

Shoreham District Ornithological Society

Newsletter Summer 1988



Forthcoming Attractions

Outdoor Meetings:

Waltham Brooks & Coates Common

Friday 10th June,

Meet at Greatham Bridge at 20.00 hours. Evening only. Leader John Dixon.

Barbecue

Saturday 16 th July

Meet 61 Grand Avenue from 8.00 onwards. Bring a bottle, cask of homebrew, magnum of champers or whatever. No doubt volunteers will be needed to help so anyone willing please contact John. Sponsored birdwatch results!

Sidlesham Ferry and Pagham Harbour

Saturday 17th September,

Meet at the Information Centre at 9.00 hours. All day. Leader Dave Smith

Climping Beach

Sunday 16th October,

Meet at Car Park on east side of Climping Beach at 9.00. All day. Leader Richard Ives

Langstone and Farlington

Saturday 26th November,

Meet at car park at Farlington Marshes at 9.00 hours. All day

Leader Dave Smith.

Adur Walk

31st December

Meet outside the Lady Jane Pub at 9.00. Morning only. Leader to be arranged.

Indoor Meetings

Monday 3rd October 1988

Mr Stephen Morphew "Islay"

Monday 7th November 1988

"Birds of South-West Spain"

Monday 5th December 1988

"Members Evening"

ALL CHANGE

Well it's summer and for once one can say that we have actually had a warm spring to herald the changing seasons. There have been many people waxing on lyrically about 'Poms', 'rosies', auks sp. and the likes - yes the insane seawatchers have had a good time and the notable birds section will show that this is the case.

The changing seasons have also affected the higher echelons of the society and we must express our gratitude to those who have helped in the running of our merry band over the last few years. John Dixon stepped into the breach, or is it breach?, during the society's crisis and performed his job admirably and so many thanks for all you have done to keep us alive. His successor, Richard Weal, is no stranger to many and I wish him every success in his new post.

Thanks must also be given to Stanley Allen whose wizzardry with the figures have kept us solvent over the last few years and I am sure his new post as contact man for new members will be performed with alacrity. Another member who has also been given the same post is Brian Clay, the microchip marvel. Brian has worked extremely hard producing the report and writing the newsletters. This unenviable task was done without complaint and the report has developed in leaps and bounds under his stewardship. It is not an easy act to follow but I shall try to do my best, especially once I learn where all the letters are on this micro-computer. I trust that I will have enough time to collate all the information and manage the odd sketch in time for next year's report.

Another committee member who has stood down is Enid Chadwell and no doubt all those involved would like to express their appreciation for her help. Les Hemblade has taken over responsibility as Outings Secretary and I wish him well in that post.

Our Recorder, Dave Smith, would appreciate it if the first batch of records could be sent to him soon so that he can begin to collate them and start the systematic list for next year. Don't forget the Barba-que, the sponsored bird watch to

pay for this wonderful machine. It really is an asset to the Editor and I feel that we should try our hardest to recoup the investment in this bit of hardware. Good luck and I look forward to seeing you at the summer "do".

Richard Ives

Notable Birds of the Area, Spring 1988

The season began on a high note with the male Little Bittern found by the County Recorder on 30 th March at Hove seafront and released later on a small pond at Oreham Common near Woods Mill, where it remained for over a week giving superb views as it ate its way through the local newt population. Woods Mill, however, was not to be outdone in the rarity stakes with a brief visit from an adult Night Heron in early May. Other unusual sightings included a Hoopoe at Hollingbury Park in April and an amazing total of 6 Cory's Shearwaters flying west off Worthing beach on the early morning of May 2nd; fortunately nearly all the regular seawatchers were present to see one or more of these "mini-albatrosses".

After the dismal spring of 1987, the 1988 seawatching season was far more productive with several days of heavy offshore passage, mainly on south-east winds in late April and early May. Numbers of the regularly recorded species were up on the previous year with good movements of Common Scoter, 'Commic' Sandwich, and Little Terns, Bar tailed Godwits and Arctic Skua.

