions at the site in 2017, one fewer than in 2016, and a few visits for management purposes during which just one or two nets were set. However, the number of birds trapped was higher than the previous year, reflecting a much more productive breeding season for the majority of species, both those which are resident or those passing through on migration.

I was present at all the ringing sessions, either solo, with trainees Mya Bambrick and/or Alex Brookes, or with visiting ringers, Sue Walsh and Clare Buckle from Ladywell, and Laurie Jackson from Knepp. Because of the limited "manpower" we were never able to set the entire run of nets, and mostly concentrated on either the central area (net rides C to G) or the eastern end of the site (net rides F to H). The A net rides at the western end of the site were not used at all, though one of the nets was redeployed to extend the F ride into an area last used in 2002.

During the year 1249 birds were trapped, of which 1076 were new, 171 were retraps with 2 controls, i.e. capture of a bird ringed elsewhere. Table 1

**Table 1: Captures at Cissbury 2017**

Species in **bold** were ringed in 2017 but not 2016. Those in *italics* were ringed in 2016 but not 2017.

Species	Total Captures	2017 New	2016 New	2017 Retrap	Control
Blackbird	30	14	20	16	
Blackcap	353	335	288	18	1
Blue Tit	26	18	11	8	
Bullfinch	28	19	23	9	
Chaffinch	7	5	10	2	
Chiffchaff	219	198	178	21	1
<i>Duncock</i>	51	22	24	29	
<i>Firecrest</i>	9	7	2	2	
Garden Warbler	10	9	2	1	
<i>Goldcrest</i>	121	104	37	17	
Goldfinch	5	5	9		
<i>Grasshopper Warbler</i>			2		
Great Tit	16	11	11	5	
Greenfinch	2	2	13		
<i>Kestrel</i>			1		
<b>Lesser Redpoll</b>	19	19			
Lesser Whitethroat	1	1	4		
Long-tailed Tit	37	23	14	14	
Marsh Tit	1	1	1		
<b>Redstart</b>	3	3			
Redwing	7	7	1		
Reed Warbler	11	11	4		
Robin	31	25	48	6	
Sedge Warbler	1	1	3		
Song Thrush	16	10	28	6	
<b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>	1	1			
<b>Stonechat</b>	1	1			
Swallow	21	21	3		
<i>Treecreeper</i>	2	2	2		
Whitethroat	64	59	23	5	
Willow Warbler	124	124	55		
Wren	27	15	21	12	
<b>Yellowhammer</b>	3	3			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1249</b>	<b>1076</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>2</b>

lists the species captured in 2017, and includes a column listing the new birds

of each species ringed in 2016 for comparison.

## **Spring & Early Summer**

The first visit on 11<sup>th</sup> March was a combined session; a morning ringing, then an afternoon burning up the piles of cut timber resulting from the enthusiastic endeavours of the Worthing conservation volunteers, ably led by Jay Cooper. A Redwing and two Song Thrushes were among the 13 birds ringed, and a Woodcock was flushed early on, but not into a net. Four visits were made during April; at the first of these, on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, birds re-trapped included the first returning migrants, a Blackcap ringed as a first year bird in autumn 2016 and two Chiffchaffs, one of which was ringed as an adult in April 2016. We also trapped the first Yellowhammer since 2014. The first Whitethroats of the year were on the 21<sup>st</sup>, a day which also produced the surprise of a female Stonechat.

May and June only saw three sessions between them, and a very low total of 38 birds trapped during the two months; the first juveniles were a Robin and a Long-tailed Tit on 10<sup>th</sup> June. More juveniles were caught during July when the average catch on the four visits was 23, one more than in 2016. During the last session on the 30<sup>th</sup>, two juvenile Goldcrests were ringed. Most Goldcrests are ringed in the autumn and it is very unusual to find individuals of this species at Cissbury which are still in juvenile plumage. Only 22 juvenile Goldcrests were ringed between 1985 and 2017, and only two others before the start of August; the influx is later in the year, when they have finished their post-juvenile moult.

## **Late Summer, Autumn & Winter**

August was busier, with catches of 66, 79, 71 and 109. Willow Warblers have not bred on site now since about 2008, but they still move through on their southerly migration route, and 106 were ringed during August, together with 97 Blackcaps and 43 Whitethroats. Though a Lesser Whitethroat was

heard singing on 10 June, only one was ringed in 2017, a first year bird caught on 12 August. Sadly, no Garden Warblers were present during the breeding season, though ten passage birds were ringed in August.

