

Shoreham and District
Ornithological Society
Autumn Newsletter
2022



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Editorial

Roger Smith

There is a much interest in rewilding at present and it is possible to sign up for informative monthly newsletters from Rewilding Europe and Rewilding Britain. The European schemes are very interesting because the space is available to conceive and implement projects at a landscape scale. In the Iberian Peninsula, in Croatia, in the Carpathians and the Rhodope Mountains the retreat of human beings from marginal land has freed up large areas for the introduction of 'wild' horses, deer, European Bison and 'primitive' cattle breeds. Predators such as Wolves, Bears and Lynx can interact with these herbivores, and, to some extent, it is reasonable to claim that a functional 'wild' system has been re-created. The ungulates and associated carrion can, in turn, support vulture re-introductions.

One of the longest running projects in western Europe is at Oostvaardersplassen', a polder in the Netherlands created in 1968, and now populated by Heck cattle, Konik ponies and Red Deer. These 'wild' animals thrive and maintain an open landscape supporting geese and a couple of pairs of White-tailed Eagles, but there is no population control by predators and in harsh winters there have been animal welfare issues. Because of this culling has been implemented following public concern about starving animals.

Nearer home of course there is Knepp and Blean Woods, Kent where Kent Wildlife Trust are using European Bison, Exmoor ponies and 'Iron-age' pigs to change the vegetation structure with, hopefully, beneficial effects. It seems to me that rewilding at its best shifts nature conservation from a reserve scale to that of the landscape. Whatever the scale, however, it should provide many benefits to both people and nature.

Best wishes to you all

Roger

Aberdeen to the Arctic

Bernie Forbes

I was asked last year if I would co-lead on an expedition ship from Aberdeen to Spitsbergen in the Arctic for the company I occasionally work for: Heatherlea Scotland. Without any hesitation my answer was yes.

Our journey would take us from Aberdeen via Fair Isle, Jan Mayan Island and onto Svalbard in the high Arctic. As with any planned expedition things can and do go wrong. We were due to board our ship, the MV Hondius, in Aberdeen harbour in the afternoon of May 17th. On the morning of our departure, we woke to find the harbour cloaked in thick fog and that our ship was slowly approaching Aberdeen from the south at reduced speed due to the weather conditions. We were informed by the Harbour Master that the ship was unable to enter the port due to the very poor visibility. Many messages were passed from the ship to the Agent, the Harbour Master and the Heatherlea team, and the entire boarding was in some doubt for a time. At 4pm, however, a plan was devised to launch the ship's Zodiacs. These would enter the harbour and pick up our group and our luggage. This was the first time such a boarding has ever been tried in the UK. Around 6pm we witnessed the MV Hondius Zodiacs appearing out of the fog. It somewhat resembled the Royal Marines invading the harbour. It was a relief for all to board the Zodiacs. All 61 members of our group boarded the ship in this unique fashion. Despite the large rolling swell I believe most of us enjoyed this additional adventure on our trip.

We had many exciting experiences but Sunday, 22nd May was a particularly memorable day. Here is an extract from my diary.

The day started with the ship cruising the Greenland Sea. It was extremely cold with a wind chill and ice on the open decks. The temperature was around one degree Celsius but there was a lovely clear blue sky. Just before breakfast,



around 7am, with many of the keen birders already up on deck, an announcement from the bridge alerted us to two Ivory Gulls following the ship! Out on the stern deck we had great views of the gulls, and after a short time the gull count had increased to eight birds, a beautiful sight! In addition, several Harp Seals were noted, plus the usual Kittiwake and Fulmar, and at least three Glaucous Gulls. From the port side a cry went up "whale", and we had good views of a Bowhead Whale as it blew three times, showing its upper back and body. This all made an exciting start to our day!

With breakfast service complete most people went back to their cabins to put on extra layers, but then, from the bridge, the Expedition Guide leaders spotted a Polar Bear on the starboard side! As the call went out everyone on board attempted to remain cool as we all proceeded to the bow. Amazingly, there were two Polar Bears very close together with plenty of interaction

between them. The ship slowly pushed forward into the ice pack with both bears at ease with our presence.



Over the next magical hour or so we observed truly wild bear behaviour in their natural environment on the pack ice. They were feeding on a seal, and would come and go to the carcass. The female bear approached the ship on the ice and even put on a show by rolling on the pack ice several times affording so many opportunities for a front-page photo shoot. We had witnessed a moment in wildlife watching that was a privilege, even an honour, to see. It was a very emotional experience for all nature lovers. Our expedition guides were able to sex the bears from the photographs taken. They were an adult female with a second-year male. They said that the male bear would leave its mother in a matter of weeks to roam alone.

