



**S HOREHAM
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AUTUMN 2011 NEWSLETTER

Autumn and Winter Outings 2011

Oct 8th (Sat) Climping Beach.

Meet 09:00 in the Climping car park (a.m. only).
OS Sheet 197. Ref. TQ005008—Dist. 3K (1).
Leader: Clive Hope 01903 700498.

Nov 27th (Sun) Fishbourne Creek & West Dean.

Meet 09:00 in the car park by Apuldram Church.
O.S. sheet 197. Ref. SU842032—Dist 4K(1).
Leader: Bernie Forbes and Dave Smith 01903 753876.

Dec 30th (Fri) Seasonal Gathering.

Meet 09:30 in Fort Haven car park (a.m. only).
O.S. sheet 198. Ref. TQ233046—Dist 2K (1).
Leaders: SDOS Committee Members including Bernie Forbes
01903 753876.

Indoor Meetings

October 11th Conservation Work at Arundel Wetland Trust

Paul Stevens

November 8th A Bird in The Hand

Sam Bayley

December 13th Members' Evening and Christmas Social

Committee and Members

Outings Reports by Russ Tofts

Impromptu Walk at Anchor Bottom 2

Friday 6th May

Anchor Bottom was in quite a different mood from the visit two days previously. There was not a lot of birdsong to be heard walking through the valley: no Lesser Whitethroats, Linnets or Buzzard but the Adonis butterflies, almost all males, were out in force as well as a few Common Blues and three Dinky Skippers. There were more Green Hairstreaks sunning themselves in the sheltered areas. There were also a few flower spikes of Meadow Clary.

At the edge of the quarry the group found that the young Ravens had fledged but there was a very dead looking bird on the grass above the nest which Chris had found earlier in the day. Later he collected it and asked Val Bentley to give her opinion as a ringer. She confirmed it was a young bird as the primary feathers were still in pin at the base. Not many people have the chance to examine one of these huge birds so closely.

Impromptu Walk at Anchor Bottom 3

Monday 9th May

It was another good morning viewing the wildlife in Anchor Bottom. This time two Kestrels put in an appearance but the Willow Warbler was not on its pylon. There were many more butterflies around. Common and Adonis Blues of both sexes were in large numbers looking pristine having recently emerged from anthills. After mating they will lay their eggs on Horseshoe Vetch and Bird's foot Trefoil, the food plants for their caterpillars. The nettle patches produced the caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshell and a Red Admiral egg-laying. There were more Green Hairstreaks, two Wall Brown and a Small Heath.

Warnham Nature Reserve

Saturday 18th June

Ten SDOS members met in the Warnham Local Nature Reserve for the outing to this new venue and were met by the new warden, Jake Everitt,

as he was peering into the small pond near the car park. He pointed out the newts and warned us to look out for the tiny toadlets which had recently emerged from the water; sadly we didn't see any. There were damselflies and a couple of the exuviae from hatched dragonflies still attached to some reeds.

Jake was left to attend to the TB testing of the reserve's cattle whilst the group went into the small hide immediately inside the entrance to look out over the large lake. Plenty of activity here with Common Terns on two protected floating rafts defending their young, which were probably about three weeks old, from the large number of Black-headed and Herring Gulls. Only a few yards from the hide was a Great-crested Grebe nest with two eggs in it. The female came in to re-organise a few sticks before settling down to brood her offspring, whilst at least three adult grebes were out on the lake collecting food. Coot were busy feeding young birds of various ages and there was a large family of Mallard ducklings resting at the water's edge where two Mute Swans suddenly appeared out of the reeds. One Cormorant and a pair of Tufted Duck were also close-by.

The group moved out to the meadow which runs along the side of the lake but were diverted by good views of a male Bullfinch in the trees to their left. In the meadow the remains of a small bird which a Magpie had left behind were found. The tuneless call of a Reed Bunting was heard but even ten pairs of eyes could not see it. The pond on the far side of the meadow had some tall reeds offering plenty of nesting material, yellow Spearworts and blue Forget-me-nots. Some discussion ensued regarding the quantity of Hemlock Water Dropwort which seems to be very widespread in Sussex and which is very poisonous.