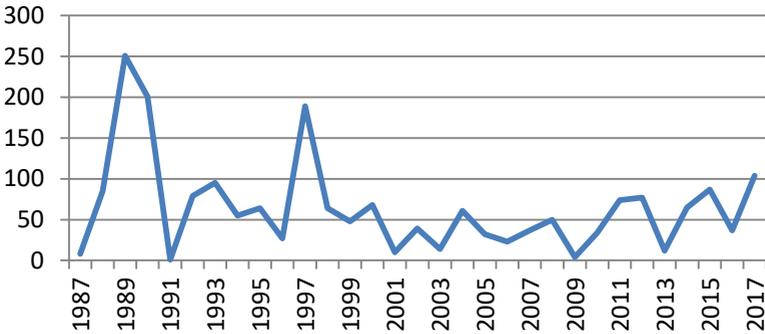
During the four September sessions, 363 birds were trapped and a maximum session total for the year (121) was achieved on the 16<sup>th</sup>, predictably due to good catches of both Blackcap (66 new) and Chiffchaff (25 new). No Blackcaps were trapped after mid-October, and the maximum Chiffchaff catch was on 4<sup>th</sup> October when 48 were ringed. A wintering Chiffchaff was ringed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

Some clearance work between the G and H net rides was carried out during the preceding winter with the intention of opening a fly through route for Swallows should weather conditions, such as low pressure and low cloud, lead to some flying low across the side of the hill. This met with some success on 30 September when 21 were ringed, the site's highest annual total.

**Table 2: Totals of Four Passage Species (as percentages of total number of birds ringed)**

<b>Year/s</b>	<b>Black-cap</b>	<b>Chiff-chaff</b>	<b>White-throat</b>	<b>Willow Warbler</b>
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
2017	31.1	18.4	5.5	11.5

## Goldcrests ringed 1987-2017



More Goldcrests started to arrive on site from mid-September; nearly three times as many were ringed this year than in 2016, the maximum being 27 on 28 October. Goldcrests are particularly vulnerable to cold winters and numbers fluctuate considerably, mainly depending on weather conditions, as can be seen in the graph above. Note in particular the drop (to just a single bird) in 1991 following the extremely cold winter in 1990/91, and to only four birds in 2009 when there was a very cold start to the previous winter. Other late autumn/winter visitors were Redwing (7), Lesser Redpoll (19), both showing an increase over the totals for 2016.



### Lesser Redpoll

A brightly-coloured adult male, ringed on 25th October

Only three December sessions have ever been undertaken; on 1 December 2009, 18 December 2015 and again this year on 23<sup>rd</sup> when a catch of 21 birds, including three Long-tailed Tits ringed in 2014, made the effort worthwhile. Conditions need to be right, with light winds and mild temperatures as in middle of winter very little sunlight reaches the north-east facing slope, which is often exposed to cold winds from the north and east.

## Residents

2016 was recognised as a poor breeding season for many resident UK species, so we were hoping that we would see an improvement in the number of juveniles found at the site in 2017, but in fact only Blue Tits and Dunnocks showed slight increase in productivity, with the rest showing declines of 50% or more. However, the sample size is very small, and nets at the very western end of the site were never set in 2017, though they were used occasionally in 2016.

**Table 3: Productivity of six resident species**

Species	Number of juveniles and first year birds (to 30/9)						2017
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Blackbird	17	17	8	22	12	5	2
Blue Tit	32	10	19	14	12	5	8
Dunnock	30	18	24	29	19	11	13
Great Tit	28	4	10	16	14	9	4
Robin	40	35	24	43	28	24	12
Wren	24	12	13	22	22	13	6

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.

Fewer of the resident finches were trapped. Though a male Chaffinch was heard singing in April and a female with a brood patch was in the net, she

could not be ringed because she was suffering from “scaly legs” (see BTO website for further information), and only seven were ringed in late October/early November. Greenfinches were recorded as present on many visits, but only two birds were ringed, a pair on 29 April – in the same net at the same time. Bullfinch numbers were more respectable, with 21 different birds trapped during the year, five adult females, three adult males and 13 juveniles, also lower figures than in the previous four years. At least one other adult male was present, but was suffering from leg encrustations, so was not ringed.

