

SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Summer
2008

NEWSLETTER

Spring Passage—a resumé

It was mid March before migrants appeared with a Wheatear at Goring Gap on 15th followed by Sand Martin at Beeding on 21st and an Osprey in off the sea at the Marina on 26th. A Blackcap was singing at Henfield on 30th and a Willow Warbler was in a Worthing garden. The only real arrival of Wheatears in any numbers occurred on this day along the coast between Worthing and Ferring with at least 25 counted. Firecrests were at a number of places in early April and a House Martin was well ahead of its companions on the 1st at Beeding where fortunate observers recorded a fine male Brambling in their garden. On 4th, Ring Ouzel at Hollingbury, Swallow at Worthing and two Pied Flycatchers in Hove were welcome arrivals. The 14th/15th saw Whitethroats, Cuckoo, Sedge and Garden Warblers appear and before the month end a few Redstarts were in the Patcham and Stanmer areas as well as two Whinchats and a Serin at Ladies Mile NR. Seawatching this spring has been exceptional for some species notably Whimbrel, Common and Black Terns, Great Skuas and Velvet Scoter. The large num-

bers of Pomarine Skuas recorded in the east of the county have not been matched in the west. This is partly due to observer coverage but also the fact that they tend to come inshore further east up Channel when winds are easterly without an element of south. Other species such as divers, Common Scoter and Bar-tailed Godwits have been seen with somewhat reduced totals this year. Arctic Skuas, Sandwich and Little Terns have been at about normal numbers.

More recently, Red Kites have appeared with at least 7 or 8 in our area with three together over Beeding Brooks on May 11th. Three Crossbills over Cissbury on 13th were the first of the year for our area in what so far has been a difficult species to find in the county. Two Marsh Harriers were seen off Worthing on a seawatch on April 22nd and massive movement (for Sussex) of Manx Shearwaters (126 flying west well offshore) was observed from Worthing on May 1st. Several Hobbies were seen arriving from the sea in the period.

Clive Hope

Summer Outings

We have put in an order for a balmy evening on Friday, June 20th when Dorian Mason will be leading us on a short walk around Lavington Common. We may encounter Tree Pipit, Stonechat, Dartford Warbler, Hobby and as dusk approaches Woodcock and Nightjar will be heard and even seen! Meet 7.30 pm in Lavington Common car park. On Saturday, July 12th we will spend the morning on Cissbury Ring in the company of Chris Wright. NOTE that we are meeting in the STORRINGTON RISE car park at 9.30 am on this occasion as there is more space for cars. At this time of the year we will be looking at the natural history of the area so expect butterflies and plants to feature as much as the bird life.

This also applies to the outing to Birling Gap on Sunday, August 31st, another 9.30 start with Brianne Reeve as our leader. This area holds a variety of butterflies and flower species although we have high hopes of finding some good birds too as we shall cover several different habitats.

Someone who always finds an interesting list of birds is Dave Smith who will be taking us round Pagham and Church Norton on Sunday, September 21st. Meet at Sidlesham Visitor Centre at 9.30 am. Those with long memories will recall that Dave found us a Wryneck, three years running, on this outing so miss it at your peril!

Chris Wright

Notes from the Council Meeting on March 19th

Raffle It has been agreed that the price of raffle tickets at the indoor meeting will be increased to £1 per ticket from October 2008. Donations of prizes for future raffles are very welcome.