The feeders in front of the next hide, at the beginning of the woodland walk, attracted a lot of tits and Chaffinches with young, two Jays and a single Moorhen. Two Great spotted Woodpeckers were seen as the group left the hide whilst a delightful family of Nuthatches fed in the tree above. Wrens were singing powerfully along this stretch and there were some Broad-leaved Helleborines coming into flower and a female Blackcap was feeding young. There was an impressive stand of Giant Butterburs on the edge of the woodland, (the male flowerheads had long since disappeared but the leaves were huge and waist-high). It was here, on the leaves, that Chris Wright showed a small moth with incredibly long antennae, aptly named the Woodland Longhorn. The whirring song of

a Goldcrest was heard and a Garden Warbler too as the group made its way up an attractive ride with Foxgloves, Marsh Thistles, Stitchwort, Figwort and Honeysuckle on either side; surely White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary would be seen here a little later in the year. At the top a Blackberry bush was found with quite a number of Large Skippers, Meadow Browns and a Red Admiral nectaring on the flowers. Heavy rain suddenly poured down; however it didn't last long and the walk continued through more woodland adding only Robins and a Blackbird to the list. The group sat for a while listening to the song of a Blackcap and then found various insects of interest on a patch of Nettles. There were a lot of ladybirds of various sizes and colours, many of which were mating. One had not yet developed its spots and was just a pure red; there were no Harlequins. A strange looking weevil-type creature was found, the male bright blue and the female a duller colour; several of those were mating too. They were later identified by Noranne as Green Nettle Weevils.

On the homeward track, running beside the very muddied stream, pleasing views of Treecreepers were had as well as a party of Long-tailed Tits and a male Blackcap. The final hide looked out across the lake at the heronry and although several nests were spotted high in the pines, only one juvenile bird was seen. Coots fed their young just below the hide whilst back in the meadow Reed Warblers were heard by the pond along with the elusive Reed Bunting again. One each of Swift, Swallow and House Martin were seen but hirundines were in short supply. Thirty-three bird species were recorded after a very relaxing and pleasant morning at this lovely, well-cared for reserve.

Impromptu Pulborough Brooks RSPB—Nightjars Friday 1st July

For the first time the chance to see/ hear Nightjars, thirteen members met in the car park on a still, warm evening with the sun still shining. As we waited for the group to get ready we looked at photos of the latest update on the Little Egrets at Coombes showing 14 juvenile birds on the edge of a ploughed field. Then we walked down the main path into the reserve with only a Song Thrush trying to out-sing some people taking part in an extremely noisy game in the play area! Just before the pond we were greeted by a very close, though unseen, singing Lesser White

throat. It gave a very fine performance, a little pre-amble followed by the staccato hard notes, a pause of about nine seconds and then it was repeated. We stood and listened to this bird which, unusually, had nothing else to rival it so late in the evening.

We did spend a few minutes in West Mead hide but there was very little to see except the cattle with their attractive young calves and a few deer in the distance. Once again during our walk we had lively discussion about, for example, the quantity of Hemlock Water-dropwort in the ditch and that it is not widely known how poisonous it is and how many Quail had been heard on Steepdown and the description of their delightful call: wet-my-lips, wet-my-lips!

So chatting easily together we went through the car park and out to the clump and tumuli area and almost immediately we could hear a Nightjar churring and very soon, probably three in different directions. Then one passed us in a flash, had been heard on missed by most of the party and another was seen all too briefly. With hands cupped round our ears it was astonishing how this extraordinary bird song was magnified. After a while when there seemed to be no activity we moved to face the fading light in the sky in the hope of seeing a bird in flight - again there was a brief, frustrating sighting. Meanwhile Russ had gone off on his own and came back to say he had seen two males at close quarters, calling and wing-clapping and perched. It was getting very dark but eight members decided to follow where he had been and were rewarded with good sightings and churring and even found some Glow worms on the way back through the overflow car park.

It seemed everyone had enjoyed this outing even though the Nightjars were so elusive. Two people pointed out to me that what we talk about and learn from each other always makes our walks more interesting regardless of the number of birds we see. Thanks to all who came and made it such a pleasant relaxed occasion.

Cocking Down Sunday 10th July

Fourteen members of the Sussex and Shoreham Ornithological Societies assembled in the car park near Cocking village for the walk up Cocking Down and into West Dean Woods. A real mix of weather with plenty of

sunshine and a couple of light showers although this was unable to dampen our spirits. Through the farmyard complex plenty of House Sparrows were encountered and, in the surrounding fields, hundreds of Jackdaws and Rooks with many juveniles. Over the woodland a few Common Buzzards were seen and in the hedgerows small parties of tits with Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Common Whitethroat could be seen feeding and Skylarks were still singing. Nearing the top of the hill Crossbills were heard chipping and a small party was seen distantly over the treetops. Yellowhammers were noted along the hedgerow with one or two still calling.