### **Survivors and Movers**

The majority of birds re-trapped in 2017 were first ringed during the year, but below is a selection of some which have survived over a longer period, whether this time is spent in the UK or elsewhere:

**Table 4: Selection of Retraps 2017**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Ringed</b>	<b>Recaptured</b>	<b>Minimum Age</b>
Wren	9.9.14	9.4.17	2yr 212d – first re-trap
Robin	3.5.14	4.10.17	3yr 154d – ringed as adult
Blackbird	10.8.13	7.5.17	3yr 270d – ringed as juvenile
Blackcap	27.7.14	29.4.17	2yr 276d – ringed as juvenile
Long-tailed Tit	9.8.14	23.12.17	3yr 136d – ringed as first year bird
Great Tit	8.10.13	21.4.17	3yr 195d - ringed as first year bird, first re-trap

There were two controls, i.e. captures of birds ringed elsewhere. A first year Chiffchaff trapped on 25 October had been ringed at Ladywell on the 17<sup>th</sup>. However from further afield, a Blackcap found on 21<sup>st</sup> April was from Spain, ringed on 25 October 2016 at Río Pícaro, Algeciras. This is very close

to the Strait of Gibraltar so the bird could well have been returning from a winter spent in North Africa.

Three of “our” birds turned up elsewhere; a Willow Warbler ringed on 30 July 2016 was controlled at Portland Bill on 15 April on its return to the UK, and another of the same species, ringed on 10 August 2013, already controlled near Bicester, Oxon, on 2 May 2015 was controlled nearby again in what was no doubt its breeding area on 17 June 2017. A first year Chiffchaff caught on 24 September 2016 was controlled at Lackford Lakes, near Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk on 8 July; a brood patch enabled the finders to confirm that it was a female. In addition, a female Blackcap ringed on 21 September 2016 hit a window and died at Newby Bridge, Cumbria, on 29 May.

### **The More Unusual and the Unexpected**

It is always interesting to see species which are not regular visitors to the nets, some of which will be migrating through. We had a single Marsh Tit, two Treecreepers and three Yellowhammers. The female Stonechat, complete with brood patch, ringed on 21 April, must have strayed from the top of the hill, and was only the second of the species to be ringed here – the first was a juvenile in 1997! In August and early September we ringed 11 Reed Warblers, three Redstarts, one Sedge Warbler and one Spotted Flycatcher.

A bird that caused us to consult the identification guide in depth was a Willow Warbler, trapped on 30 September, quite late on in their migration period. Most Willow Warblers have a greenish back and, particularly the young birds, yellowish front. This one was grey and white, but all the other criteria fitted Willow Warbler – we agreed that it was likely to be the



### **Willow Warbler** (ssp *acredula*)

*acredula* subspecies, whose range is Norway, north and central Sweden Russia and western Siberia. It was subsequently accepted as such by SOS Records Committee.

### **Summary**

Considering the lack of ringers available, the slightly reduced number of sessions and nets used, and the possible lower breeding success of our resident birds, we still ringed 238 more birds in 2017 than in 2016, and were pleased to note some interesting movements between sites. At some time during the visit on 10 September we passed the total of 40,000 birds ringed at the site since activity commenced there in 1984.

I am particularly grateful to our Group Secretary, Brian Clay – although he was unable to join us on ringing sessions, he looked after the transfer of the IPMR database from my old computer to a new one, and worked some magic to produce a readable day to day summary of our efforts during the year. Also thanks as always to the National Trust for their permission to ring at the site, and to the owners of the track for allowing vehicular access so a car can be parked near to the ringing area.

## Ringling in Ladywell 2017

### John Newnham

This was the eleventh season and perhaps the most successful year for this study of birds using the Ladywell valley. A total of 39 ringing sessions were undertaken which, as Table 1 shows, equals the effort in 2011 and is similar to many previous years.

Like most recent years 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.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. netting sessions	22	29	33	34	39	31
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
	37	25	38	37	39	

*Table 1: The numbers of ringing sessions in Ladywell in each year (2007-2017).*

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 ten years.

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2007-16 sessions	16	12	18	32	25	26	29	36	44	40	26	21
Average catch (2007-16)	52	43	35	35	45	35	41	65	84	69	61	58
2017 sessions	0	0	0	3	2	2	4	6	8	6	5	3
Average catch (2017)				35	59	51	68	116	151	125	65	40

*Table 2: The number of ringing sessions in each month and the average monthly catch (2007-16 and 2017).*

September was clearly the most productive month with an average catch of over 150 birds but both August and October provided average catches in excess of 100 birds. December was the only month with notably smaller catches than in past years.