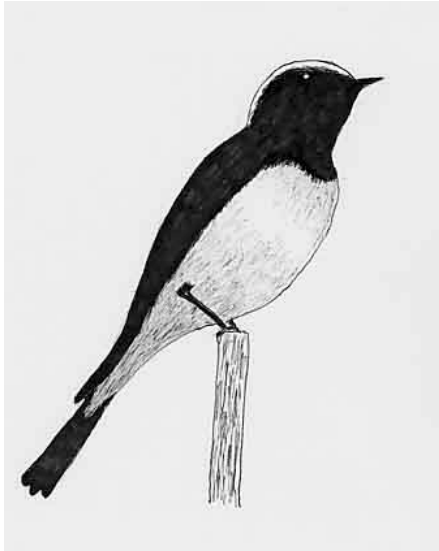
Data Protection Council reviewed the Society's arrangements for meeting the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Brian Clay has accepted the role of Data Controller for the Society. Please note that your names and addresses are held on computer and used solely for membership administration purposes. They will not be released to any third party. The same also applies to email addresses held for the email group or electronic Newsletter distribution. If you have any concerns about this please do contact Brian Clay (01903 602439).

Next Indoor Meeting...

October 14th - Magazines & the Art of Bird Photography by David Cromack

Living the Dream?

“Daphne, come and have a look at this” Our first Cyprus Wheatear had arrived in the garden. And so this cry was repeated time and again, including many from my wife who has a keen eye for the ‘bird that looks different’. Having an interest in all forms of wildlife there were many other creatures seen for the first time. But perhaps I should say, briefly, how we came to be living in Northern Cyprus.



Cyprus Warbler—Ken Hearne

Ten years ago, our youngest daughter was working as a tour guide in Turkey, and met and subsequently married a Turkish Cypriot. They lived in the UK for seven years but he yearned to return to Cyprus, and after careful thought by all the family, Daphne and I said we would join them. We found a one-and-half acre plot containing 36 olive trees on a rocky hillside near the foothills of the Kyrenia mountain range, and 10 minutes from Kyrenia. This size enabled us to set our two houses 100m apart with a third house to be used as a holiday home for our eldest daughter. This spacing enabled us to retain two wild areas rich in orchids and other wild flowers including a small area of maquis near the back of our house.

During the first year of taking up residence in Cyprus we needed to have a garage built, extra water tanks installed, terraces constructed, etc., all of which need to be supervised. So for this time our birdwatching was mainly from our garden, and it was interesting to record the residents and migrants through the seasons.

Soon after we moved in April three years ago we discovered a pair of Little Owls

were nesting in an olive tree in the back garden, and were delighted when two fledglings appeared a short while later. It was also at this time that Bee-eaters started appearing in the sky, calling as if rejoicing the return to their breeding grounds. The first Cyprus Wheatear was soon joined by its mate, and they stayed in and around the garden during the nesting season. The Cyprus Warbler, resident all year, was now bursting into song and breeding nearby. Other warblers passing through the garden included Cetti's, Olivaceous, Spectacled, Sardinian, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap and Chiffchaff.

During the summer many birds moved up to the mountains to benefit from the better food supply generated by the more lush vegetation. Apart from an occasional Hobby we were then left with our all-year round residents: Great Tit, House Sparrow, Magpie and Hooded Crow. After this lull in sightings we were surprised to see walking past the kitchen window in stately procession a family of Chukars parading in their finest livery. Then there was a flurry of autumn activity with Red-breasted Flycatcher, Masked and Red-backed Shrike, and Spanish Sparrows appearing around the house. Perhaps the most memorable sights were the formations of Demoiselle and later Common Cranes demonstrating their precision flying. On their outbound migration Bee-eaters tend to linger often perching on nearby overhead electricity cables as if they were reluctant to leave, which gives us an excellent opportunity to study their almost iridescent colours.

October heralds the arrival of the first of the winter visitors, the Stonechat – a poser par excellence, followed by Black Redstarts, and together they stay in and around the garden all winter. An open area between our houses is always an attraction for small groups of Woodlark, and with the onset of severe weather in Eastern Europe these are joined by typical UK garden birds such as Robin, Chaffinch, Blackbird and Song Thrush.

With more time to explore the countryside we found reservoirs to be the most productive areas. Many were built in valleys fed by rain flowing down the mountains and are steep-sided with not much more than a few Moorhen and Mallard on the water.