During our bear watching we counted at least 50 Ivory Gull and at least 15 Glaucous Gull gathered around the seal carcass to feed on scraps. This was an amazing sight in its own right. The rest of the day we proceeded slowly through the pack ice accompanied by many blue morph Fulmar with a Redwing and Turnstone seen around the ship. In the afternoon a Hooded Seal was observed hauled out on the pack ice and, as the ship approached, we had decent views before it disappeared into the sea.

On deck we were treated to hot chocolate with rum and squirty cream, absolutely delicious. In the lounge we listened to experts discuss the bear sightings and how they had sexed the bears. A fascinating end to a glorious day.



Migratory Musings on a Blackcap Bonus

John Maskell

Back in 1983 I wrote my first article for an SDOS publication, so almost 40 years on seems a good time to reflect on an ornithological change that I've enjoyed over the past four decades.



The exact date is lost in the mists of time but back in early 1980 I received an excited 'phone call from Christine, my sister, who was living in St. Andrews in Scotland at the time. She had just seen a male Blackcap on one of her garden feeders. At first my wife Shena and I were somewhat sceptical but from Christine's description the bird could not have been any other species. It was our first introduction to wintering Blackcaps.

As is widely known Blackcaps are one of the warbler species that 'traditionally' arrive on our shores to breed in the Spring before returning to southern Europe during the northern Winter; a movement mainly driven by the availability of food. However, the recovery of ringed birds has shown that many Blackcaps from central Europe have, in recent decades, chosen to spend the Winter in the UK. Climate change and the freely available food provided by many households probably account for this change in behaviour.

Our own first record of wintering Blackcaps in our Worthing garden came on 8th January 1981 with two birds. Since then our BTO Birdtrack records reveal that we have recorded Blackcaps on more than 1,000 dates and subscribers to the SDOS email user group will know that I have often reported some of these sightings!

A study of our Birdtrack records for the past 10 years reveals a steadily increasing trend for more wintering Blackcap records each year, with most observations made in the New Year. Back in 2011 we only recorded Blackcaps on 4 dates before the turn of the year whereas in 2021 the number of sightings had increased to 28.

In 2012 our first wintering Blackcap sighting of that New Year wasn't until Valentine's Day but thereafter they have been recorded in early January. Indeed, for the past 6 years Blackcaps have appeared on our Year List on New Year's Day!



Apart from a handful of Blackcap records in the “Summer period” (May – September) each year the majority have been logged as wintering birds. In 2021

we noted Blackcaps feeding in the garden on 113 dates with 17 of those in the “Summer period”.

One noticeable trend has been the increasing number of individual birds seen feeding together. After exhausting the tiny red berries on our Spindle tree, the feeders containing fat pellets and sunflower hearts are their favourites. Since 2018 we have recorded 7 individuals on 4 dates whilst our record was 8 birds on 3rd March 2018. Being easily able to separate males and females certainly helps in the counting process! Additionally, variations in the shading of female caps and a ringed bird have also assisted in the identification of individuals.

Garden birdwatching has certainly been a highlight of our ornithological interest. Being able to study our records via Birdtrack is a great benefit and I would recommend the system to all SDOS members whatever their level of interest. Birdtrack also allows you to input data from the past so it’s never too late to digitise your records.

The images are of two males on spindle berries on 3 January 2022 and a female on 26 March 2011.

The Mute Swans at Widewater

Jo Proctor and Tony Benton

SDOS Chair Tony Benton recently talked with Widewater Swan champion Jo Proctor about her experiences of the last 15 years with her garden Swans. Here’s what she had to say.

When did you first develop an affection for the Widewater swans?

I moved to the Widewater Lagoon in 2007 but little did I know how my life was going to change and how enriched it would become through the privilege of a friendship with our Mute Swans. At the time, there were two territorial



pairs living on the lagoon. One pair, mainly occupied the western side of the central bridge and as I live in this area, they would come to feed at the bottom of my garden and I would sit with them and watch them for far too long. I found them fascinating. They were wild birds but they seemed to enjoy being sociable and sitting so close to them allowed me to observe their behaviour. Day by day, I was being drawn into their lives.

Presumably your neighbours liked these swans too?

Yes, and they even given them names. The Cob is called Stanley and his mate is Hilda. I'll leave you to work out which soap characters they are!

Did two pairs of swans living so close to one another cause difficulties?

Well in the beginning the Cobs were constantly at war, battling every day. They were both large, strong Swans, equally matched and neither could succeed. I watched them busking and fighting, feeling anxious for their safety.

What is busking?

Busking is the term used to describe the threat posture designed to let other Swans know that they are ready to fight. The secondary feathers are arched over the back to make them look larger and more intimidating and the head is laid back to prevent the necks becoming entwined. They thrust their bodies through the water using both feet together to create more power. The idea is to intimidate a rival causing him to withdraw but it didn't quite work out that way with our evenly matched Cobs.

Did they settle their differences?