*Figure 1: Yellow-browed Warbler in Ladywell on 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017.(Clare Buckle)*

The ringing total for 2017 was a record 2941 birds ringed, 767 retraps and nine controls (birds ringed elsewhere and subsequently caught in Ladywell) giving a total of 3717 handlings. The details for all year's ringing totals are shown in the large Table 3 (see next page spread). Record figures in 2017 are marked in yellow which, of course, includes the Yellow-browed Warbler and Tree Pipits; both new species ringed in the valley. Although 14 species were ringed in record numbers a further 20 species which have been ringed in previous years were not trapped in 2017. With the exception of Whitethroat all the more numerous warblers were ringed in record numbers. 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 although the number of Lesser Redpolls and Bullfinches were the highest recorded.

The most productive day was 7<sup>th</sup> September when 200 birds were trapped and the poorest catch of 18 occurred on 28<sup>th</sup> December. There were 17 other sessions, all between 8<sup>th</sup> July and 6<sup>th</sup> November, when more than 100 birds were trapped. Nineteen different species were trapped on both 15<sup>th</sup> July and 27<sup>th</sup> August and eighteen on 6<sup>th</sup> August; these were the most diverse days with the year's average being just under 14 species per session. Like last year Chiffchaff was the only species with more than 100 individuals caught in a single day; 111 on 20<sup>th</sup> September and 127 on 4<sup>th</sup> October. The 1010 Chiffchaffs ringed in a year is yet another record for the highest number of a single species trapped in a year in Ladywell but Blue Tit remains the most trapped species in the valley as shown in Table 4.

Species/year	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TOT-ALS
Sparrowhawk			2	3		2	6		2			15
Kestrel		2	1	1		1		2				7
Water Rail										1		1
Stock Dove				2			1	1			1	5
Woodpigeon	5	4	4	6	3	1	4	2	7	4	9	49
Tawny Owl				1						1		2
Kingfisher	1	2	4	2	5	1	4	8	9	7	10	53
Green Woodpecker	3	7	6	4	9	2	2	3	1	2		39
Great Spotted Woodpecker	4	4	5	5	7	9	9	7	5	3	5	63
Swallow						1	18					19
House Martin		2	34	29	12		62		1	4		144
Tree Pipit											2	2
Meadow Pipit							4					4
Grey Wagtail				1			1		2			4
Wren	24	26	31	43	45	32	33	31	52	64	63	444
Dunnoch	34	31	33	38	47	23	37	22	48	34	45	392
Robin	40	39	44	37	57	37	49	30	59	77	49	518
Nightingale									1			1
Redstart	1				1	1	1			2	1	7
Stonechat							1					1
Blackbird	63	29	62	62	68	49	48	26	67	79	41	594
Song Thrush	9	14	23	19	42	12	23	19	28	43	35	267
Redwing		2	6	3	1	6		8	6	18	5	55
Mistle Thrush				2	3						1	6
Cetti's Warbler					4			3	1	4	3	15
Grasshopper Warbler					3		3			1		7
Sedge Warbler		1		2	6		2			4	7	22
Reed Warbler	18	26	22	61	51	35	49	23	69	71	105	530
Lesser Whitethroat		3	2		4	2		2	6	5	7	31

Table 3:- The annual ringing totals in each year (2007-2017) for each species ringed in Ladywell.

Table continues													
Species/year	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TOT-ALS	
Whitethroat	6	3	5	23	43	15	16	3	18	18	28	178	
Garden Warbler	1	1	2	2	3	1	1		10	12	13	46	
Blackcap	25	31	51	145	279	70	109	80	356	329	575	2050	
Yellow-browed Warbler											1	1	
Wood Warbler									1			1	
Chiffchaff	16	22	71	206	204	65	171	145	673	679	1010	3262	
Willow Warbler	19	9	14	38	64	30	57	4	155	274	350	1014	
Goldcrest	1	33	10	25	19	13	11	27	218	70	265	692	
Firecrest		2	1	4	1	2	4	2	10	4	15	45	
Spotted Flycatcher	1			2	3	3	3		2	2	2	18	
Long-tailed Tit	21	47	64	47	56	18	14	28	40	30	32	397	
Coal Tit									1	1		2	
Blue Tit	98	111	144	234	239	114	139	63	116	85	114	1457	
Great Tit	45	53	55	68	113	57	90	65	61	67	70	744	
Nuthatch		3	1	3	2	8	6	1			1	25	
Treecreeper	7	2	7	11	17	1	7	4	6	6	4	72	
Jay	2	2	2	4		4	1	1	3	1	1	21	
Magpie		1	1	1	2		2	1				8	
Jackdaw				1	3	1		15	9	1		30	
Rook				1								1	
Carrion/Hooded Crow				1								1	
House Sparrow	1											1	
Chaffinch	11	42	37	31	82	58	63	19	44	30	17	434	
Greenfinch	5	15	10	20	55	23	14	2	7	6	2	159	
Goldfinch	11	29	9	7	42	7	4	4	15	9	24	161	
Siskin						1			3			4	
Lesser Redpoll						1			8	6	17	32	
Bullfinch		2		3	1	2	1	2		1	9	21	
Reed Bunting			1	4	6	3				2	2	18	
TOTALS	472	600	764	1202	1602	711	1069	654	2120	2057	2941	14192	

