

SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Winter and Spring Outings 2011

January 16th (Sun) Beeding Brooks.

Meet 14:00 Park outside 'Noordwijk', Pound Lane, Upper Beeding, just before stables (p.m. only). Wet and several stiles.

O.S. sheet 198. Ref. TQ197111 - Dist. 2K (2).

Leader: Terry Goble 01903 813698.

February 27th (Sun) Rackham Woods.

Meet 09:00 in quarry car park next to old school.

OS Sheet 197. Ref. TQ050144. Dist. 3K (1-2).

Leader: Bernie Forbes 01903 753876..

April 17th (Sun) Goring Seawatch.

Meet 08:00 at shelter opposite Alinora Avenue (a.m. only).

O.S. sheet 198. Ref. TQ117018—Bring chair (1).

Leader: John Newnham 01903 247596.

May 6th (Fri) Nightingale Walk, Woods Mill.

Meet 20:00 in Woods Mill car park (evening only).

O.S. sheet 198. Ref. TQ218138 - Dist. 2K (1).

Leader: Val Bentley 01273 494723.

May 21st (Sat) Anchor Bottom.

Meet 09:30 in Beeding Hill car park (a.m. only)).

O.S. sheet 198. Ref. TQ208097 - Dist. 3K (1).

Leader: Chris Wright 01903 814859.

Upcoming Indoor Meetings

January 11th RSPB in SE England– Sussex biased.

by Chris Corrigan

February 8th—AGM followed by the latest on Wetlands, Woodlands and Heathlands at RSPB Pulborough Brooks.

by Peter Hughes

March 8th—Migration in Urban London

by Mark Pearson

April 12th—Birds of the World

by Graham St. John Smith

Impromptu Outings

Last year we had a successful impromptu outing to Burton Pond to watch the wintering Bitterns. If a bird (or birds) are present in the late winter period i.e. January and February then the walk will be repeated. One of the committee members will post notification of the walk on the user group with as many days notice as possible to ensure appropriate weather conditions. If there are any days of the week when people would prefer this to run then please contact me. Typically meeting about 14:30—15:30 depending on date and lasting a couple of hours.

For the last two years we have also had an outing specifically aimed at watching displaying Goshawks and this will be repeated between late February and late March. Again notification via the user group. This is likely to be a full-day Sunday outing although a Saturday is possible if people would prefer it.

There will also be a Dawn Chorus outing in early May.

If you are not on the usergroup but would like to be told of these outings please let Brianne have your telephone number and you will be informed.

Outings' Reports

Cissbury Ring – Saturday 28th August

A glorious morning greeted the 11 members who met Clive Hope in the Nepcote Green car park. A few yards from the car park the first, of probably 10, Spotted Flycatchers was seen. On the way to the top Swallows and House Martins were feeding overhead, a Willow Warbler was heard and a Blue Tit and Whitethroat were seen in the scrub. On the top of the Ring the views were clear to the Isle of Wight in the west and to Beachy Head in the east. Four Cormorants flew north high above and then three Tree Pipits were picked up on their call as they passed over westwards. A male Brimstone butterfly was much admired. Then a Hobby was spotted, luckily most people managed to see it as it flew away. Closer at hand superb views were had of Wheatears and a Whinchat. Everyone had a good look at these smart birds through Peter Casebow's telescope.

Then away to the right we had the first two of eight Redstarts! There were adult males, females and juveniles; it was a real treat to be able to compare these unusual birds, quite a rarity for most of us. The flicking of their rusty-red tails made them easy to pick out amongst Whitethroats and Lesser Whitethroats and more Spotted Flycatchers. A Kestrel posed for a long time on the top of a holly. The plaintive call of Bullfinch was also heard. On walking round the bushes to the lower part of the Ring, where it was even warmer, many butterflies were seen; Wall Brown, Meadow Brown and Small

Heath, then in a very small circle a Common Blue, Adonis, Chalkhill and a Small Copper. It was a great opportunity to compare the different blue species.