Taking a break overlooking the forest, a purring Turtle Dove could be heard albeit a long way off. Entering the woods the soft piping of an unseen Bullfinch was heard. Walking the forest rides many flocks of Crossbill were heard moving around and good views were obtained of a couple of dull streaky juveniles sat up in the top of pines. Nuthatch, Tree-creeper and Siskin were heard calling, all being very elusive.

A second Turtle Dove was heard purring in a different part of the woodland from a secret singing post which we were unable to find. Two Peregrine causing panics amongst the corvids and pigeons and, right by the main road, a Red Kite completed the day's bird list. Also of note plenty of Marbled Whites, Silver Washed Fritillaries and Ringlets plus sightings of Fallow Deer and Hare.

Chantry Hill Saturday 20th August

Eleven members and a guest assembled at Chantry Hill car-park for a leisurely stroll along the South Downs Way and round in a loop past the scarp edge of the Downs. The weather remained mostly cloudy with a fresh southerly breeze and occasional bouts of warm sun.

Few small migrants were encountered but a good showing of Yellowhammers, Meadow Pipits, Linnets, a few Whitethroats, a couple of Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs plus plenty of Swallows, a House Martin and two Swifts were seen. Both Red-legged and Grey Partridges were seen but sadly no chats of any description were found.

However, the morning belonged to the raptors which put on a good

show for the group. Six species were logged - namely Kestrel (6-8), Hobby - a nice flypast and Buzzards (as expected but just three). The real stars were Red Kite (extended views of two in the air and on the ground), an immature female Marsh Harrier and finally a superb male Hen Harrier which passed close by heading west over the fields just prior to the walk's conclusion. This last species was totally unexpected being about six weeks early! In the same field as the Kites, a charming family of three young Hares chasing each other and two adults were seen.

Additionally, a few butterflies showed when the sun came out later on including a very late Marbled White and three sp of Blues (which only Brianne saw). The wild flowers were quite stunning and worth the walk on their own.

Pulborough RSPB Reserve Friday 25th August

Seventeen members of the SDOS gathered in the RSPB car park for an evening wader session. After a dreadfully wet morning the late afternoon and evening was blessed with plenty of bright sunshine and excellent light for viewing the waders.

We spent a very pleasant hour or two scanning the feeding birds on the North Brooks from the Hanger viewpoint finding plenty to keep all of us really busy and honing our ID skills. The highlight of the evening I guess was the Temminck's Stint creeping around feeding on the marsh and nearby a juvenile Little Stint although really only visible in the scopes. In addition a single Wood Sandpiper and plenty of Green Sandpipers with Ruff and Black-tailed Godwits. Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers plus a Common Sandpiper were all on show as the supporting cast.

Just before dusk descended a ghostly Barn Owl flew below the look-out ending a brilliant evening's birding.

Adur Valley River Walk Saturday September 3rd

Twenty-five members gathered for this outing in fine and dry conditions,

Two distant Peregrines on a pylon in Anchor Bottom were viewed before the group made their way over the footbridge and headed down the west side of the river. With the tide fairly low the Common Sandpipers were well spread out but four or five birds were seen, and their distinctive call heard, at different times during the morning. All three hirundines swooped over the river, with Swallows the most numerous. A Chiffchaff was singing from the Cement Works and Crows and Jackdaws were together in the field opposite; they were joined later by some Rooks from the nearby rookery at Coombes.

Around the grazing cattle birds could be seen feeding around their heads and feet. Some were Pied Wagtails but some Yellow were soon picked out and eventually everyone had good views of these delightful birds through the telescopes - for several people these qualified as a 'first'. The approaching cattle fortunately brought the birds near to us; there was surprise at the variety in the plumage, some very pale and a couple with really deep yellow on the breast. It was noted that the Yellow Wagtails have the shortest tail of all the wagtails. Before the bull led the herd too close to the group we moved into the next field away from the riverbank.

Some of the group were diverted by a Sparrowhawk whilst the rest were sorting out birds in the reeds and bushes; they were juveniles of Yellowhammer, Corn and Reed Bunting. Two Grey Herons were standing in the stubble field but only a single Little Egret near its nest site.

At least four Common Buzzards were either calling or soaring over the shaw at Applesham and across the river to the east. Rejoining the riverbank, a Wheatear sat up on a post and three or four Stonechats were seen; the hoped for Whinchat which had been in the area in preceding days failed to materialise.