Those constructed on the plains with shallow margins are particularly good in spring. Here we have seen Great White Egret, Wood Sandpiper, Little Ringed and Spur-winged Plover, Collared Pratincole and Black-winged Stilt. If there are small trees nearby then Night, Squacco and Purple Herons, together with Great Spotted Cuckoo, are sometimes present. This spring we are experiencing our worst drought for 60 years and these reservoirs are mostly dried out with huge cracks in the mud base. During the winter the only significant rainfall was three inches in February and shortly after we visited our nearest reservoir only to find the rain had not even filled the cracks. There was an eerie silence broken only by the occasional chirping of House Sparrows. Looking at the deep ravines near our house, gouged out many years ago by water shed from the nearby mountains, and now always dry, one realises how much the climate has changed here.

In Northern Cyprus there are no published sightings. In three years of birding I have never met another bird-watcher. There are references to reservoirs and other places worth visiting in one or two books and in trip reports, but these can soon be out of date because of change of use and the building boom that has taken place over the last few years. So it is almost like going back 50 or 60 years when you discovered the birds yourself without help from anyone else.

As a change one can get together passport, driving permit and euros, and go ‘abroad’, i.e. to the Republic of Cyprus, which is usually just referred to here as the ‘south’. We drive to Nicosia, the last divided capital in the world, go through Turkish Cypriot passport control, cross the green line manned by UN soldiers, and then through Greek Cypriot passport control. Sightings in the south are published on the internet which helps determine where the most productive sites are likely to be. However, it takes three hours to get to Pafos in the west, so we are more likely to head south for the delights of Larnaca Sewage Works.

In addition to birdwatching I used to record butterfly sightings for Butterfly Conservation when living in the UK. A butterfly I never saw was the Swallowtail, and little did I think that one day it would be a common species in the garden. It is a prolific egg layer and uses parsley for this purpose instead of the usual fennel which will have died down

by early summer. As a result picking parsley for the table takes time as each leaf has to be checked for eggs before it is used. I would not want some eggs to be lost because I had eaten them! Surveying areas for butterflies is very worthwhile here, and I have been able to find species never recorded before in some 5km squares.

The most important influence on daily lives is of course the high light intensity. Even in mid-winter driving through the lanes to Kyrenia one is constantly distracted by the ripening oranges and lemons glinting in the sun like gaudy baubles. Another factor is the friendliness of the locals. The car park attendant in Kyrenia greets me with greater enthusiasm each time I park there. It will not be long now before he kisses me. I can appreciate this may not be a plus point for everyone. So what is the downside? Without doubt it is the shooting of birds during the winter on two days a week. Those living in a town will hardly be aware of it, but in the countryside it is not possible to ignore it. When the north of the island is eventually included in the EU I can foresee strong resistance to stopping this activity. So are we living the dream? As the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is not recognised by the rest of the world, apart from Turkey, we must be living in a country that does not exist. So one day we will wake up and realise it has been all a dream!

Ken Hearne

Let's Amble down The Hamble

Monday 21st April 08

When I was at school, one of my main hates was cross country running. As a result I became a rambler and a cyclist and have remained so ever since. The trouble is though, if you remain in the same locality all of your life, it becomes more and more difficult to find new places to visit. So I started to search a bit further afield.

Several years ago we had a speaker come to the club who came from Titchfield Haven or thereabouts. He had photos of Spoonbills taken locally. (The Haven website currently shows pictures of Spoonbills taken in May 2007.)

As a rambler my aim was to devise a walk starting at the top of the Hamble, just south of the A27, walk south on the east bank of the Hamble, east along the Solent Way to Titchfield Haven then north on the Titchfield canal to the village of Titchfield itself. It left some

logistics to sort out, namely how to get from Titchfield back to the Start at Lower Swanwick!

As I have a motor caravan I was able to spend time in the area and explore further, to tune things more in favour of bird watchers.