In the Rifle Butts area, both Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers were added to the list as were Woodpigeon, Robin and Blackbird. Away to the right, down below in the valley, birds were seen on posts, fence wires and in the bushes: Whinchat, Redstart and Whitethroat joined by a party of Goldfinches. A Chiffchaff sang quite clearly above us in the Rifle Butts area, both Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers were added to the list as were Woodpigeon, Robin and Blackbird. Away to the right, down below in the valley, birds were seen on posts, fence wires and in the bushes: Whinchat, Redstart and Whitethroat joined by a party of Goldfinches. A Chiffchaff sang quite clearly above us whilst two Peacock butterflies and a male Brimstone nectared on a Buddleia bush. Three Spotted Flycatchers flitted back and forth from a Hawthorn and another Lesser Whitethroat was recorded. Migrants seemed to be everywhere. Also noted were Rook, Crow, Jackdaw and several Magpies. Returning to the top of the Ring, a Wheatear was perched on the top of a Gorse bush while a Meadow Pipit fed just below it. The end of an excellent outing, everyone was very pleased to have seen so many migrants in such good weather conditions. The final tally was 33 bird and 11 butterfly species.

Adur Valley Walk – Saturday 4th September

On a perfect autumn day, Chris Wright met 12 members in the lay-by just north-west of the old cement works. We crossed to the west side of the river and walked south. The autumnal song of a Robin was heard followed by the

calls of Green Woodpecker, Jay and Magpie. Common Sandpipers and Pied Wagtails were seen on the muddy banks of the river. With the aid of a telescope good views were had of a Peregrine Falcon on the ladder of the cement works chimney. Further on, near a herd of cattle the group enjoyed watching two Yellow Wagtails. Black-headed Gulls and Rooks. Crows and Jackdaws were watched and compared.

On turning back two Little Egrets flew past, with another further down river on the water's-edge. A Great spotted Woodpecker, Collared Doves and Blue Tits were seen. One female House Sparrow was in a noisy group of mostly juvenile Starlings and a Common Buzzard flew overhead. Near the South Downs Way footbridge the group was surrounded by Swallows and one each of House and Sand Martins, comparisons were made as they swooped low over the river. We then moved back to cross the footbridge and walked a little way down the east bank of the river. Here we saw the juvenile Starlings again and many more House Sparrows and quite a number of Goldfinches in the wild area of Elder, Hawthorn, Bramble, Teasels and Thistles by the stables, masses of food for them all. Leaving the riverbank we crossed the road to walk into Anchor Bottom through Dacre Gardens. Immediately inside the gate a Kestrel was hovering, two more were seen later. Final additions to the bird list were a Wheatear, a Chiffchaff and the calls of Meadow Pipits were heard, 32 species in all,

Many butterflies were to be seen in Anchor Bottom; Small Heaths, Meadow Browns and the spectacular male and female Adonis. Luckily a Brown Argus was found and could be compared with the similar female Adonis. Also seen were Chalkhill and Common Blue, a few Small Whites and a

beautiful Small Copper.

Finally another speciality in Anchor Bottom are the Orchids and at this time of the year Autumn Lady's Tresses are found although they are difficult to see as the whole plant is only six inches high.

North Wall and East side of Pagham Harbour - Sunday 19th September

Bernie Forbes & Dave Smith met 11 members in Church Lane, Pagham. The wind a strong westerly managed to keep the temperatures down a little and those wearing shorts felt it was a little fresh! Due, perhaps, to the previous clear night many of the lingering migrants had moved on south and the hedgerows held few birds. Out in the harbour, many Wigeon and Pintail were feeding although still in their dull eclipse plumage. Eight Golden Plover stood out roosting with Grey Plover and other common waders and at least two Yellow-legged Herring Gulls were seen, standing apart from the other large gulls. In the fields good numbers of Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew were busy feeding and amongst them a Bar-tailed Godwit for comparison. Sitting on a fence post a Common Buzzard was actively ripping apart its breakfast!

Sand Martins, Meadow Pipits and a Grey Wagtail were moving west and we heard a couple of Yellow Wagtails. Walking inland we took the loop path finding Great-spotted Woodpecker and Greenfinch whilst overhead a few Med Gulls drifted high east. Scanning the fields near the Halseys farm we picked up a raptor in the sky being harassed by crows and quickly identified it as a juvenile Honey Buzzard as it lazily flew north west, out of view, a very fortunate encounter!

On the return journey along the wall we heard calling Whimbrel and two calling Spotted Redshank drop down onto the mudflats nearby. After lunch we walked down the east side of the harbour and saw several Knot with the usual waders. A confiding Wheatear was feeding actively along the tide line. In one of the channels a Whimbrel flew close by and a Mediterranean Gull was loafing. At Pagham Lagoon we watched a superb Kingfisher perched on a fence post and offshore a lone Sandwich Tern flew west. On the return journey we found Greenshank and had stunning close views of the two Spotted Redshank.