Appearing in lesser but significantly improved numbers were Pomarine Skuas (including a party of 16 on May 3rd), Great Skuas, Black Terns and Little Gulls; several Mediterranean Gulls were seen and other highlights were 3 Roseate Terns, at least 9 Great Northern Divers (6 of which passed eastwards on April 30th), a party of 5 Avocets in Mid-May, a possible Little Auk, and a most unusual party of 6 Great Skua on April 16th.

Most passerine and hirundine migrants arrived on time with some early individuals. Chiffchaffs and Wheatears were as usual seen from mid-March, arriving in force towards the end of that month to peak in the first ten days of April with Willow Warblers, Blackcaps, Whitethroats, Lesser Whitethroats Redstarts, Cuckoos, Sand Martins, and Swallow close behind. Initial impressions are that Whitethroats, and to a lesser extent Sedge and Garden Warblers are up in numbers on last spring, although the picture will not be fully revealed until your records are received and analysed at the end of the year.

Apart from early singletons House Martins appeared late this year with observations from Worthing beach noting few arriving until towards mid-May, although at the time of writing, end-May, they seem to be present in reasonable numbers. It is hoped that this specie has not suffered a

decline in its African wintering quarters.

Yellow Wagtails have not been numerous and Whinchat, usually a scarce spring migrant in our area, has been noticeable by its absence (unless you know better!). However, so far Nightingales have been well reported for the second spring running, Spotted Flycatchers seemed a little late; there were none on my local patch at Goring Wood until the first arrival on May 15 th, a week later than usual.

Of the scarcer passerine migrants, up to 4 male Pied Flycatchers and a male Ring Ousel were seen near Goring Beach on April 16 th and at least 2 singing Grasshopper Warblers have been noted, at Sompting and Devil's Dyke.

With the country reeling from influxes of Red Kites in April and Black Kites in May, we could have expected more than our usual share of large raptors; however, this was again not to be, although single Red Kite, Buzzard and Peregrine have been reported, and there have been a number of Hobby sightings.

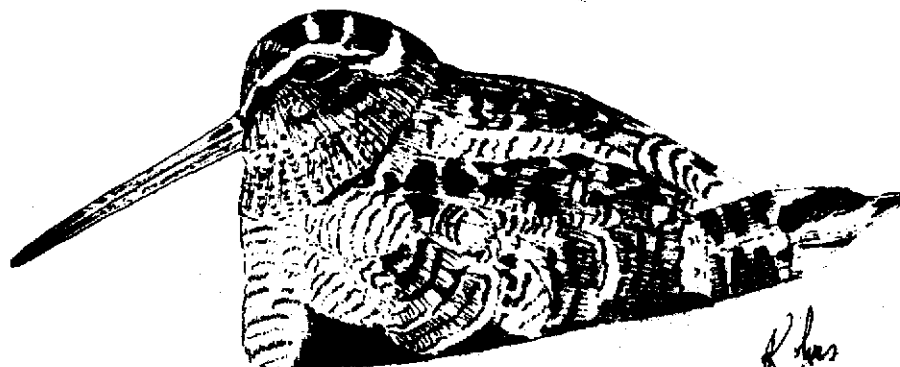
Quail have been recently heard between Cissbury and Chanctonbury Rings.

Outside our recording area, other sites in Sussex have again experienced a good spring for the unusual in recent weeks; examples being Little Egret, Osprey, Temminck's Stint and Garganey at Waltham Brooks, Black Kite, Broad Billed Sandpiper and 2 Temminck's Stints at Pevensey levels, 2 Little Egrets and Osprey at Cuckmere Haven, Black Eared Wheatear at Bawl Water, Woodchat Shrike at Pagham, 2 Red Rumped Swallow over Rye Harbour and a singing male Sub-alpine Warbler at Beachy Head.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to all those members (and non-members) who took the time and trouble to prepare and submit records in 1987. The size of the systematic list in the current Annual Report illustrates that not only are the numbers of individuals submitting records increasing but also the volume of records now being received, which is to be applauded; keep them coming in 1988- please!