Table 3 continued:- The annual ringing totals in each year (2007-2017) for each species ringed in Ladywell.

Table 4:- The total number of handlings (new birds and retraps) in Ladywell (2007-2017).

Species	Total handlings
Blue Tit	3680
Chiffchaff	3471
Blackcap	2272
Great Tit	2066
Robin	1066
Dunnock	1053
Blackbird	1025
Willow Warbler	1022

Nine birds were caught in the year carrying rings applied elsewhere (controls) and the details are given in Table 5

Species	Date	Age /Sex	Ring date	Age /Sex	Ring site	Distance	Interval
Blackcap	23/08/2017	3M	11/08/2017	3M	Beddington Sewage Farm, Greater London	63 km SSW	12 days
Blackcap	08/10/2017	3M			No information yet received		
Chiffchaff	07/09/2017	3	25/08/2017	3	Besthorpe GP, Newark, Nottingham	262 km S	13 days
Chiffchaff	20/09/2017	3	18/05/2017	1	Orlestone Forest, Kent	86 km WSW	125 days
Chiffchaff	04/10/2017	3	06/09/2017	3j	Rhostryfan, Caernarfon, Gwynedd	368 km SE	28 days
Chiffchaff	25/11/2017	4	22/01/2017	5	Linares Jaen, Spain	1441 km N	307 days
Goldcrest	16/11/2017 & 17/12/2017	3M	25/10/2017	3M	Woolston Eyes, Warrington, UK	322 km SSE	22 days
Reed Warbler	15/07/2017	4M	15/09/2016	3	Old Hall Marshes, Tollesbury, Essex	133 km SW	303 days
Reed Warbler	06/08/2017	4	17/07/2016	4	Titchfield Haven, Hampshire	66 km E	385 days

Table 5: The details of birds caught in 2017 and ringed elsewhere.

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

Species	Ring date	Age	Recovery date	Age	Recovery location	Distance	Interval
Reed Warbler	22/08/2015	3J	18/06/2016	4F	<u>Steyning</u> , West Sussex	6 km N	301 days
Chiffchaff	07/09/2017	3	29/09/2017	2	<u>Icklesham</u> , East Sussex	70 km E	22 days
Chiffchaff	17/10/2017	3	25/10/2017	3	<u>Cissbury Ring</u> , <u>Worthing</u>	6 km NW	8 days
<u>Cetti's</u> Warbler	26/10/2016	3F	14/12/2016	2F	<u>Litlington</u> , East Sussex	34 km E	49 days

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

S571096 was also trapped at Litlington during 2017 on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 4<sup>th</sup> October and 3<sup>rd</sup> December where it was considered to be one of the breeding females. Z378803 was back at the Mumbles in Steyning on 29<sup>th</sup> May and 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

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 avian biology. Each of the session reports detailed many of the birds retrapped and during 2017 a total of 434 individuals were retrapped. Most, as expected, were ringed either in 2016 or 2017 and Table 7 gives the year of ringing of each of the individuals retrapped in 2017.

Species	Total	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Blackbird	40	-	-	1	-	1	2	1	3	7	12	13
Blackcap	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	22
Blue Tit	76	-	-	-	1	4	-	5	5	9	8	44
Bullfinch	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
<u>Cetti's Warbler</u>	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Chaffinch	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Chiffchaff	48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	46
<u>Dunnock</u>	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	8	20
<u>Firecrest</u>	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Garden Warbler	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<u>Goldcrest</u>	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Great Tit	57	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	6	2	10	35
Kingfisher	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Long-tailed Tit	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	10
Reed Warbler	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	10	8
Robin	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	7	12
Song Thrush	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	3
<u>Treecreeper</u>	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Willow Warbler	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wren	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	8	19
Yellow-browed Warbler	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	434	-	-	1	2	7	2	12	21	30	82	277

Table 7: The year of ringing of birds retrapped in Ladywell during 2017.