Thorney Island – Saturday 9th October

Just four members joined Clive Hope for the outing to Thorney Island. Rather grey and cool conditions greeted them for the first half of the morning but it gradually brightened and the sun came out at lunch-time. Sixty species were logged, the highlight undoubtedly being the flock of 17 Bearded Tits that three times flew high over our heads before returning to the reeds. Three or four Cetti's Warblers were heard and two seen flying off. Other nice birds were a flock of Golden Plover circling over the Deeps, about 20 Greenshank roosting and several seen at close range in Emsworth Channel, singles of Common and Sandwich Tern, Whinchat and Wheatear, three Stonechats plus the commoner expected waders, of which large numbers of Curlew flying into roost on the Deeps dominated. A Water Rail was heard squealing. Wigeon (100s) and Brent Geese (just 8) added to the list. No sign of the Ospreys but a magnificent Peregrine flew low over two early starters' heads and close views of Buzzard,

Sparrowhawk and two Kestrels completed the raptor sightings.

Impromptu Ring Ouzel Walk at Cissbury Ring - Monday 18th October

At 10:00hrs 23 members gathered in the car park before climbing the gentle eastern slope of the hill. We picked out two ringtail Hen Harriers hunting over the downland stubble away to the north. Although a long way off the white rumps were very visible as they quartered the game strips and the entire group managed good views. We spent the morning birding around the ring and its environs finding few migrants; only three Chiffchaff and no Blackcap. The occasional Siskin was heard as they moved overhead. Just outside the ring on the south side we heard two Ring Ouzel chattering in thick cover and managed to glimpse both birds as they briefly fed on berries in the bushes. We did try to gain better views although they both melted away, out of sight into thick cover! We drew a blank at the other regular sites for ouzels on or around the ring!

Returning back to the car park a ringtail Hen Harrier was seen flying east and at the same time a Merlin dashed by, low over the stubble, unfortunately I think only the leader got on to this bird! Most of the group dispersed at lunch time leaving only four to take a downland stroll in the afternoon. We took a circular route out to No Man's Land via Stump Bottom. A Red Kite was observed as it hunted over a hillside. In the afternoon sunshine a ringtail Hen Harrier came very close overhead, although views were not good as we were looking into the sun. We sat at the top of the of the hill overlooking No Mans Land having further cracking views of hunting Hen Harriers, one of them slightly smaller than the

other two we had seen earlier, the thinking being we had seen three birds today. One of the harriers put up a covey of four grey Partridge, when we arrived back at the car park we could still see one of the ringtails hunting away in the distance over the game crop making a lovely end to another good day's birding.

Fishbourne Creek- Sunday 21st November

Eleven members gathered in the car park at Apuldram Church for a walk to Fishbourne Creek led by Bernie Forbes and Dave Smith. We spent the entire morning birding leisurely along the banks of the creek although there was a huge high tide we found plenty of birds to keep us all occupied although most of the waders were roosting on the west bank in thick cover! A superb Whimbrel was feeding alongside a Curlew which made for a brilliant comparison and nearby a Kingfisher sat up on a derelict boat. Out in the channel we counted a dozen Red-breasted Merganser and nine Goldeneye put on a good show. There were plenty of Brent Geese and Wigeon on the open water plus a couple of Gadwall and two Little Grebe. A Peregrine dashed through putting up the waders and a couple of Common Buzzards were thermalling around. In the sewage works we could hear a chattering Cetti's Warbler and some of us managed to glimpse it as it skulked in thick cover. A Chiffchaff was briefly heard. In the hedgerows 20+Yellowhammer, with a few Reed Bunting were seen. Along the edge of the salt marsh at least 10 Rock Pipits were feeding and another Kingfisher dashed by. In the reed bed by the river Lavant we had poor views of a Water Rail and a late Swallow was hawking insects over the river. A Spotted Redshank was picked out in flight in a flock of mixed waders unfortunately it dropped into cover on the opposite bank.

Returning to the car park for lunch eight Redwing flew over calling and we also had a pair of Peregrine calling agitatedly as they flew high to the east.

In the afternoon we drove up to Hytlers Lane near Chilgrove and had four Red Kites together with at least another three further north. Around Staple Ash Farm the Little Owl played hide and seek but eventually showed well to all.