Sort of. The central footbridge was adopted as a demilitarized zone and apart from the odd incursion or excursion, depending on your viewpoint, they rubbed along together reasonably well. My pair, Stanley and Hilda, at first

nested in a garden facing the lagoon but when the house was demolished for development, they moved to the bank at the East end of the lagoon and more recently, they built a nest on Stanley Allen Island to protect it from Foxes. Over the years they have produced 31 cygnets surviving to fly into the wild, but now Stanley's fertility is decreasing as he gets older. It is hard to be completely accurate but I estimate his age to be about 25 years old though he may be older.

Many people feed swans - did you feed yours?

Yes. My pair bred each year and they would parade their cygnets along the edges of the resident's gardens to show them off! I created all sorts of ledges and feeding bowls of different sizes and established twice daily meal times with fresh water available all the time. The lagoon is saline and I had read that although Swans have a salt gland that enables them to drink salt water by excreting the salt through the nostrils, the cygnets would benefit from fresh water.

What about the other pair? How did they get on?

I have often wondered if a Swan could have the intelligence to be tactical in a battle situation; I guess it is possible as they are intelligent birds. Having reached a stale-mate in terms of male combat over the territory, Stanley attacked the mate of his adversary and sadly she died of her injuries. Not long after the other Cob left the lagoon. I thought he might go to the river and bring back another mate but he didn't return. The idea that Swans bond with a mate for life and pine for a lost mate for the rest of their lives, is a romantic view but not true! Yes, they are strongly bonded to a mate until the mate is lost but then the surviving Swan will find another mate. Survival of the species through breeding is a primary instinct.

So what happened after that?

Stanley and Hilda dominated the lagoon without any serious challenges from other Swans and there followed several years of relative peace. Many Swans flew in hoping to stay but were soon chased away by the King and Queen! They had their cygnets each Spring and were wonderful parents and, as Swans do, they chased the cygnets away when they were about 8 months old to clear the decks for the new brood. These Juveniles would probably find the nearest flock on the River Adur where they would stay until they reached maturity at 3/4 years. Then they would pair up and fly away to establish a breeding territory of their own.

How did your relationship with your swans develop?

At dawn, every day I would sit with Stanley and Hilda at the bottom of the garden in the perfect tranquility of a still morning as the sun rose. I was also there in the pouring rain, howling gales and snow! It didn't matter, they would come and I would be there. It's hard to put into words those moments of communion with the Swans but I felt blessed and thankful for the privilege. The time spent with them always taught me something else about them. I learned about the different sounds and calls that they make: distress, bonding, triumph, and asking for more food. They are far from Mute! I observed their physical features and the details that have helped me identify them when Swans look so similar. A tiny "bleed" of the black "mask" leaving a small mark on the bill has been the feature that I have always looked for to confirm that the Cob is Stanley. But in the end, I got to know their demeanour and personalities and I would know which Swan was swimming towards me from a distance. Stanley is slower, stately and measured; his mate is feisty and alert and more aggressive. Last year, Stanley decided to have his annual moult in my garden! He sat there for several weeks and covered the lawn in white feathers that looked like snow. It was beautiful and I loved having him there. The Pen would visit and sit with him sometimes. These were the last times that they would come to the garden.

I believe your commitment to swans extended beyond Widewater. Can you tell me about that?

I had so many questions and I read every book about Swans I could find. The more I learned, the more I wanted to know. When I couldn't find any more books to read, I decided to become a volunteer at the Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton, a huge hospital and sanctuary for sick and injured Swans and many other birds. I have been going there, when I can, for twelve years and have learned so much more about the problems that Swans encounter and I have learned how to rescue and care for them.

Recently, I believe, there has been drama at the lagoon, with a rival pair arriving and breeding: what has happened and is this unusual?

It's not unusual for other pairs to arrive and usually they are driven off by the residents after a short chase but last year a new, younger Cob arrived with his mate. He was much more aggressive and equal in size to the older male and he managed to drive Hilda and Stanley under the bridge into the eastern part of the lagoon. The central bridge became the 'front line' for a protracted territorial battle. For some time, they would busk there with neither giving way. In the end, however, the new pair gave up and left the lagoon, possibly to look for a safer breeding territory.

But this year the new pair came back?

That's right. In the Spring the new pair returned to Widewater to breed and they built a nest on an island east of the bridge. Suitable habitats for swans to breed are becoming fewer as natural wetland habitats are destroyed. Widewater has ideal conditions for breeding having plentiful weed for food, suitable nesting sites on islands and a long "runway" for flying lessons! It is therefore prime territory and worth fighting for. This meant that the conflict between the Cobs resumed. The first serious fight took place and although neither was injured, nothing was resolved.

So how did Hilda and Stanley manage with these new arrivals?

They built a nest on Stanley Allen Island. At the beginning of May, one cygnet hatched! We were elated after months of wondering if the eggs were fertile and if Hilda was going to sit for weeks waiting for them to hatch as she did the previous year when she sat on infertile eggs for 15 weeks, almost starving in the process. Then tragedy struck and after only two days on the water, the cygnet was predated by a Great Black-backed Gull. Hilda returned to the nest to sit on the other eggs that were not going to hatch. It was heart breaking to watch her.