We started our exploration by driving to Titchfield Haven. As it was Monday we found plenty of free parking on the front, facing the sea with the Isle of Wight beyond.

The National Nature Reserve is immediately behind, with a Visitors' Centre as well. Unfortunately it was only open from Wednesday to Sunday. (9.30-5 in Summer/4.30 in winter). The Visitors' Centre is free to visit but a charge is made for the Reserve. Web information tells us that the Reserve has a record of over 200 bird species and is the Summer breeding ground of the Avocet. (A couple of people we met on the following day told us that there were Avocet currently on the Reserve.) The only birds we saw on the reserve, from the coastal road was a huge gaggle of Black-heads kicking up a devil of a din.

We walked north on the west side of the reserve adjacent to the Titchfield canal (not a very exciting narrow waterway) for a while and returned to the coast as the tide was dropping. A few puddles so we wore boots. A couple of Redshank paid us a visit and a lot of Turnstone made their way along the beach, doing what Turnstones do! A couple of Eider drifted by, out in the bay. Egret were about as well. We returned to our campsite in the Bere Forest with plans to explore further the next day.

Tuesday 22nd April 08

Down near the mouth of the Hamble, where it joins Southampton Water is Warsash. There are 2 car parks, one on Shore Lane, by the Harbour Office (4 hour limit) and one nearby in Passage Lane. Both are free of charge.

We walked south from here, (wearing trainers) along the Solent Way and soon came to the Hook with Warsash Nature Reserve. It is open access. There is a hide overlooking a sizeable pool. We saw Oystercatcher, Shelduck, Lapwing, Moorhen, Coot, Dunnock, Heron and of course Canada Geese.

Opposite there was a long shingle bank off shore with a few Lapwing along its length. We continued on the

Solent Way, with Southampton Water tight up on our right hand side and the reserve opening out on our left. Plenty of low gorse and taller shrubs in front with several pools behind gave a good habitat. We next added a flock of Bar-tailed Godwit to the list. These were nestled down beyond the main pool. More Lapwing, an Egret and Mute Swan. We continued along the path for a bit and added Linnet, Stonechat and Greenfinch. The beauty of this site is that the sun (if it's out!) is behind you, so viewing is good. This coastal strip has great potential for easy viewing. No doubt at a lower tide there will be a wider variety still.

We decided that we would make an inland loop back to Warsash. We took the first public footpath going left which took us through some pretty high value properties, at the end of which were fields with standing oaks. Not a bungalow in sight! We took a left footpath into a field and curved round left until we came out on a road. On the right was a road bridge over an area of reeds. There was parking here if it was needed. We continued via the bridge up a small hill and soon forked left on a footpath that led us back to the coast and the first pool with the hide. From here we returned to the quayside where we had parked. There is a pub on the quayside as well. Even if you don't find any birds there is plenty of shipping in the channel to look at. The web lists 2.5 hours before high tide as the best time to visit the Hook with Warsash Reserve area.

LOGISTICS Take the M27 as far as junction 9. This will take you off in the Lower Swanwick area. Head south to either Titchfield or Warsash. It is **HIGHLY ADVISABLE** to have some form of local street map of the area as it is very much "bungalow town" without signposts until you actually get to the coast. These can be obtained off the web at www.OrdnanceSurvey.co.uk click on "Get a map from the Ordnance Survey". Once you have got your map you can paddle around and move the map sideways to get to Swanwick, Warsash etc. Use a scale of 1:25,000 or move the slider up or down to suit. Another very useful website is www.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-countryside

John Ford

The John Stafford Prize 2007/2008

In 1953 John Stafford, together with some like-minded people, started the Shoreham Ornithological Society, now called the SDOS. After John's death in May 2007 it was decided to use some money he had left to the Society to inaugurate a prize in his honour. Various suggestions were made but it seemed the one he might have chosen himself was for a piece of written work on any ornithological subject relevant to our recording area, with a maximum of 1500 words. Members were informed and encouraged to take part on several occasions and the satisfactory result was that we received six entries on a variety of topics.