Retracing their steps the group managed to find several birds feeding on Elder-berries; more Yellowhammers but also a Common Whitethroat and an elusive probable Lesser, whilst at least three Kestrels were in the air at the same time. Jake heard a Cetti's Warbler singing from the Passies Pond area and saw a Mistle Thrush on a wire nearby. The forward party of the group encountered a number of Long-tailed Tits before returning to the starting point. Thirty species were recorded

Pagham, Sidlesham and Church Norton Sunday 11th September

Only two members met the leaders for this walk and they started by looking out over the Sidlesham Ferry in excellent light. A single juvenile Curlew Sandpiper close in front of the Hide was joined by three Black-tailed Godwits. Further out on the Ferry were three Ruffs, some Shelduck and a few Lapwings. Around the Information Centre there were six Mistle Thrushes, numerous Goldfinches, a few Willow/Chiffs and some Long-tailed Tits.

The group moved on to Church Norton and sat on the bench overlooking the harbour where the birds included one Greenshank, the interesting leucistic Curlew (with a couple of perfectly normal ones for comparison), 37 Knot, 15 Dunlin, 40+ Grey Plovers, many Little Egrets; Ringed Plovers, Turnstones, 3 Mediterranean Gulls, 30 Sandwich Terns, Common Terns and at least two Arctic Terns. Additionally there were two Buzzards, one Kestrel and the summering Red-breasted Merganser, 20+ Pintail, 40+Wigeon and two Green Woodpeckers.

Walking to the hide and round into the churchyard two Redstarts (probably three) were found including a bright male, two Spotted Flycatchers and a Lesser Whitethroat. A male Kestrel caught a Long-tailed Fieldmouse, flew up into a tree, removed its head and swallowed the rest. Several Blackcaps protested at the Kestrel's presence. Although the forecast for the day had been dire, the weather was perfect and it was a treat to have had such close views of many interesting birds.

Impromptu Outing Cissbury Ring Friday 16th September

An impromptu walk around Cissbury Ring this morning attracted 18 members of the Shoreham and District Ornithological Society. Setting off from the small car park just north of the ring we found a few Yellow Wagtails and Meadow Pipits feeding amongst the cattle and a lone Whinchat sitting up briefly on the fence wire. Taking the gentle east path upwards we heard (just about) Siskin & Grey Partridge. A few "hweeting" Chiffchaff and scolding Blackcaps could be heard in the scrub. Along the track down to the

Rifle Butts we scoped another Whinchat and found our first Spotted Flycatcher with nearby Blackcap and Chiffchaffs busy feeding up. Over head House Martin and Swallows were moving through and a couple of Common Buzzards were up lazily flapping; an obliging Wheatear briefly posed before flying away .

Near the southern entrance to the ring we found plenty of Spotted Flycatchers in the scrub with estimates of at least 10 birds plus a delightful Lesser Whitethroat and a single Common Redstart. On the top of the ring another Common Redstart and at least 6 Wheatear and couple of Stonechats gave cracking views. On the way down our third Common Redstart flew out of a bush only to quickly melt away. Returning to the car park we all tried to gain better views of the Yellow Wagtails feeding with cattle although proving difficult in the long grass!

A very pleasant walk in warming sunshine and good company.

December Indoor Meeting 2011

This is the meeting where we ask members to entertain us. We have had a couple of offers of photos, where and when they were taken, a light-hearted quiz and we are open to a few more suggestions.

We wondered if any of you have some favourite bird behaviour, amusing or just interesting. If you are not too keen to stand up in front of everyone and hold forth you can send in a written copy which will be read out on your behalf. There must be something you have seen this year, or even longer ago, in your garden or when you were out for a walk.

Please contact either of us and we can share it on December 13th – which will be a social evening free to all members (apart from an excellent raffle at £1 a ticket)!

Brianne briannereeve@yahoo.com or 01273 452 497
Sue daisue@btinternet.com or 01273 845 988

IF 2,500 IS THE ANSWER, WHAT IS THE QUESTION?

The location of the Ladywells site on the boundary of Lancing College and Applesham farm is somewhat symbolic of our ringing team's objectives. In addition, of course, to the gathering of scientific data which is at the heart of bird ringing we are keen to develop the broader educational value of our work and we also hope that we constitute a small, but perfectly integrated, part of the local agricultural scene.

We were therefore very pleased, even excited, earlier this year to receive an invitation from Derek Cleaver, who was still managing the Lancing College farm project at the time, to run a stand at the South of England Agricultural Society's annual '**Connect with the Countryside**' event.