Further up in the woods we found a pair of Firecrest, four Marsh Tit and a calling Nuthatch. We did see several large flocks of finches going to roost although all of them really too far off for positive identification although one of them was a probable Hawfinch. Nine Redwings sat up in an ash tree allowing us good scope views.

Noranne Biddulph

Committee Changes

Sue Miles has been appointed to the role of Honorary Secretary. Her details are:-

24 Chancellors Park, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 8EZ
Tel: 01273 845988 email daisue@btinternet.com

Shena's details remain the same with the exception of:-
email sdosmembership@tiscali.co.uk

See back page for all current contact details.

2011 SDOS Subscription Rates

I am pleased to remind members that SDOS subscriptions remain unchanged for 2011. Subscriptions are for a calendar year and are due on 1st January. If you have not yet paid then please do so as soon as possible as this will help to save time and postage on issuing reminders.

Ordinary: £12

Family (at same address): £18

Junior: £5

Life Membership rates are available on application.

Subscriptions will be gratefully received at any indoor meeting or sent to me at: 41 St. Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, BN14 7JJ.

Alternatively for future years you may wish to set up a Standing Order. Forms are available from myself in paper or electronic format.

John Maskell.

Hon. Treasurer
sdostreasurer@tiscali.co.uk

Russell recently challenged me to write a piece about some aspect of bird ringing not covered in our session reports or in the society's annual report - "give me the stories behind the numbers", he demanded in that Woodward & Bernstein way he has. So here is the first of what may or may not become a regular ringing column in the SDOS newsletter:

USQUEQUAQUE PUGNA

I recently re-watched that great 1970s wildlife documentary: Monty Python and The Holy Grail. No serious ornithologist will fail to recall the film's ground-breaking examination of the migratory habits of horse hoof sound effect coconut-bearing African Swallows:

"But then of course a-- African swallows are non-migratory."

"Oh, yeah..."

"So they couldn't bring a coconut back anyway..."

"Wait a minute! Supposing two swallows carried it together?"

"No, they'd have to have it on a line."

"Well, simple! They'd just use a strand of creeper!"

"What, held under the dorsal guiding feathers?"

This is also the movie which brought us that prototype of the post-modern anti-hero: Sir Robin the-not-quite-so-brave-as-Sir-Lancelot "who had nearly fought the Dragon of Angnor, who had nearly stood up to the vicious Chicken of Bristol". Sir Robin strides through the film with a massive chicken painted on his shield - which reminded me of an excellent after dinner party conversational game, along the lines of the oldy but goody about describing your favourite animal (how you see yourself), your favourite colour (how others see you) and your favourite body of water (your sex life)

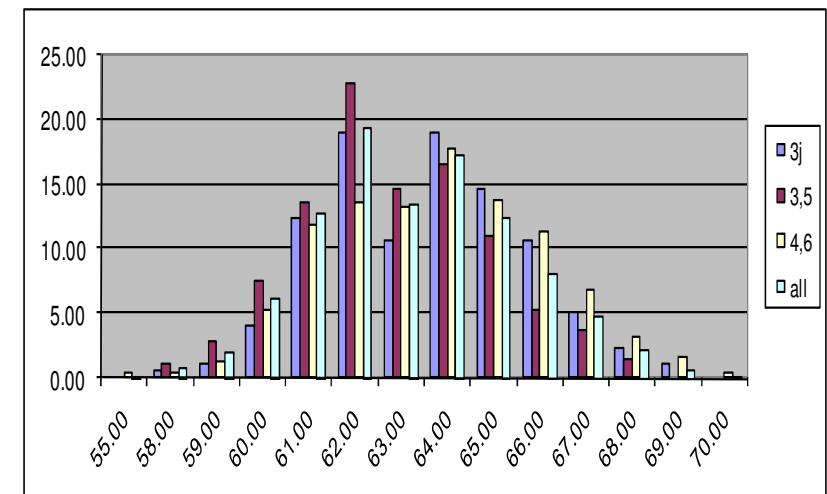
The birdwatcher's version of this is much more concise but no less revealing: participants are simply asked to say which bird they'd paint on their shield if they had to go into battle.

