

SDDS NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1991

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The final months have seen a real crop of good birds especially along the coast. Reports have just come in of another new species to the area : a Franklin's Gull in Brighton Marina on December 30th. Not a bad way to end the year ! Unfortunately it didn't hang about very long (under a minute, I hear) and was seen by only two observers - better luck next time perhaps ?

The short sharp shock of winter did produce a few species which have been missing in the last few winters. Dave Smith was fortunate in seeing 2 Whooper Swans off Goring Beach on 15th December and a Goosander (another was recorded flying east on 29th Dec). A female Long tailed Duck took up residence on Hove Lagoon for a week or so at the end of October early November. Two were recorded flying offshore on December 16th. Whitefronts have been well represented this autumn/winter period: a flock of 9 were recorded flying west on 21st Oct only to be recorded by the SDDS outing at Climping a few miles along the coast !, JAN had a flock of 24 off Worthing in mid December. A female Scaup has been on Widewater for the last month.

The main talking point and the biggest frustration for some (BFF, LH) was the remarkable passage of Little Auks just off our coast. The winter records have doubled the SDDS's total ! 1 was recorded at Ferring on Nov 4th, followed by 1 on Dec 16th, another just after and then 8 on 28th Dec at Worthing and 4 at the Marina (probably the same birds) on the same date. These clockwork, dumpy rotund auks are really quite exciting.

Divers and other auks have been in good numbers especially in the final week of the year. Kittiwakes are extremely common and the pick of the Shoreham gulls was a first winter (coffee-cream) Glaucous Gull which was found at the harbour on Dec 30. There are 3 Purple Sandpipers at the same site - the one with the gammy leg, alas, is not present, it probably died of old age. Another famous SDDS wader has returned: the albino Redshank which was on the Adur in December.

Passerines have not been in plague proportions but there have been a few interesting birds: a lovely male Black Redstart on Ferring beach until the new year; a male Blackcap in my garden throughout the second half of December; 3 Snow Buntings on Lancing beach green until the new year (they often hide in the building site to the NE of the green.) Unfortunately the large autumn invasion of Waxwings seem to have passed us by for another year- one day it's going to happen and the Chairman will be as happy as Alan Border ! The autumn saw a fairly large number of Firecrests passing through the area (but not through the nets at Cissbury where at least 5 were ringed) and Goring Wood was home to at least 3 on 27th Oct.

A Palm Dove took up residence in a members' garden. A lovely bird but where did it come from ? If it were genuine, it would constitute the first British record but as doves are frequently kept in cages, it would appear that the various ornithological bodies will not give it the benefit of the doubt.

I wish you all the best with the bins for 1991- how many new species will turn up ? Only time will tell.

Richard Ives

Forthcoming Attractions !

Indoor Meetings

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Monday 4th February | The Natural History of Badgers |
| Monday 4th March | Birds of Europe |
| Monday 15th April | AGM plus Turn of the Tide: Estuaries and Conservation. |

Field Outings **

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sunday 10th February | Shoreham Sanctuary- working party |
| Sunday 24th February | Chichester Harbour and East Head |
| Sunday 14th April | Climping and West Littlehampton Beach |

** See Programme card for leaders, times and meeting points

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES (thoughts of chairman Stanley)

On behalf of the Society, on December 10th I attended a planning enquiry- an appeal by Mr Town- against Adur Council's refusal to grant planning permission for a golf driving range at New Salt's farm. The enquiry lasted all day, and the following day the Inspector appointed by the Department of the Environment went to the site, and following the evidence I had given the previous day, I was asked to attend to point out where many of the birds to which I had referred in my evidence were to be seen. The inspector showed much interest in the habitat of the Cetti's Warbler, which had been mentioned in a letter from the NNC. It became obvious how valuable our records are for occasions such as this, and I can only appeal to all members to go on counting, go on keeping records for particular locations; who knows - " New Salt's Farm" threat could crop up anywhere and threaten habitat, and without good records, evidence on behalf of a Society such as ours can be useless. We await with interest the result of the enquiry.

Chris Fox, who has done a splendid job as Treasurer these past few years, has had to give up owing to a big increase in his workload. He's kindly agreed to carry on until the AGM in April, but meanwhile we are urgently looking for his successor. As former Treasurer, I would be pulling the wool over someone's eyes to say that the job is a cakewalk; it takes a bit of time, certainly between November and February, when you are collecting subs (particularly the late ones !), and in January there is quite a rush to get the books to audit, and back for inclusion in the Annual Report. There is a lull from April till September, when the Committee meets and fixes the subs for the next year. Any volunteer- please ring me on Brighton 463332.

On the matter of subscriptions- please - if you haven't paid by the time you read this, send off your sub to Chris Fox without further delay, and avoid us having to mail you.

If anyone is taking a holiday in the Algarve, and would like to have a copy, or borrow the original of my bird checklist of that area please let me know. If you don't know the area, it's very useful to read up some of the more interesting habitats, and the birds to be seen.

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