How did the newcomers fare?

Five cygnets hatched at the beginning of June and almost immediately they were led onto the water. Only 4 were seen the next day and the following day I watched a Great Black-backed Gull predate another. It was too far away to help. The Cob tried to save his cygnet and flew at the Gull but it was too late. Swans are very good parents but this year there seem to be more Gulls on the lagoon and as it is such an open space with little shelter they are easy prey.

The new Cob now dominates most of the lagoon and Hilda and Stanley stay in a small area at the East end. Although the Cobs busk daily, Stanley won't be driven off and holds his ground, but the old timers don't seem able to push the newbies back. They seem to accept that they just have a small territory that you could say they have retired to! What will happen in the end is unpredictable. They could leave and fly to the river but it is unlikely as they are a breeding pair. We could try to move them but where to? This is their home and moving them, for example, to the Swan Sanctuary and putting them amongst 200 other Swans on their lake, would be very stressful for them. The recent outbreak of Avian flu has also made it difficult to move birds so what could be a solution is not a straight forward option. My hope is that they will settle reasonably peacefully in a shared territory. Swans are adaptable and Stanley and Hilda have had to share before.

The Widewater Swans have ‘Celebrity status’ on social media. Have you been surprised by how many people have been following this year’s events?

With all the drama of the lives of these conspicuous birds who share their home with the human residents of the lagoon, it isn’t surprising that there is much interest in watching their story unfold. Social media has opened up a window of communication where reports, images and questions can be posted and it has become like a daily ‘Swan newspaper’! Like myself, people have been caught up in the story with all its unexpected twists and turns, highs and lows and everyone wants to know what will happen next! We have become involved with their lives and we have grown attached to them and emotionally invested in our relationship with them. They are definitely the celebrities of Widewater; they’re certainly the most photographed swans in the area!

Why do you think Swans are so popular with the public?

There are so many reasons! I think they have a particular beauty, an aesthetic appeal with their long, curved necks, pure white feathers, bright orange beaks and their large imposing size. They are instantly recognisable. We have all watched the awesome sight of Swans in flight and heard their distinctive wing song as they beat their huge expansive wings. They have a deeply rooted history and have been entwined in our culture for centuries. We see them on ponds, lakes and rivers in every part of the countryside. They feature in any artist’s English country scene seeming to symbolise the essence of peaceful country life, gliding serenely over the water. They have inspired Art, Music, Ballet and have acquired Royal status! They symbolise Peace, Love and Fidelity and they are revered in many cultures and religions. In so many ways, Swans touch all our lives.

Will you write the book about Stanley and Hilda?

It has crossed my mind to record their story but that will be when their story ends. The Swan who has captured my heart and become my friend for 14 years is an old Swan now and I know that a very difficult day will come when I will have to say goodbye to him or to them both. There will be many others, who know and care about them too, who will feel the same.

I will always be so grateful for the immeasurable gift that I have been given and the rare glimpses that I have been allowed, into the lives of these Mute Swans.

Appendix

Hilda and Stanley's breeding efforts over the years.

2008 – 1 surviving cygnet. Previous Mate.

2009 – 4 surviving cygnets

2010 – 6 hatched 0 survived. Present Mate.

2011 – 8 hatched 0 survived

2012 – 5 hatched 5 survived

2013 – 6 hatched 6 survived

2014 – 2 hatched 1 survived

2015 – 7 hatched 7 survived

2016 – 5 hatched 5 survived

2017 – 4 hatched 4 survived

2018 – 1 hatched 1 survived

2019 – 2 hatched 1 survived

2020 – 3 hatched 1 survived

2021 – 0 hatched

2022 – 1 hatched 0 survived

A local Kestrel family

Wendy Ball

A friend of ours has a local farm near Brighton, and recently she told me that a pair of Kestrels had started to build a nest in their garden. To put this into context, it is a very busy arable farm with a great deal of movement of noisy farm machinery and a constant stream of visitors and vehicles. Added to this disturbance the garden is used extensively and several dogs frequent the area too.

Undeterred, the Kestrels continued their task of nesting and it was apparent that eggs had been laid. I was notified when the eggs had hatched and invited to observe the nest. Three chicks were seen. The following week I spent 3 days observing and watching the adults bring a selection of food to the nest, and toward the end of the three days it became clear that ‘three’ had become ‘four.’

A couple of days after that I again spent a day watching as the juveniles, which now were as big as the adults, began to explore the branches and strengthen their wing muscles by vigorously wing flapping. To our surprise four had now become five! Two days after that they had fully fledged.