Some, often rather boring adolescent types, will chose obvious species such as eagles. Listers and Twitchers will sometimes go for rarities they've yet to tick - which, I suppose, is a form of sympathetic magic, akin to our ancestors scratching images of the big juicy dinosaurs they'd like to catch and eat next morning on the walls of their caves. I also encountered one individual who chose a Robin for his emblem - when asked for reasons he explained how he liked the fact that a Robin would not only see off any male competitor for its territory, but (outside the breeding season of course) would also attack any female which strayed onto its patch. Hmm. I seem to remember that this chap was very definitely sans wife, girlfriend or any other variety of mate-for-life.

The choice is easy for me. I have always admired the way a Blue Tit will keep on pecking fiercely at you - in the mist net, in the bird bag, in the hand - will never give in despite overwhelming odds (your 100kg vs. its 10 grams). I'd happily go into battle with a Blue Tit *rampant* on my shield and the motto USQUEQUAQUE PUGNA (which roughly translates as 'always stroppy') painted beneath it. Which brings me to the ringing bit of this column. Since we started ringing at Ladywells in March 2007 we've caught a total of 1250 Blue Tits - ringed 587 individual members of the species. This is a significant proportion of our overall total of 5163 birds, of which we have ringed 3038 individuals (i.e. the others were retraps). This sometimes leads the less well informed to question why it is worthwhile putting so much effort into ringing so many examples of what is, after all, a very common species (3.3 million territories in the UK).

The answer is that it's all to do with data - the more of it the better, because the larger your sample, the more likely it is to be an accurate representation of reality. So our 1250 Blue Tit records are there in the British Trust for Ornithology's database along with all the other Blue Tit records from all the other ringing groups across the UK. And it is this database that scientists, conservationists, ecologists and various other kinds of 'ists' will access when they wish to study questions of survival, population distribution, breeding success and so on.

And even our own small subset of this Blue Tit data is now large enough for some forms of analysis to be statistically valid. Take wing length for example - let us suppose you've woken up one morning with your enquiring mind at gas mark 6 and you're just itching to know whether Blue Tit wings get longer as they grow older. Adult human arms are much bigger than baby human arms - and so with Blue Tits, you might hypothesize. But no, here's a picture:





The columns are different aged Blue Tits (3Js are recently fledged, 3s and 5s are first year unmoulted birds, 4s and 6s are adults). The bottom axis is wing length in millimetres. The side axis is the percentage of each age group with whichever wing length. The conclusion from the graph must be that there is very little difference in juvenile vs. adult wing lengths, a conclusion which is borne

out by the fact that the average 3J wing length is 63.55mm, 3/5s are 62.87mm (perhaps the slight reduction is due to the lower quality juvenile feathers starting to wear away?), 4/6s are 63.22mm.

The other interesting thing about the graph is that it is not a typical bell curve - readers may wish to speculate why there are peaks at both 62 and 64mm.

John Crix
December 2010

Editor's Comment

For those unfamiliar with the names, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein were the Washington Post reporters responsible for the exposure of corruption within the Nixon administration in 1972 leading to his resignation 2 years later.

Ferring Rife Autumn and Winter 2010

As you probably know Ferring lies at the western edge of the SDOS recording area. The village is bounded to the west by Ferring Rife, a small river which descends from the Downs. Our location looking out across the Rife is perfect and with the addition of birding neighbours we have a little network of watchers who coined the phrase "Ferring Bird Observatory" for our house!

In September we had a trickle of migrants just after breeding Whitethroats and Reed Warblers had left. There were small numbers of Wheatear, Sedge Warbler, Whinchat, Willow Warbler and just one Yellow Wagtail. Blackcaps continued to appear in the garden throughout autumn and winter with a male and female on Dec. 21st. Similarly one or two Chiffchaff regularly turn up in and around the garden and are often in Pauline and Martin Ford's nature reserve which is just a few metres from us.

In mid September Swallows were moving south, then east along the coast with at least 400 some days with perhaps 50 House Martins. This continued into early October. The last Swallows were reported by the Fords on Nov. 14th.

The Stonechats returned in late September with a pair often seen near the footbridge. Later they were joined by an immature and have stayed around until now (late December). We had two rarities during autumn, a Coal Tit appeared twice in the garden and a Tawny Owl was heard calling from the Rife in mid September.

October brought the first winter thrushes when a flock of 20

Fieldfare flew east over the house. Our first Redwing was a flock of five on Nov. 10th. There were good numbers of Goldfinch with at least 300 on the 9th. Meadow Pipits and Skylark were regular in groups of around 25 and parties of Pied Wagtail with a maximum of 13.