Ten species accounted for the 45 birds trapped in 2017 which had been ringed prior to 2015; these are clearly seen in the table. The individual with the longest duration between ringing and re-trapping was a Blackbird. Multiple retraps are a common occurrence in Ladywell and have frequently been described over the years. The current record holder is a Great Tit (L674455) which has now been handled on 25 occasions since July 2011. Additionally a Blue Tit (L674614) has been caught on 19 occasions and a Great Tit (Y829722) 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 of the flight feathers (primaries and secondaries) were recorded on 57 individuals of 17 different species. Like last year Long-tailed Tit (22) and Blackbird (8) 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.

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 83 species were seen during the year with two new species, Hawfinch and Mandarin, recorded during the year. Only Woodpigeon, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit and Blackbird were recorded on each visit.

The average number of ringers present for the 39 sessions was just over three but the number of "staff" varied between two and six with each of the regulars being available at different times. During the year the number of sessions each team member was able to attend were John Newnham (36), Mark Mallalieu (29), Sue Walsh (23), Clare Buckle (21), Chrissi Twitchen (12) and Dave Boddington (4). Val Bentley, an experienced ringer from Cissbury, joined the team once and two potential trainees, Emily Mustafa and Janie Burrage attended twice and once respectively. In late October Brianne

Reeve led a small party of Shoreham District Ornithological Society members into the valley and they were shown a good selection of migrants typical of late autumn. My thanks go to all the members of the ringing team for their regular efforts throughout the year. 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 2-4. Firecrest, Kingfisher and Tree Pipit in Ladywell 2017 (Sue Walsh)*

## St Mary de Haura Project

### Bob Witney

Members will remember that we have been contributing to St. Barnabas Home bird project by supplying a bird bath and feeders to attract birds into their grounds for the benefit of their patients. We have, however, had to abandon the feeding side of the project as a result of problems with rats.

We are now engaging on a new project in collaboration with The Reverend Canon Ann Waizeneker and the Wardens (Edith Leslie and Ian Tompkin) of St Mary de Haura church in Shoreham.

In summary we are going to provide and erect bird boxes in the churchyard and they will, in return, allow us to place posters advertising SDOS on their notice boards and inside the church itself.

The text box below contains a brief explanation of the project and is an edited version of our contribution to the Parish Newsletter.

*Shoreham and District Ornithological Society, the oldest bird society in Sussex and formed in 1953, has agreed with the Vicar and Church Wardens to erect and maintain bird boxes at the Western end of the Church and also in the North Western corner, opposite the Library.*

*If possible we will reuse the existing boxes, re-site them away from the footpaths and have them a little higher than they are now (3 – 4 metres above ground is the recommended height by the RSPB).*

*We are also going to put a shallow watering place inside the metal fence which surrounds the remains of the old nave. As you will know there are already water bowls left out which are utilised by dogs, the larger birds and of course Tufty the Squirrel. Our provision will be for smaller birds.*

*We will number and monitor the nest boxes and if we are lucky enough to get residents (pairs begin to prospect in the latter half of February so we are a little late for this year) we will try to get some pictures and will regularly report back to you about what has arrived and what they are up to.*

*There will be no cost to the church.*

When I'm 64....