It spoke volumes that all five juveniles fledged successfully and is a reflection of the quantity of prey items available in the countryside surrounding the nest site. Also human activity in the vicinity of the nest was not modified or diminished indicating that it is possible for some species to live closely alongside us.

It was a real privilege to be able to have access to this family of Kestrels and a fascinating insight into the development of these beautiful birds.

Birds recorded in the SDOS area between January and June 2022

Clive Hope and John Newnham

In the first half of 2022 a total of 27.6k records have been submitted by 250 observers for the SDOS recording area. Most of these have been recorded either through the BTO's Birdtrack system, Cornell University's e Bird or iRecord. There are no records yet collected from the national ongoing surveys, that is the Wetland Bird Survey, the Breeding Bird Survey or the Garden Bird Watch.

Brent Goose	Coastal records from Jan 2 nd to Jun 6 th totalling 4209 E and 85W with a max of 1022 E on Mar 9 th .
Canada Goose	There were 240 on Henfield Levels on Jan 9 th .
Greylag Goose	150 were on the Upper Adur Levels on Jan 12 th .
Mute Swan	The Steyning Levels held 21 on Apr 18 th .
Egyptian Goose	Most noted were 12 on Henfield Levels on Mar 20 th .
Common Shelduck	Records from 11 sites with 12 passing Goring beach on Apr 11 th .
Garganey	An exceptional spring passage involving at least 53 birds all moving E offshore in Mar, with a maximum of 24 on 22 nd . Also one on the Adur at Shoreham on 25 th .
Shoveler	Maximum count was of 40 on Henfield levels on Jan 17 th . In addition, 121 flew E off Goring / Worthing in Mar and Apr.
Gadwall	There were 16 at Rye Farm, Henfield on Feb 19 th .

Eurasian Wigeon	Noted up to Apr 11 th with 150 on Henfield Levels Jan 17 th .
Mallard	Brooklands, Worthing held 60 on Jan 10 th .
Pintail	Sea-watches in Mar and Apr produced 381 flying E with 160 on Mar 21 st off Goring. 40 at Rye Farm, Henfield on Jan 13 th .
Eurasian Teal	A max of 200 on the Upper Adur Levels on Jan 12 th . 70 on the Adur Saltings on Feb 2 nd .
Common Pochard	Two at Rye Farm, Henfield on Jan 13 th .
Tufted Duck	One on Patching Pond Jan 28 th and Feb 7 th . Eight flew E at Worthing beach on Mar 8 th .
Common Eider	Up to four were off Widewater on three dates and one passed Goring Gap on Mar 16 th .
Velvet Scoter	Fifteen flew E between Jan 23 rd and Apr 16 th with a max. of four on Apr 11 th .
Common Scoter	1640 flew E between Jan 4 th and Jan 10 th , with a max. of 296 passing Worthing Beach on Apr 11 th
Long-tailed Duck	A long-staying bird in the Southwick Canal area from Jan 4 th to Apr 3 rd . One passed Hove on Feb 17 th .
Goosander	One on the Adur near Botolphs from Jan 21 st to Feb 22 nd and one off Goring Gap on Jan 30 th .
Red-breasted Merganser	Noted up to Apr 13 th . Max. was 88 on Jan 25 th on the sea between Ferring and Worthing.
Grey Partridge	Records from 11 sites with ten at Fore Down, Portslade on Jan 10 th .
Common Pheasant	Max. of 27 at Michelgrove, Patching on Apr 17 th .

Quail	One at Ditchling Beacon Jun 17 th .
Red-legged Partridge	There were 28 at Chantry Hill on Jan 20 th .
Nightjar	One in Brighton Borough on Jun 2 nd .
Common Swift	Two Apr records, the first at High Down on 13 th followed by one at Hove Park on 20 th . Max. were 50 at Steyning WTW on May 13 th and 45 at Devil's Dyke on Jun 29 th .
Common Cuckoo	First was at Wood's Mill on Apr 16 th . Records from a further 16 sites.
Feral Pigeon	Sixty in the Lower Adur on Feb 1 st .
Stock Dove	200 were counted on Jan 31 st at the Wiston Estate, nr Steyning
Woodpigeon	A count of 2000 at Chantry Hill on Jan 15 th .
Turtle Dove	At Wood's Mill, one was noted on May 1 st and two on Jun 12 th . One at Sompting on May 27 th .
Collared Dove	Noted at 70 locations with 25 at Ditchling Beacon on Jan 10 th .
Water Rail	Single birds reported from five sites.
Moorhen	Fifteen at Brooklands on Jan 10 th .
Coot	Thirty at Brooklands on Jan 10 th .
Little Grebe	Reported from 15 locations with nine at Widewater on Feb 1 st .
Red-necked Grebe	One off East Worthing on Feb 22 nd . One off Goring beach on Apr 9 th then a pair displaying off Goring Gap on 13 th .
Great Crested Grebe	Present on sea between Ferring and Worthing until Jun 22 nd with a max. of 78 on Jan 17 th .
Slavonian Grebe	One or two reported from Widewater, Worthing beach and Goring on seven dates between Jan 3 rd and Apr 18 th .