The Little Egrets, surely the most impressive positive change to the birds of Ferring Rife since the 1980's when we previously lived here, have been feeding in the river and roosting in the copse. Monthly totals were as follows:- September. 9, October. 9, November 8 and December. 8.

Goldcrests have been uncommon since the hard weather early in the year. However, there were four in the Egret copse and they have been seen in the garden, most recently on Dec. 21st. However, Long-tailed Tits another species often hit by bad weather were doing well with a maximum of 17 in the garden in mid October. Unfortunately they may be affected by the recent severe weather. The most we have seen in December is six.

Reed Bunting seemed to disappear after the breeding season but we have seen a few during autumn and had a superb male in the garden in mid December.

Raptors have been good. Sparrowhawk and Kestrel are around every day. We watched the former take a Snipe in the snow. It dropped down to the river bank and was mobbed by a Crow. The hawk flew off and the Snipe flew off too. A lucky bird we thought although we found a dead one in the river two days later! In mid December a Kestrel took a bird from the feeder in the garden. We see Buzzards regularly including one just west of the Rife which was being mobbed by 17 Magpies! Peregrines have been reported but we have not seen one since the summer.

Thanks to the glass roof in the conservatory and the network of local watchers we had a good autumn for Hobbies. It was particularly nice when we saw one overhead and phoned both the Fords and Clive who all managed to see it before it went off south. Eventually we had four sightings during autumn.

In November we had small parties of Siskin, six in the Ford's area and eight in the southern overflow lagoon on the 21st.

During the exceptionally hard weather from late November into December when snow covered the ground we had a very exciting period of birds. The Rife was the only unfrozen water and attracted more than 20 Snipe. At least four, possibly six, Jack Snipe. Several Lapwing and single Golden Plover, Redshank, Woodcock and Dunlin. There were up to six Little Grebe, four Water Rail and three Green Sandpiper.

Up to nine Teal have become regular on the river with at least one Wigeon.

After the snow melted the rails stayed around often giving close and confiding views. One individual became much photographed and filmed as it regularly appeared just north of the road bridge into Ferring Country Centre. A Kingfisher has taken up a territory along the river and is often seen near the footbridge. Moorhens have been common with at least 26 during the hard weather.

We have not done much birding on the coast but have seen parties of Sanderling, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Oystercatcher, Turnstone, Ringed Plover and Redshank. More unusual were the seven Black-tailed Godwit seen by the Fords on Ferring beach on Dec. 1st.

During mid December unusually high numbers of Cormorant have been seen moving south-east. On the 21st a neighbour Peter Dale saw 100 plus.

My thanks to Tricia, Pauline, Martin, Clive and Peter for their records.

Mike Hall
December 2010

The John Stafford Awards 2010

You may recall that for the 2010 JS Awards your Council attempted to widen the possibilities for members to participate. However, this brought no responses.

It seems that we are not using this money in the positive way in which it should be used. As a result I have been thinking what JS would have wanted us to do with the money. He paid for the 50th Anniversary Book to be published and allowed the Golden Jubilee account to flourish. This has been added to at various times for example from the sales of goods given to me by the family of Cliff Walder, £154 was raised from the latest sale.

A little history for those of you who might not know the background to all this.

From 1953 to March 2007 the SDOS leased a copse from the Brighton Water Board. This area, known as 'The Sanctuary' was below Mill Hill, Shoreham, near the flyover. John Stafford organised the construction of the Heligoland trap but very shortly afterwards he was asked by the BTO, to use the new mist nets (made from human hair!), with the bird ringing pro-

gramme he had started in Shoreham, at that time the only ringing station in Sussex. Many ringers have emerged from SDOS from this early beginning. (See the excellent reports in the 'Fifty Years of Birdwatching' SDOS book).

More than fifty years later technology has moved forward, computers, databases and the microchip have changed our world. The BTO has recently published results of fitting tracking devices to Nightingales which has revealed exactly the extraordinary journey undertaken to and from their wintering grounds. We did not know the route they took or how quickly they turned around to come back here. (One device was recovered from a Nightingale fifty metres from where it was originally attached in 2009)! The latest Swiss made tracking devices weigh only half a gram.

After reading about this, then hearing more on Saving Species on Radio 4 and again on Autumnwatch, I decided to contact the BTO to ask what they were planning for the future.