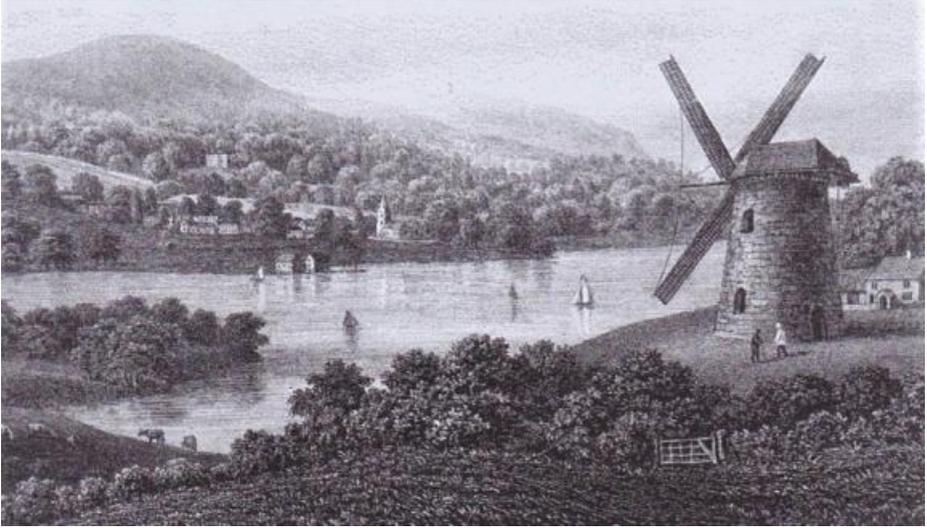
## John Maskell

In the last Newsletter I talked about the Isle of Wight's newest nature reserve in Ryde. This time I would like to discuss a much larger concern a few miles east, the RSPB's Brading Marshes Reserve.



View south-east to Bembridge Windmill, Brading Marshes - 24 Feb 2018

Growing up on the Isle of Wight one lasting memory was the explosion of pop groups in the early 1960s. Like sponges we junior school children quickly absorbed the words of the latest hits from the likes of the Rolling Stones, Dave Clark Five and, of course, The Beatles. I recall much local excitement when the latter released "I've Got a Ticket to Ride" and Ryde Town Council, trying to cash in on the homonym, invited the Fab Four to perform in my home town. But sadly, the coup didn't materialise. But the Isle of Wight got a



Brading Haven from Bembridge Windmill as portrayed in an engraving of 1840 by Philip Brannon. It is this area of sea that was reclaimed by Victorian engineers and now forms the main part of the RSPB's Brading Marshes Reserve

more definite plug in the lyrics of "When I'm 64". "Old age" seemed a long way off when I was in Miss Cook's class but last December that birthday duly arrived and with The Beatles' words singing in my head my chosen birthday treat was a long overdue visit to the RSPB's Brading Marshes Reserve.

It is an area that I first explored with my late Father, even before The Beatles came to prominence, as we trekked along the Island's many abandoned railway tracks. Indeed, one of the main "highways" through Brading Marshes is the trackbed of the former branch line from Brading to Bembridge that closed in the Queen's Coronation Year and the year of my birth! Yet even now one can still find traces underfoot of the marine-dredged ballast that is unique to the Island's railways.

Brading Marshes is the RSPB's only reserve on the Isle of Wight and a comparatively recent addition to its property portfolio. It a large reserve covering more than 400 acres of wetland stretching between the village of

Brading and the sea at Bembridge Harbour. Also included are some meadows and a small area of ancient woodland. Through it flows the River Yar (or Eastern Yar) at the end of its 27 kilometre northward meander from springs on St.Catherine's Down to Bembridge Harbour.



Brading Marshes Reserve – view west along the disused railway

The history of the site is quite interesting as much of it once formed Brading Haven, a large inlet of the sea. However, the industrious Victorians built an embankment between St.Helens and Brading between 1874 and 1880. They thus created the much smaller Bembridge Harbour and the land beyond was drained to produce agricultural grazing fields, and by 1882 the railway was running between Brading and Bembridge. The RSPB began acquiring much of this reclaimed “Victorian land” in 2001 and produced its first trail guide leaflet in 2007 (currently being updated).



The long staying Glossy Ibis accompanying a Canada Goose, Brading Marshes - 30 Dec 2017

My first visit made such a favourable impact on me that, as of late February, I've been motivated to return again four more times in the ensuing two months. The overriding impression is one of tranquillity in a wide open landscape. As there is no visitor centre, car park or facilities it is very much a wild space and underpopulated. So, during all my visits I only encountered four other birders! Highlight this past winter has been a long-staying Glossy Ibis that never roams far from its favoured field. But this bird is not the first of its kind as in the autumn of 2011 "at least 11" Glossy Ibis dropped into the site! Also noted during my late December visit were a trio of Marsh Harriers. The Reserve is popular with common wildfowl, wading and gull species which are to be found alongside impressive flocks of Lapwing. Birds to be seen

obviously vary with the seasons and I have yet to experience the delights beyond Winter.

Looking back through the past 15 years of newsletters and annual reports produced by the Isle of Wight Ornithological Group one is able to track the successful development of Brading Marshes. Thanks to careful land management three species attempted to breed here, for the first time on the Isle of Wight, in 2014. Little Egret initially managed to produce infertile eggs but subsequently Great Crested Grebe and Marsh Harrier have been successful. Indeed in 2017 two pairs of Marsh Harriers fledged 6 young.

