



SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 1993

Well another year has almost evaporated and I am sure that many of you have got some interesting records to send to our new recorder. His name is Rod Shaw and his address is:- 1 Forge Close, Portslade, Brighton. BN41 2GP.

I am sure that he would be delighted to get his first batch of records so that he can begin to start the log for 1993. Despite the typical wet British spring, there were a few interesting records. The first sign of spring was a Hoopoe which resided in Wiston for a few days in March; unfortunately few members were lucky enough to get to grips with it. Sea-watching produced a large number of Skuas this year and there were some other species showing a welcome return to their former numbers. My sea watching highlight of the spring was an Osprey which came overhead at a height of 45' - I can now say for sure that this bird has a yellow eye and a bluish base to the beak- absolutely breathtaking. Another two were recorded in the spring (I was possibly the bird I recorded coming in off the sea) and so that makes it a very positive start to the year. Other broad winged raptors recorded over the sea included Marsh Harrier and the falcons were represented by both Peregrine & Hobby. Another splendid sight was a Nightjar recorded coming in off the sea at Worthing much to the delight of those present.

A pair of summer Mediterranean Gulls stayed on the River Adur for a couple of days and they looked wonderful with their black heads and almost white primaries. A couple of Grasshopper Warblers reeled away on the northern side of the airport at the same time. The largest bird recorded in the area was a White Stork which drifted eastwards on May 3rd - it was the bird which had spent a few days near Arundel.



There seemed to be a late arrival of some summer migrants with Swifts a few days late and Spotted Flycatchers almost completely missing- I am sure the recorder would appreciate any records of this latter species to confirm my initial impression of this species' status.

The early summer heat wave during the Wimbledon fortnight must have helped our breeding birds; let's hope that their youngsters have fledged successfully. One of the highlights from this period was a Little Egret which was recorded on the River Adur. This once extremely rare vagrant has now appeared for the last three years which mirrors the national growth in numbers; if this trend continues we may even have a small breeding population in the next century, who knows? One was seen in mid-summer in a tree near the airport and two were reported coasting along the beach at Goring in September.

On the disappointing side I hear that one of the field outings was attended by only one member! It seemed that the early start for the outing the day before had sapped your strength. For those of you who have never seen a Pomarine Skua you missed the opportunity of having a couple pointed out to you on that particular field trip! It would also appear that many didn't read the last newsletter very carefully as the change in date for the Nightjar trip was not noticed. Dave had a huge number on the Friday Sussex outing as many of you turned up a day early! I wonder how many turned up the following evening with Brian?

I hear that the B-B-Q was a great success this year with over half the membership present on the one almost summery evenings in July. This is obviously one of the highlights of the year and thanks must be given to Brianne for all the hard work she put in and for the kind use of her very attractive garden. The sponsored birdwatch was another great success this year with a record amount raised for the Sussex Wildlife Trust but the total of species noted was fewer than the year before. If you require a blow by blow account see Bernie or Dave at one of the meetings, I am sure they'd give you the run down on the day's activity.

Return passage seems to be starting early this year as I recorded a Lesser Whitethroat in my garden at the beginning of July. I should imagine that this is a local bird already on the move. My local Swifts were on the wing at the same time, the youngsters were screaming after their parents. The Swifts seemed to leave en masse at the end of July as very few were present in August and I have heard of no local records for September at all. The third weekend of September caused a flurry of records with an Osprey

moving west over Broadwater and a heavy passage of Hirundines throughout. Siskins were recorded moving that weekend. The county was alive with rare migrants with Wrynecks, Honey Buzzards, Ortolans, and a Buff breasted Sandpiper at either Beachy or Sidlesham - little has been passed on to me as to what was seen in the local area.

The ringers have been busy all summer and they have had a good crop of autumn migrants with at least 4 Grasshopper Warblers being ringed in the latter half of August and the beginning of September. They are eagerly awaiting the first of the Ring Ousels and perhaps they may even trap another Yellow-browed Warbler this year:- the ringing report in next year's report will keep you in the picture.

So far this year has been unexceptional but with October and its potential for rarities this picture could be altered radically. Widewater has played host to Little Stints this autumn and maybe an American wader could find itself on our local patch - let's hope so.

Richard Ives

MEETINGS

The shortening days herald the beginnings of the indoor meetings which will take place on the following dates:-

November 1st **Climping Gap Preservation & Field Society** by Sarah Patton

December 5th **A Personal Ornithology** by Tony Marr
Come along and hear Tony Marr on our fortieth anniversary meeting. One of our founder members and an extremely entertaining speaker. It should be an interesting meeting.

Please Note: the January and April indoor meetings are not on the first Monday of the month.

The outdoor meetings for the latter part of the year include:

December 5th **Thorney Island**
Meet Clive Hope at the usual spot for this full day trip. 9.00 start. His phone number, if you want further information, is 0903 744489 and not the number given in the programme.
Please note:- meet as programmed but access restrictions mean that some parts of Thorney cannot be visited as usual.

December 28th **Adur Walk**
Stanley Allen will meet members outside the Wateside Inn for this sobering up exercise. Come along and see what you can see.

Further details and grid references can be obtained from your programme card.