Black-necked Grebe Oystercatcher	Four on the sea off Goring Gap on Mar 21 st . Present throughout the period with 22 on Jan 10 th at Worthing beach the maximum.
Avocet	One on the Adur at Shoreham on Mar 26 th and two E at Worthing beach on both Apr 26 th and May 8 th .
Lapwing	The biggest count was of 400 on Feb 12 th on the Upper Adur Levels.
Grey Plover	Records from 13 sites with 37 on Goring Gap on Feb 12 th the largest gathering. Twenty-six flew E at Worthing on May 8 th .
Ringed Plover	There were 36 on the beach at Widewater on Feb 1 st , the most noted.
Little Ringed Plover	One at Rye Farm, Henfield on Mar 19 th .
Eurasian Whimbrel	Records from Mar 22 nd to Jun 11 th at 17 locations. A total of 633 flew E in Apr and May at Worthing beach. Most on the Adur in Apr were six on 26 th and in May four on 6 th . Birds seen up to Botolphs.
Curlew	One to three at twelve sites. Returning birds in Jun numbered 11 W.
Bar-tailed Godwit	One on the Adur at Shoreham on Apr 16 th and 24 th and May 3 rd . Passage E off Worthing in Apr and May totalled 811.
Black-tailed Godwit	Two on the Adur at Shoreham on Mar 18 th and six at Widewater on May 9 th .
Turnstone	Present until May 19 th at 24 coastal sites with 125 at Goring Gap the peak.
Knot	One on the beach at Kingston Gorse on Jan 5 th and one at Goring Gap on Apr 11 th . Six flew E off Worthing beach in Apr and May.

Sanderling	Records until Jun 5 th . Most were 200 at Goring Gap on Feb 28 th .
Dunlin	Records until Jun 5 th with 170 at Goring Gap on Feb 9 th the max.
Purple Sandpiper	Five at Brighton Marina on Jan 15 th was most reported. One or two at Shoreham Harbour to Apr 19 th .
Woodcock	Two at Cissbury on Jan 16 th and one at Ladywell on 26 th .
Jack Snipe	One on the Upper Adur Levels on Feb 12 th .
Common Snipe	The Adur Saltings remains the most productive of the 14 sites reporting this species with a max of 89 on Jan 4 th .
Common Sandpiper	As last year, just three on the Adur on May 12 th was the max. and the last spring date. One at Brooklands on the 1 st .
Green Sandpiper	From Jan 5 th to Mar 21 st , singles on three dates on the Henfield and Upper Adur levels.
Common Redshank	The Adur Saltings at Shoreham held 53 on Jan 4 th , the max. count. None after Apr 12 th there but two near Botolphs on 29 th and one on Henfield Levels on May 2 nd .
Greenshank	A single at Shoreham from Jan 2 nd to Apr 7 th intermittently.
Kittiwake	Sea-watches produced 175 W and 80 E at Worthing Beach and 1427 off Widewater from Jan to Mar.
Black-headed Gull	With over 400 records from 77 sites, the largest count was of 1000 on Feb 26 th at Botolphs.
Little Gull	Eight flew E off Widewater on Apr 17 th and eight off Worthing beach in the month and four on May 8 th .
Mediterranean Gull	Recorded throughout the period with 158 reports from 77 sites. Over 300 flew E off Worthing in Mar and Apr. Goring Gap held

	62 on Apr 12 th . 86 passed Widewater on 17 th . On Jun 23 rd 42 had re-appeared on the Adur at Shoreham.
Common Gull	Present to May 11 th with 850 in the Lower Adur on Feb 22 nd and 800 on Goring Gap on 26 th .
Great Black-backed Gull	Largest count was of 94 in the Lower Adur on Jan 8 th
Herring Gull	As last year, over 1200 records with a max. count of 710 on Mar 12 th at Shoreham.
Argentatus Herring Gull	One in the Lower Adur Valley on Jan 8 th .
Caspian Gull	One in the Lower Adur Valley on Jan 8 th .
Yellow-legged Gull	One in the Lower Adur Valley on Jan 8 th and one at Black Rock, Brighton Feb 22 nd .
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Appears to be increasingly widespread in the winter months across the area. Max. were 20 at Patcham on Jan 12 th .
Sandwich Tern	First was one past Worthing beach on Mar 10 th . Then 1540 flew E and 151 W until end of Jun, peak day was Apr 11 th with 454.
Little Tern	Just two singles on May 9 th and 29 th passing Goring Gap and Worthing respectively.
Common Tern	Another very poor year with just 49 E at Worthing in Apr and May with 32 on May 9 th the max.
Arctic Tern	Three on Apr 24 th at Worthing beach was the only record.
Commic Tern	A total of 50 including the species above
Black Tern	One passed Worthing beach on Apr 18 th .
Great Skua	Fifteen flew E and four W off Worthing between Mar 24 th and May 3 rd .
Pomarine Skua	A total of 43 flew E along the coast between Ferring and Hove. There were two on Apr

