



SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WINTER/SPRING 1993

Well it's time to brush off the keyboard and keep you up to date with everything that is going on this year. May I wish you all a very successful new year and I hope that the birds behave themselves this year and actually arrive in good numbers. Another mild winter, so far, means that the numbers of wildfowl and raptors are rather low at the moment but then again a short, sharp snap could start things moving. My two Blackcaps seem to be feeding well and are no doubt feeling that spring is just around the corner.

The year ended very quietly and the autumn was not much better! The ringers worked hard throughout the area and the Cissbury group did very well with Grasshopper Warbler this autumn. A few Bramblings were recorded in October but there was an obvious lack of Ring Ouzels throughout the area (I didn't see any!). Raptors were well represented with a Peregrine using the Southwick chimney as a roosting site - not the most sheltered of places that springs to mind! The roosting Starling flock at the West Pier were kept busy by the harrying of a female Merlin in November. Inland on the Beeding Brooks a dozen Bewick's Swans were found feeding in December and a Buzzard flying west over that area was an unusual visitor. Two Green Sandpipers and a couple of Water Pipits at the same site also provided interest. The Short-eared Owls returned just before Christmas and were seen into the new year.

I have heard that six Bearded Reedlings were seen at Sompting Brooks but alas their stay was brief and only one fortunate observer managed to see them. However, a couple of Chiffchaff and a pair of Black Redstarts at that site did provide some solace. Black Redstarts seem to be everywhere at the moment with

about a dozen along our western coasts. There are no doubt birds east of Shoreham Harbour but I have heard nothing from that area. The coast has generally been very quiet with no large Scoter or Eider flocks being recorded. A late Swallow was seen hawking for insects around the harbour arm on November 11th. Widewater has been extremely quiet but two female Scaup joined the Pochard flock at the beginning of January.

Just outside our area, at Brighton Rubbish Tip, a Dartford warbler has decided to winter among the discarded waste of our households. The rest of the county has fared little better this autumn. Climping hosted a Barred Warbler in September and a Honey Buzzard was seen to depart out to sea by some fortunate observers. (Bernie Forbes and I missed it by two minutes!) A Wryneck was also seen there along with a couple at Pagham. Little Egrets seem to be thriving in the county with over a dozen being recorded together in the west; their numbers have reduced slightly now but it's still possible to see 5-8 together! Something unimaginable a few years ago.

Everyone seems to agree that autumn 1992 was one of the worst on record. It can only get better so keep your fingers crossed.

I hope that those members who got the Garden Bird Survey forms from Brian Clay are recording the species feeding on their bird tables. Those wishing to see some birds will no doubt be interested in joining some of the field outings - for those of you who have not paid their subs or who have missed the past few indoor meets and have failed to pick up the programme for 1993 the field outings and indoor meeting are listed on pages 2 and 3.

Sunday Apr 18th Goring & Ferring Rife

Dave Smith is eager to prove that this area can be excellent for spring passage and falls of migrants. Last year's trip was earlier and the birds hadn't realised that spring had begun. This year the sun will shine and a Hoopoe will be located on that lovely turf at the end of the Ilex trees (I've said that for 26 years- it's got to happen sometime!). Meet at the Ilex woods in Goring gap at 9.00.

Saturday May 8th Dawn Chorus at Wiston

Chance to test your alarm clocks and your knowledge of bird song with Chris Fox. Meet at Hole Street Wiston at 0500 (most people complain that most of the birds have already stopped singing by that time- that may just be an ugly rumour). A lovely setting, and a chance to see the sunrise.

Sunday May 9th Sea Watch

Meet Mr Sea-watch (John Newnham) on his home turf at the "shelter" at Alinora Avenue, Goring. After the very quiet last few years this is sure to be a bumper morning. Telescopes are recommended as the birds do have a horrible habit of being a little way out. Your mentor will, however, put a name to those dots moving along the horizon, have no worries.

Sunday June 6th The New Forest

Bernie Forbes and Richard Ives have pleasure in leading this far flung outing into deepest Hampshire. Those who have been before know what an exciting day this is. A Montagu's Harrier was the first bird of the day last year- what will it be this? Who knows? Full day, needless to say. Meet at Telegraph car park on B3078 at 0830.

Saturday July 3rd Waltham Brooks & Nightjars

Please note the change in the published date- this one is correct! Owing to a clash with the SOS we have put our outing back one day to alleviate trampling, and crushing when these incredible birds start flying around our heads. Bring a white handkerchief it fools them every time (why a white handkerchief is mis-identified as a large white moth is beyond me) Meet Brian Metcalfe at Greatham Bridge at 20.00.

Sunday Sep 5th Hollingbury Camp

Join Peter Whitcomb on his stomping ground and you may be surprised by what you find. This area produces many records of unusual species. Those lucky enough to see the Honey Buzzard two years ago need no more encouragement. Meet Peter at Ditchling Road car park at 09.00.

Sunday Oct 3rd Cissbury & Ringing Site

The arrival of our autumn thrushes and the final flourish of some of our warblers means that an autumn trip to this site is well worth the effort. The added attraction of seeing some of these birds in the hand is also an added incentive to join this group. Meet Brian Metcalfe at the Cissbury Ring car park at 08.00.

Sunday Oct 10th Climping

As for Cissbury the autumn passage of birds is a truly wonderful spectacle to witness. Climping is a hive of activity at this time of year with hirundines, finches & pipits moving in great numbers. Last year this area hosted 2 Red-backed Shrikes, a Barred Warbler and a Dartford Warbler at this time of year. Join Roy Sandison at the car park on West Beach at 09.00 and add a few ticks to your list!