Reflections of a Summer Evening

The Summer Barbecue was a great success (on one of those rare good evenings weatherwise) enjoyed by over 50 members. Brianne was grateful for the help given by Joan Nye, Hazel Jackson, & Enid Chadwell before everyone arrived. Bernie Forbes & Terry Hicks organised a highly efficient system on the barbecues whilst Brianne was assisted by Carol Forbes and other willing hands to get the food outside. It can only be said that it disappeared like water off a duck's back ! John & Sheena Maskell sent a rather good Thank You poem:-

*Thanks once again for Summer Pud
(Thank heaven's that the weather was good)
For Barbecue & garlic bread,
We really did enjoy your spread,
For toads in a hole & garden plot
The Shoreham Group says thanks a lot."*

The toads appeared from under the stones on the patio once everyone had gone home. A good evening for everyone. A few bird lists of the day of the barbecue were sent to Brianne, if there are any more and you still have the records do please send them in to me and a prize will be offered at the December meeting.

Richard Ives & Brianne Reeve

SUBS

Don't forget our Treasurer would be delighted to take your subscriptions for next year at any of the remaining indoor meetings. Yes, the year has almost turned full circle.

Announcements

Please note that if you wish to advertise in the Newletters please contact myself or Brianne. Many people might be interested in hearing about certain events of items for sale.

One such item to announce is the lecture by Dr Algirdas Knytautas at the Martletts Hall, Burgess Hill on Tuesday 16th November at 7.30. He will be talking on the Birds of Russia and promoting his new book. Tickets cost £4.00 and can be obtained from Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9SD. Please enclose cheques and sae to this address.

Call for Help

We have received a letter from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee asking for our help. You may be aware that this organisation is trying to fight against illegal poisoning of our wildlife. Yet another Red Kite has been found poisoned in England recently and we should be trying to find out who is responsible for causing this decimation of our rare birds of prey. 380 raptors were found poisoned between 1979-1990 - how many others were not actually found ?

We were contacted as many of us spend many hours in the field and we may come across a corpse. Should there be any suspicion of poisoning please contact the JNCC on freephone 0800 321 600. We should also note the location, number and species involved and any evidence of baits. Photographs would be useful but DO NOT TOUCH any baits or carcasses. If possible, cover the bait or carcass to make it safe.

Let's hope that the above is not applicable to our local area but we should all be vigilant just to ensure that this nefarious deed does not occur locally.

The Path *by Richard Ives*

The path led through a olive grove between two tor-capped slopes, over the crest of a hill and then meandered gently to the coast and the beautiful blue Adriatic. It was along this unmetalled road that I made my way every morning before the sun climbed above the mountains and scorched the herb gardens. The aromatic air was full of bird song, some familiar and some newly learnt.

The first olive grove was home to three species of Shrike each one trying to outdo the other in the beauty stakes - my favourite being Masked with its gingery flanks and stunning pied plumage. There were also Sombre Tits and Subalpine warblers flitting through the trees while both Short toed Treecreeper & Middle Spotted Woodpecker busied themselves on the trunks.

As the path wound upwards the olive groves gave way to open pasture and stone fields. This meant that other species were utilising these niches and none better than the Rock Nuthatch which proclaimed its presence by its trilling from the most conspicuous vantage point. What a wonderful creature- with its propensity to run up vertical crags and seek food from fissures in the rock. Its neighbour on the rocky outcrops were Black-eared Wheatears which sang and danced in the air trying to attract a mate. Alien sounds in an alien environment.

One morning the air was full of raptors and I was fascinated by the Eleanora's grace & perfect control of the air. The nearby Hobby, Red footed Falcon and Peregrine looked almost pedestrian in comparison. High above the slopes a couple of Long legged Buzzards and a single Short toed Eagle sailed majestically. What an incredible place.

The most evocative sounds were the "bripping" of Bee-eaters as they hawked for insects over the warming slopes. A pair of Hoopoe lopped into view -their pink & piebald plumage resplendent. On an opposite crag my attention was drawn by a large bird on its hunting sorties from a dead tree. Even without using my binoculars I knew the jizz belonged to only one bird- and through binoculars the turquoise plumage of its underparts confirmed my original identification as a Roller. There were two birds hunting in unison and that spectacle will remain with me for ever.

It had always been my ambition to log the most colourful birds on plate 46 of the Peterson guide in a day but that morning I had all three at the same time. 25 years of waiting was finally over and my childhood ambition fulfilled- what a wonderful feeling ! The island of Lesbos had provided the solution to my problem and it must be a destination for anyone interested in flowers and birds.

The northern resort of Anaxos- 20 houses, 1 hotel, 12 donkeys & 30 goats, is a wonderful place to be in May. Birds are moving through the area on their way north to their breeding grounds. Nightingales and Black headed Buntings are everywhere and Golden Orioles whistle down from the Poplar trees. I can think of no better place to get to grips with Mediterranean species and the scenery is just wonderful. Those who wish to see all the colourful species on plate 49 (1970 edition) will have the chance to fulfil their dreams. I wish you luck.

Garden Birds

The new season is already on us and forms are enclosed for those Members wishing to participate. Full instructions are also enclosed. Roy Sandison has kindly agreed to take the survey "under his wing" and will be writing-up the results for the 1992/93 winter for the 1993 Annual Report. If you have any queries in the meantime please contact me, Brian Clay on 0903 249225 or Roy on 0903 872504.