	11 th , one on May 1 st , five on 2 nd , four on 8 th and the peak of 31 on May 9 th .
Arctic Skua	Fifteen flew E and two W off Worthing between Mar 26 th and Jun 17 th with five on Apr 11 th the max.
Common Guillemot	Records from four sites with eleven off Widewater on Feb 4 th .
Razorbill	As usual, many more reported in our area than the previous species. A count of 2140 off Widewater on Jan 31 st .
Auk species	Noted till Apr 17 th with a max. count of 1765 on Jan 17 th at Widewater.
Red-throated Diver	Records from Jan 1 st to May 1 st with 233 E and 144 W noted off Worthing beach. Single birds on the Shoreham Adur on Jan 6 th and Feb 13 th and up to 15 on the sea at Widewater and Goring.
Black-throated Diver	Between Jan 9 th and Apr 12 th , 12 were reported from the coast, including four off Worthing on Apr 10 th .
Great Northern Diver	From Jan 2 nd to Apr 12 th there were six reports with two off East Worthing on Mar 16 th .
Diver sp	Twenty unassigned noted.
Fulmar	Mostly ones or twos noted offshore between Jan 8 th and May 17 th with a max. of eight at the Marina on Feb 21 st .
Black Stork	One reported over Brighton Jun 10 th .
White Stork	Records from four sites between Apr 15 th and Jun 10 th with four over the Steyning Downland scheme on May 8 th .
Gannet	Seen almost daily offshore throughout the period. Worthing sea-watches tallied 888W and 783 E. At Widewater, 805 counted on Jan 31 st .

Cormorant	Noted daily across the area with 200 in Shoreham Harbour on Jan 31 st . Between Mar and Jun 267 flew E off Worthing.
Shag	Eight records from five sites with three off East Worthing on Feb 22 nd .
Spoonbill	Two E at Worthing Beach on Mar 10 th and one E on 15 th .
Cattle Egret	One on Jan 1 st at Steyning WTW.
Grey Heron	Records from 35 locations with five on Henfield levels on Mar 21 st .
Great White Egret	One past Worthing Beach on Apr 28 th .
Little Egret	Recorded on most days throughout the period from 33 sites with a max. count of 11 in the Lower Adur on May 26 th .
Osprey	Five records as follows. First was one over Brighton Mar 10 th , then one West Worthing Apr 7 th , one Hove on 10 th , one Preston Park on 28 th and one Tenant Hill on May 21 st .
Sparrowhawk	Reports from 50 sites with three at New Salt's Farm on Mar 21 st .
Marsh Harrier	Just four records from three sites, Chantry Hill, Chanctonbury and Rye Farm, Henfield in Jan and Apr, Feb and Mar.
Hen Harrier	Reports from Jan to Mar 25 th at six locations with Chantry Hill and the Steyning Round Hill / Steep Down areas the most favoured.
Red Kite	With 178 records from 70 sites, continues to increase. Max. was ten at Chantry Hill on Jan 15 th .
White-tailed Eagle	One passed over Brighton and Steyning Downs on Mar 21 st .

Common Buzzard	One hundred and one sites generated 411 records with 11 over Preston Park on Apr 10 th .
Barn Owl	Reports from eight sites of single birds other than two at Storrington.
Little Owl	Birds at six sites, four of them with pairs – at Sullington, Storrington, Upper Beeding and Botolphs.
Long-eared Owl	Four reports from Downland sites; two indicating successful breeding.
Tawny Owl	Appears to be declining with only 22 reports from 11 sites.
Hoopoe	One in Steyning on Apr 26 th and one in Shoreham on Jun 2 nd .
Kingfisher	Records till Apr 22 nd from 15 sites.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	One was in Clapham Wood on May 8 th .
Great Spotted Woodpecker	A contrast with the above species having 253 records at 73 sites.
Green Woodpecker	Matches the last species in abundance and reporting.
Kestrel	With records from 76 locations it remains a widespread raptor. Six at Lychpole Hill nr Cissbury on Jan 5 th was biggest sighting.
Merlin	Seven records between Jan 10 th and Apr 10 th at six sites – Adur Levels, Shoreham Adur, Chantry Hill, Lychpole Hill, Worthing beach and Brighton.
Hobby	First was one at Chanctonbury on Apr 23 rd . Then records from Small Dole, Truleigh Hill, Beeding Hill, Adur, Preston Park and Storrington.
Peregrine	Over a hundred records from 39 locations across the area.
Ring-necked Parakeet	One or two in Shoreham from Jan 2 nd to Apr 5 th .