But then we thought about it a bit more and then the doubts and nerves set in. Because the question to the answer 2,500 - and fans of *Mock The Week* will empathise with this - is not: How many times this Barn Owling season did Barrie Watson think we'd mislaid some equipment? - or even: How many calories does each member of the ringing team consume during a ringing session? Nope, the correct question/answer is that 2,500 was the number of 9-10 year old children expected to attend the one-day '**Connect with the Countryside**' event at the South of England Show-ground this July.

With the likes of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, the Environment Agency, and even the Countryside Alliance also down to run stands it was clear that we'd need to come up with something pretty good to attract sufficient interest and, basically, to maintain our credibility. Oh yes... and also contribute to the South of England Agricultural Society's aim of providing these 2,500 children and maybe their teachers with a greater understanding of the countryside in general.

A ringing demonstration was out of the question. Anyone who has attended the South of England Show will know that the site is essentially a massive carpark with barns and toilets - hardly a hotspot for passing warblers. And even if we were to catch any birds there was the unacceptable risk of stressing them with half a hundred kids pressing in to get a better view.

Eventually we decided on a photo quiz: A3 prints of some of Janet Derri-

cott's bird portraits, plus some close-ups - of just an eye or section of wing, for instance - the objective being to match close-ups and portraits. We also put a selection of the smaller sized rings on strings and challenged the participants to read and note down the numbers correctly. Skills exercised in our quiz would thus be in the area of observation and accuracy - both fairly important when bird ringing.

We rigged a short mist net at the back of the stand and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) helped out by providing large laminated posters, a display case of all the ring sizes, and also by letting us pitch the whole thing as a BTO production. Janet and myself; my younger daughter, Jane; Denise and John Newnham; and Ann and Barrie Watson all turned up on the day to run the stand. And it was with reasonable confidence that we stood waiting at 9 o'clock on Thursday 14th July for the first waves of the hordes of the Midianites and Amalekites to appear.

Actually our encounter with the first wave was a very positive experience. A couple of dozen neatly uniformed children from a small private school: their teacher was enthusiastic, the children were polite, keen, well-behaved and seemed to enjoy doing the quiz. We seven guardians of the ringing stand exchanged nods and glances: we'd got this right, we were in for a pleasant day.

But as the morning progressed and the numbers increased we all - but particularly Denise and Janet with their experience of the best and worst of junior schools - became adept at spotting which groups of kids were going to be interested and which blankly indifferent at best, mildly vandalistic at worst. My impression was that this was all highly representative of the divides in British society, our lingering class system, the whole debate about private education... but an SDOS ringing article is probably not the place to explore this further.

Whatever my analysis of the underlying causes, it was a fact that by half time I'd become a little impatient with the representatives of the down side of the educational bell curve: the trainee scallies; the little gangs of incipient football thugs; the rather dim little girls only interested in their mobile phones. It became a case of 'no more mister nice guy' as far as I was concerned - towering over the least well socialised groups in maximum intimidation mode it became a case of: "*are you having a go at the quiz? no? then why don't you wander along and have a look at the bee stand next door?*" Just because we'd labelled ourselves geeky birdy people it

didn't mean they could nick the cuddly bird toys we were using to demonstrate how easy it is to get a bird out of a mist net, or steal all the pencils.

But there were a couple of memorable kids. One, already so into bird watching that he waltzed along the row of pictures and correctly identified every one of them without even referring to the quiz sheet, will probably end up as president of the SDOS. Whereas the other was a tough-looking shaven-headed kid I caught messing with the mist net. Not quite ready to cast him out unto the bee stand, I mildly bullied him into doing the reading the ring numbers part of the quiz. And he tried really hard - and seemed to blossom and wake up somehow when I praised him for getting all the numbers right - so much so that he was quietly working away matching the bird pictures when his teacher turned up, possibly wondering what trouble he'd got himself into this time.

That slight awakening, that quickening of interest in response to such a small amount of praise fleetingly reminded me why I once trained to be a teacher more than thirty years ago. It's probably just rose-coloured wishful thinking to hope that maybe my tough-looking kid found the beginning of an interest that morning. But maybe he did - just maybe - and maybe that's really what '**Connect with the Countryside**' is all about.