Sunday Dec 5th Thorney Island

Windswept and bleak it may be but what better place is there in Sussex at this time of year? This area hosts one of the country's only wintering grounds for Little Egret. These delightful birds are just one of the specialities to be found in this area. Clive Hope will be there to take you around this incredible area. Meet at 09.00 at Thornham Lane/Thorney Road.

Tuesday Dec 28th Adur Walk- Shoreham

Blow those Christmas blues away with a stroll along the River Adur. Stanley Allen, after his few pints from this last outing, has kindly put his name forward to lead this trip to collect data on the number of birds roosting and feeding along our river. Join him at 09.00 south of the footbridge by the Waterman's Arms.

The Indoor Meetings are as follows:-

March 1st

**Kingley Vale - English Nature
by Richard Williamson**

April 5th

**AGM & An Update on Nature Conservation in West Sussex
by Ann Griffiths**

October 4th

**Water for Wildlife
by Tony Whitbread**

November 1st

**Climping Gap Preservation & Field Recording Society
by Sarah Patton**

December 6th

John Newnham's Quiz Night

All Indoor meetings held at St. Giles Church Hall, Shoreham by Sea at 7.30.

Come along - the more you put in the more you gain and learn about the fascinating world of birds.

From the Editor.....

At the moment Dave Smith is preparing his final report ready for me to type up and prepare for the 1992 Annual Bird Report. We, as a society, owe a great deal to such people and all those others who work behind the scenes getting everything prepared and published. I'd like on behalf of the society to thank our recorder for all the hard work he has put in for the last 6 years and to thank him for making my task a little easier. Thanks Dave.

Also thanks must go to Brian Clay for his never-ending enthusiasm and hard work in reformatting the Newletters and Annual Report and getting them printed into such a professional-looking product. The new programme list (enclosed for those who have not yet received one) is a classic example of Brian's handiwork on his desk-top publishing computer.

A Reminder : the spring sponsored birdwatch is taking place again this year and if you want to help support the Sussex Wildlife Trust please sign the sponsor sheets which are at the indoor meetings, or see Bernie Forbes, Richard Ives or Dave Smith and make your pledges. Last year's money went towards the purchase of a wetland area on the edge of Rye Harbour. It does prove that a little effort does go a long way - your generosity would be most appreciated.

.....*Richard Ives*

What Next on the Adur? *by Stanley Allen*

Until last autumn, the chances of finding 10 Oystercatchers on the Adur SSI were as about unlikely as our News Editor (off spinner when he's not editing) taking 10 wickets in an innings. Suddenly their numbers have increased, with a total of 93 near the railway bridge on 10th January this year. What intrigues me is that this is near the site of the old oyster beds; no oysters there for many years, but a cleaner river may well contribute to ample food in the area.

Grey Plover, which normally turn up in singles, have also increased, with 15 present on 19th Jan. Another pleasant surprise is the number of Snipe- since Christmas there have been regular sightings from the houseboat area, with 37 present on the 19th, and 4 at New Salt's farm. Here there was a lone Golden Plover with the 1,486-strong Lapwing flock. The Dunlin are much harder to count, as they are far more scattered than a few years ago when the largest numbers were near the houseboats. The impression is of dwindling numbers, with a count of around 350 on the 19th. The Ringed Plovers are also well scattered and the easiest way to count is on the beach near the Fort at high tide. It is always fascinating to try and work out where our estuary birds go at high tide, and the only obvious movement is the Ringed Plovers to the beach.

Redshank numbers seem constant around 90, plus the ever-present Albino; the star bird before Christmas was the Iceland Gull- seen only by a few lucky few; as it stayed a very short time near the footbridge. A first-winter Mediterranean Gull has also been seen, and a very light coloured Black headed Gull. One has been saddened to see a lot of oiled birds these last few weeks. The Southwick Canal has had 2 Little Grebes & a Great Crested Grebe near the locks, where also a Red throated Diver has also been seen. High above, on the Power Station chimney, the most spectacular bird of the area: a Peregrine, is sharing its roost with a large flock of Feral pigeons and so this bird is assured of a meal whenever it fancies one.

An Apology

The timing of the newsletters has become a little confused over the last 12 months and has adversely affected the issue of the Garden Bird Survey forms in the autumn and the distribution of the current year's programmes. The issue of the programmes was also delayed because the usual printer was no longer able to undertake the work and new arrangements had to be made. As a result members who have not been able to attend recent indoor meetings may not have been aware of events taking place in the early part of this year. Hopefully all members should now have received a programme. If not please contact our Secretary Mrs Brianne Reeve on 0273 452497 who will arrange for one to be sent to you. Your Committee will be discussing these difficulties at the next meeting in March and will try to ensure that no such problems arise again. Please accept our apologies if you have been adversely affected.

Ashdown Forest

Our Society has received an invitation from Roy Harman of the Ashdown Forest Bird Group to join them on their field outing on July 16th when, in particular, they will be looking for Nightjars. Full details are not available at this stage but will be announced at our AGM on April 5th. If you cannot be at the AGM then contact our Secretary, Brianne Reeve, after the AGM and she will provide you with the details. Brianne's telephone number is 0273 452497.

Your Ideas

The Committee would welcome your ideas or suggestions so that account can be taken of them when compiling the programme of speakers for the indoor meetings or arranging the venues for the field outings. It would also be valuable to know if Members are happy to continue with the annual summer barbeque or would prefer some other event. Do let any Committee Member know your views so that events can be planned with your wishes in mind.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 1993 are now overdue. If you have not yet paid please do so at the indoor meetings or send a cheque to our Hon. Treasurer, Tony Bullock, at his home address (see SDOS Bird Report 1991). This will be the last mailing based on the 1992 membership list. Please ensure that your 1993 membership is paid so that you can receive your copy of the forthcoming annual report