-----Dave Smith-----

||| Please Note ; Dave's trip to Siddlesham is on Saturday 17th |||
||| September and not what was stated in the outings card. |||



The Plover Has Landed

At the beginning of May three intrepid members of the SDOs made the journey across strike bound waters to forge the first links with our international brethren in Northern Holland. The weather was hot, calm and perfect for the crossing. Unfortunately there were not many seabirds on show but there was enough of interest to punctuate the smooth journey across the water.

The moment we touched land at Dunkirk an unfamiliar call was picked up, it didn't take long to find the owner it belonged to a Crested Lark. The journey northwards was trouble free and we arrived in Schagen at 8.00. Our hosts invited us to their committee meeting which was held in a Chinese Restaurant, a good start for the weekend.

The following day we visited the dune area which is inside their recording area and it was alive with birds. Nightingales were everywhere and we were fortunate in seeing the only pair of Mediterranean Gulls on the reserve. The star bird for the area is Spoonbill and we saw many constructing their nests among the reeds- a lovely sight. The sky was full of Marsh Harriers which was superb.

Black Terns and Little Gulls were also feeding over this large reed fringed lake. Greenshank, 8 Spotted Redshank and numerous Curlews were the waders of the area. A male Bearded Reedling was also picked up skimming across the top of the reeds. Our guides were very informative and they tried to show us everything that the reserve had to offer. The Bluethroat of the previous day couldn't be re-located which was unfortunate as they are really super birds when seen in full breeding plumage.

The afternoon was taken up by their tenth anniversary meeting in which several distinguished guests gave speeches. It was a shame that we hadn't participated in a quick Dutch revision course as everything went over our heads. They were, however, grateful that we had made the effort to attend their special meeting. The town itself is absolutely gorgeous with dykes, traditional buildings and of course numerous bulb fields. The people were incredibly friendly and it was a real pleasure to be among such a group.

In the evening we were taken to another marshy area on the coast and it was wonderful to see breeding Avocets from only 10 feet away! There were a couple of Curlew Sandpipers coming into summer plumage, a few Little Gull and a noisy Common Tern colony. It was like a very large Sidlesham Ferry Pool but full of breeding birds. We walked over the large sand dune and looked towards England and did a bit of seawatching but Marine Gardens was not in sight nor were any juicy seabirds.

We set off at 7.00 the following morning and reached Dunkirk four hours later. The motorway system in that part of Europe is second to none and so further visits are not as daunting as the map would have one to believe.

On behalf of the SDOS I would like to thank Tringa for their hospitality and I hope we will make their members feel at home when they come over for our barbecue. They will also be participating in the sponsored birdwatch, no doubt, so there'll be no excuse for not talking to them.

I would also like to express my thanks to Richard Weal for all his work in setting up this arrangement and I am sure that many people can benefit from our European link-up. We managed to log 100 species in a day which may be enough to encourage others to spread their wings, who knows ?

R. Ives

BTO BREEDING ATLAS

It is now June and I trust that all those responsible for logging the local species in their tetrad have completed the first stage of this exercise. Don't forget if you have any problems JAN is ready to answer any queries.

Pagham - a reminder

We were told at one of the indoor meetings that the wildfowling shooting licence for Pagham is up for renewal soon. We should, therefore, take this opportunity to express our feelings on this subject to those responsible. The Society has written on our behalf but as it was mentioned this only counts for one letter !

If you regard Pagham as the most important wetland in Sussex then please write to County Hall, Chichester to register your complaint. If enough people show concern the council might then consider the birds and the environment. Disturbance by hunters should not be tolerated and so this is your chance to do something about it.