John Crix
August 2011

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter, the Winter issue, will appear in January. Copy deadline for this will be 31st December. If you would like to contribute anything then please contact me at:-

tarsigercyanurus1@btinternet.com or
01903 207993
Russ Tofts
Newsletter Editor

Bird Notes

By Michael and Wendy Ball
(posted on September 2nd)

Michael and I have made several evening forays to Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough) during the year to see the nightjars. We have been very fortunate to have had many great sightings, and witnessed some interesting behaviour patterns. Early on in the season we saw, what we concluded, was pair-bonding behaviour with many 'kuw-eek' calls when flying from a roost to a song perch accompanied by frequent wing-claps when moving to another perch. 'Churring' began at around 21.00. The flight was characteristically glides with wings raised and tail depressed and fanned. One pair in particular appeared to favour a particular area on the common and disappeared regularly into the bracken.

Towards the middle of the season this display flight became less obvious, but the birds were very accepting of our presence and often appeared curious and we had several instances when they flew around us before hunting in other areas of the common. We regularly met another individual who was equally intrigued by these enigmatic birds as us, and he experienced some incredible behaviour while we were away which made us very jealous. He witnessed two juvenile birds hovering together in front of him, just metres away. They were making forays from nearby posts and were attempting to 'churr' - one successfully, but one could only make a noise that he could only describe as 'chicken like.' One flew and hovered immediately in front of him, eventually he left them. This behaviour was repeated the following night. Two weeks ago we noted that again things had changed. 'Churring' was minimal although there were flight calls and the birds were commencing hunting at 20.00. One bird in particular had a favourite perch from which to forage. We went to Devon and after our return we thought that the birds would have left, although apparently stragglers have been known to be around in early October. The main exodus from breeding areas occurs in late August onwards. Last night we made another foray to Wiggonholt without great expectations. However I nearly fell off the tree stump I was sitting on when a silent nightjar flew in a very purposeful manner low above the cut chestnuts directly past us and then in a spiralling flight around us several times before alighting on 'the favourite perch.' and instead of the characteristic sudden disappearance of its long wings and tail, it landed across the branch with splayed tail and opened and shut its beak. It continued to observe us for some time totally silent before again flying with deep deliberate wing-beats, easy wheels,

and floating glides with wings extended. On a different note House Martins, who have been our constant companions throughout the summer, are diminishing and are flying during the evenings in more close-knit formation. We shall miss them when they finally leave.

2012 SDOS Subscription Rates

I am pleased to report that at the recent Council meeting it was decided that SDOS subscriptions will again remain unchanged for next year. Subscriptions are for a calendar year and are due on 1st January.

Ordinary: £12

Family (at same address): £18

Junior: £5

Life Membership rates are available on application.

Every year I have to send out renewal reminders to nearly a third of our members and it would greatly ease this annual problem if more members set up Standing Order arrangements with their banks, especially those who do not regularly attend indoor meetings.

Standing Order forms are available from myself in paper or electronic format. Payments will not be debited from your account until 1st February.

Subscriptions for 2012 will be gratefully received at any indoor meeting or sent to me at: 41 St. Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, BN14 7JJ.

Thank you to the majority of members who always pay their subscriptions promptly or who have already set up a standing order arrangement.

John Maskell. Hon. Treasurer
sdostreasurer@tiscali.co.uk

Up-date on the Nightjar tags from Graham Appleton at the BTO.

This summer we caught a total of 27 adult Nightjars, of which 19 were heavy enough to be fitted with geolocator tags. This leaves just one geolocator tag remaining, which we will look to use next summer.

For the next eight months the Nightjars are going to be away collecting data. Through a combination of natural mortality and changes in breeding site location, we do not expect all 19 tagged birds to return. Given the difficulties associated with catching, we might recapture 10 returning birds in 2012 and a few more in 2013.

The results from this study will help reveal the migration routes and African wintering areas used by Thetford Nightjars, complementing the work being undertaken in southern England. The few available ringing recoveries only provide indications of migration routes within Europe and as far south as north African. Greater knowledge of the actual migration routes and wintering areas used will provide two critical missing 'pieces of the jigsaw', which will greatly help our interpretation and understanding of population changes and the focus of conservation effort.

When I come down to give the talk next autumn I should be able to reveal some of the early results.

The Cuckoo stuff has been fascinating. It's a shame that we cannot use the same tags on Nightjars. Sadly, they are too small and, as you can imagine, solar-powered batteries would not work (when Nightjars are not hunting at night they're hiding). Cuckoo tags are very expensive, of course - £2500 each and £600 per year for satellite time.

SDOS Car Stickers

The Society's stylish car stickers are still available for a mere £1 (incl. postage) and can be purchased at any indoor meeting or from:

Hon. Treasurer, 41 St. Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, BN14 7JJ.