It seems that they are keen to do the same kind of system with Nightjars as they have been successful in retrieving data from tagged Nightjars breeding in Sussex. Two birds were tracked to the tropical zone of Africa (Congo) in an area where the species had not been predicted to winter. Further data are now required from other breeding populations in Europe to build a more complete and representative picture of the species' movements and wintering destinations.

There is no doubt that Nightjars were of particular interest to John S. He would even camp out overnight to discover more about these elusive birds. I have a few glass, hand-coloured, slides recording what he found. I am sure he would be very pleased to think that the money he left us should be used to find out more about Nightjars, or Nightingales, both

birds we are fortunate to see fairly easily in Sussex. He was never keen to give money without a specific purpose in mind. The BTO does not hold huge amounts of money from year to year and is dependent on donations.

My proposal was that we donate the money in the Jubilee account to the BTO project for Nightjars in the name of John Stafford and SDOS. Patricia Stafford is certain he would have approved this idea. It would also mean that we would be informed at first hand with resulting data and this would be of considerable interest and reflect well on the SDOS. Bernie told me this was a 'brilliant idea' and following online discussion with Council members, the proposal was agreed at a Council Meeting and a cheque for £1650 has been sent to the BTO which will be used for the specific purpose outlined above.



European Nightjar, sadly not in Sussex! May 2010 by Russ Tofts

We have also reserved some money to pay for two seats to be erected on Beeding Hill in Anchor Bottom and an adjoining field, with the permission of the farmer Frank Grantham, whom we thank for his encouragement and cooperation. Bernie and Dorian have generously offered to fulfil this project. Exciting times ahead!

Brianne Reeve
December 2010

GARDEN BIRD SURVEY SNIPPETS

July/September 2010

As to be expected, there was an increase in the numbers of tits and finches seen in the gardens during this period. Stanley Allen had a maximum of 15 Chaffinches and 16 Greenfinches in late July/early August and Noranne Biddulph noted a brood of Great Tits in mid-July, the youngsters begging for food. John & Shena Maskell counted 18 Long-tailed Tits in the first week of August, and 56 House Sparrows at the end of the month while Geoff Nicholls was visited by more than 30 Starlings at the beginning of July. David & Rae Titcomb were entertained by watching the development of a Collared Dove in an untidy nest in their apple tree – the chick finally fledged on 8th September.

John Ford has been keeping a track of what type of food attracts which species, niger seed usually bringing in Goldfinches and black sunflower seeds attracting Greenfinches and Chaffinches, which do not visit otherwise. He has more luck than I do with peanuts as the tits come to his feeders – I used to put out peanuts, but they just went mouldy, so I have kept to sunflower hearts, which are taken by Blue, Great and

Tits, House Sparrows, Robins, Chaffinches and Greenfinches, while Dunnocks and Pied Wagtails hop about underneath collecting the dropped seeds.

Summer visitors which were seen in gardens during this period were Willow Warbler, noted by five observers, Common Whitethroat seen by Martin Ford in early August, and two Lesser Whitethroats and a Spotted Flycatcher both seen on passage by Laurie Keen at the beginning of September. In fact in what Laurie described as a "frantic ten minutes" at the bird bath on 7th September, as well as the two species mentioned above and his regular Blue Tits, House Sparrows, Dunnock, Robin and Blackbird, he recorded one female Blackcap, a Chiffchaff, two Willow Warblers, an immature Goldcrest, and two male Blackcaps.

Janet & Gordon Paterson heard a Tawny Owl in their High Salvington garden in September, and were regularly visited by a Nuthatch from the end of August. Audrey Wisdom had an unusual looking pipit in her garden on 9th July, very wagtail-like in appearance.

Only three gardens recorded Sparrowhawk during this period, though on a form returned early for the October/December quarter, Noranne reported two sightings in November.

Thanks again to everyone for supporting the SDOS Garden Birdwatch during 2010, and I wish you interesting sightings during 2011.

Val Bentley
December 2010

Shoreham District Ornithological Society

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Next Newsletter

The next newsletter, the Spring issue, will appear in May. Copy deadline for this will be 30th April. If you would like to contribute anything then please contact me at:-

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Russ Tofts
Newsletter Editor

The following photos are included for online recipients only. Please contact me if you would like to submit your photos in future issues.



Some Recent birds

*Jack Snipe and
Common Snipe*
<<

Waxwing >>



Black Redstart >>



<< *Snow Bunting*



Some Sussex birds 2010

Red-footed Falcon >>



<< *Shore Lark*



Wryneck >>



<< *Short-eared Owl*