These were sent to Tony Marr, who as a child had started his birding under John's tutelage. No names were attached.

Tony enjoyed judging the contributions and we are indebted to him for doing so. He decided to award the prize to John Crix, our Report Editor, for his piece on 'Monitoring Barn Owls'. Our congratulations go to him for his lively and interesting contribution. John will be donating the prize of £100 to further the work of Barn Owl conservation in West Sussex. In second place was Jeannette Simpson for her article on 'Three Level Birding' proving that you can derive a great deal of enjoyment from watching birds from your own home.

We have decided to publish the entries in a small booklet which will be sent out with the Annual Report later in the year. It means you will have to wait a little while but we hope you will enjoy reading them and also that they might inspire more entries for next year. To those

who took part this year, thank you for the effort you made. It is no mean feat for each of you to produce a piece of writing of which you can be justly proud.

Brianne Reeve

Garden Bird Survey

It's that time of the year again to collate and tabulate the garden bird sightings sent in by members for the year 2007, ready for the annual report. This information has been collected constantly since 1999 from the gardens of about 30 members and it can be seen how the fortunes of some of the more common birds have changed over this time. The reduction in the number of House Sparrows in particular is a good example.

Location and structure of gardens obviously affect the number of species noted, but all returns, however few, or even nil, help to build a picture of the fluctuations in garden bird populations. The more records received the finer the picture becomes.

It is always exciting to record an unusual bird in the garden, but it is the constant recording of our common garden birds which can give a view of the wider changes which may be occurring.

With thanks to all members who have contributed their garden records.

Martin Ford

Summer Picnic

A few years ago we had a very successful SDOS picnic at which everyone brought food for a shared meal. The idea is that you just bring anything you like, savoury, sweet, salad, vegetable or fruit and everything will be put on tables for a gentle free-for-all! Last time the tables were groaning with good stuff, there was plenty for everyone and very little wastage. No one person was burdened with providing the food. Some soft drinks will be provided but if you would like anything stronger please bring your own.

Margaret and Dorian Mason have offered to host this Summer Picnic Lunch in their seaside garden at :-

**Seagate,
Florida Road, Ferring, BN12 5PE
on
Sunday, July 27th from 12:30 pm.**

Please contact Dorian & Margaret by **SAT. JULY 20th** if you would like to come.

You are asked to park in the Bluebird Café car park (OS sheet 198 TQ 092015 - where we meet for the Ferring Rife outing) then a short walk along the beach eastwards (in the Worthing direction brings you to the Mason's garden gate which will be marked with an SDOS sign. Any queries please contact Dorian on 01903 700456

Dorian Mason

Electronic Newsletter—Thirty five members have now signed up to receive this Newsletter in electronic form—have you? There are considerable advantages!

- Ø It will save the SDOS money on printing costs
- Ø It will save the SDOS money on postage if you are unable to pick up your copy at an indoor meeting
- Ø It will reduce the amount of envelope stuffing our extremely busy Chairman has to do
- Ø It will cut down on the number of labels we have to buy and the amount of printer ink used
- Ø You will get your copy immediately it is completed and checked at the same time it is sent to the printer
- Ø We will save a few trees – or branches at least!
- Ø If you do want a printed copy you can print it out yourself on a paper colour of your own choice!

Please email me if you would like a test run. It is in pdf format and on most computers it should just open automatically if you click on the attachment. If it doesn't you can download Adobe Reader free of charge from the Adobe web site at www.adobe.com by clicking on >Get ADOBE READER<. If you want to go ahead please email me on brian.clay@ntlworld.com so that I can add you to the Newsletter emailing list.

Do please give it a try and if you find the Newsletter doesn't open on your computer let me know and we may be able to solve the problem or try another format. I look forward to hearing from you!

Brian Clay