Other recent rarities at Brading Marshes have included a Green-winged Teal (2004), Squacco Heron (2013) and Wood Sandpiper (2013). But 2017 looks to be the best to date with records of Bittern, Black-winged Stilt, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Pectoral Sandpiper, Purple Heron and White Stork.

If you are planning to visit Brading Marshes, then I suggest that you consult the RSPB's website which also provides links to useful location maps. Southern Vectis, the I.O.W's bus company, also produces a helpful 'Birds By Bus' leaflet with details of how to access the Reserve. Alternatively, the Reserve can be reached by train to Brading ... or with a bit of cunning and local knowledge limited car parking can be found in the area... though I've yet to try it in the busier summer season... now I'm 64!

RSPB Brading Marshes website:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/brading-marshes/>

## Henfield Garden Ringing Val Bentley

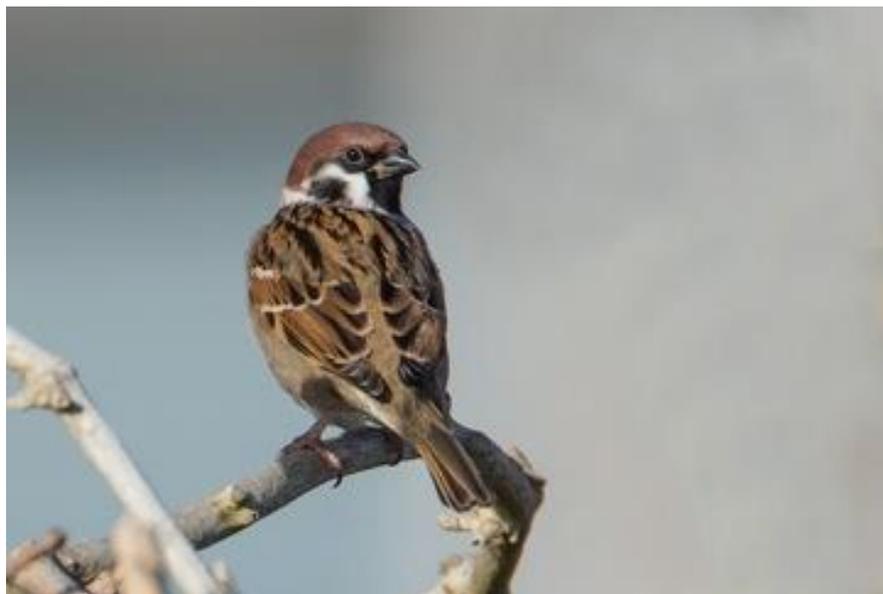
I started some ringing activity in my garden in 2016, and have continued throughout 2017. It is a fairly enclosed and sheltered spot, with hedges and some mature trees in the vicinity. A good variety of different species of bird visits, particularly to take advantage of two sunflower heart feeders.



During the year I ringed 173 new birds and retrapped 42, with 19 species featuring on the list. The most numerous of these, as expected, was Blue Tit, with 74 different birds trapped of which 60 (82%) were juveniles or first year birds, and the rest adults. A very different ratio from that in 2016, a poor breeding year, when of the 73 ringed only 39 (53%) were youngsters. The next most frequently trapped species was Dunnock at 26 different birds. There were also seven Coal Tits, two Nuthatches, one Great Spotted Woodpecker, one Willow Warbler, one Treecreeper and – an extraction challenge – a Jay. There were two local recoveries, a Blackbird which hit a window, and a Great Tit which was a road traffic casualty at Woodmancote



Turtle Dove (at Sidlesham in October 2017) and Cattle Egret with Little Egret (at Warblington, Hants.): Dorian Mason



Tree Sparrow and first winter Caspian Gull at Dungeness: Dorian Mason

## Photograph acknowledgments

The source of photographs is often clear from the context or other attribution 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 cover: Glossy Ibis: Dorian Mason

Back cover: Common Stonechat: Dorian Mason

Page 13 Brent Geese in flight: Dorian Mason

Page 14 Female Goosander: Dorian Mason

Page 16 Red Knot: Dorian Mason

Page 17 Common Kingfisher on boat: Dorian Mason

## Society officers and the User Group

(Officers in post following the A.G.M. of 13th March 2018)

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If you use an email address but are not a member of the User Group then please consider joining (<https://groups.io/g/sdos/join>) to make sure you receive up-to-date information about SDOS activities