Jay	Common and widespread. Five at Lychpole Hill on Jan 5 th .
Magpie	Forty-nine at East Kingston on Feb 11 th .
Jackdaw	Three hundred Cissbury North Scarp Jan 15 th .
Rook	Nine hundred Beeding Hill Feb 8 th .
Carrion Crow	Seven hundred Goring Jan 17 th .
Raven	Records from 39 sites with ten at Chantry Hill on Feb 15 th .
Coal Tit	One hundred and thirteen reports from 37 sites with five at Newtimber Hill on Jun 24 th .
Marsh Tit	Only five locations recording this bird (three on the Downs) with seven on Steyning Round Hill on Feb 7 th .
Blue Tit	Common and widespread with 44 at Steyning Round Hill on Feb 7 th .
Great Tit	Again, similar numbers to Blue Tit with 20 on Oreham Common on Feb 12 th .
Woodlark	One flew over Goring Gap on Apr 20 th .
Skylark	Daily reports covering 86 sites with 70 on Lychpole Hill on Apr 20 th the max. count
Sand Martin	First were four at Sandgate Park Storrington on Apr 7 th then five at Washington Rock Common on 12 th .
Barn Swallow	First was one at Steyning WTW on Apr 3 rd . Numbers remained low until 28 th when 86 arrived at Worthing Beach. In May the max. was at New Salt's Farm with 20 on 8 th .
House Martin	A wintering bird was reported from Wood's Mill on Feb 11 th . The next report was of two

at Devil's Dyke on Apr 7th. There were 20 at Newtimber Hill on May 10th.

Cetti's Warbler

With 123 reports at 25 locations, this species is doing well. Most were five at New Salt's Farm on Mar 21st.

Long-tailed Tit

The same can be said for this bird with 76 sites noting it. Washington Rock Common held 21 on Jan 7th.

Willow Warbler

First was on Mar 21st at Ferring Rife. Noted at 27 sites with eight at Ladywell on Apr 10th the most.

Chiffchaff

There were 432 reports from 107 locations, 19 in the winter period (Jan/Feb) such as the 13 at Edburton on Feb 20th.

Sedge Warbler

First was on Beeding Brooks on Apr 14th. Records from ten locations with five by the Adur at Shoreham on May 5th.



Reed Warbler	First was on Apr 13 th at Shoreham Airport. Twenty sites produced 76 records with the max. at New Salt's Farm, 13 on May 8 th .
Blackcap	The second most abundant warbler with nearly 400 records from 74 locations. 85 records were in Jan and Feb at eight locations, with eight birds at High Salvington on several dates. The spring migrant peak was of 14 at Highdown on May 8 th .
Garden Warbler	First was on May 4 th at Wild Park, Brighton followed by just four more reports from Findon, Durrington, Wood's Mill and Sheepcote Valley.
Lesser Whitethroat	There were 62 reports from 23 locations, the first at Wood's Mill on Apr 26 th . Five were on Beeding Hill on Jun 1 st .
Common Whitethroat	Records from Apr 11 th on Henfield Levels, with 62 further sites reporting them. The max was 60 at Sheepcote Valley on Jun 13 th .
Dartford Warbler	One in Sheepcote Valley on Jan 28 th . One at Newtimber Hill Jun 13 th .
Firecrest	Records from 16 sites with five on Patching Hill on Mar 5 th .
Goldcrest	Reported from 42 locations with four on Jan 5 th in the Lower Adur.
Wren	Remains a very common bird across the area.
Nuthatch	St Anne's Wells, Hove and Highdown were the only sites south of the Downs to report this species. Most were four on Jan 11 th at Tottington, Small Dole.
Eurasian Treecreeper	Records from 18 locations with three at Ladywell on Apr 10 th .
Common Starling	An estimated one million birds at Brighton's West Pier on Mar 2 nd

Song Thrush	Appears to be just holding on to its status with 96 sites reporting it. Most were 19 at Oreham Common on Feb 12 th .
Mistle Thrush	Records from 36 locations with five at Tottington Small Dole on Jan 11 th .
Redwing	Records until Mar 30 th when three at West Worthing. Most were 100 at Steyning WTW on Jan 11 th .
Blackbird	Over a thousand records from 129 sites and a max. of 32 at Lychpole on Jan 20 th .
Fieldfare	Last was one on Beeding Hill on Mar 18 th . Max. were 250 on Upper Adur Levels on Jan 12 th .
Ring Ouzel	One at Ferring Country Centre on Mar 28 th then three each at Cissbury, Mill Hill and Truleigh Hill all on Apr 11 th .
Spotted Flycatcher	First was one on Newtimber Hill on May 10 th then records from seven further sites to the end of Jun. Max was four at Lychpole Hill on 14 th and at Devil's Dyke on Jun 24 th .
Robin	Twenty-eight on Feb 7 th in Steyning.
Common Nightingale	First were three at as many sites on Apr 14 th . Six at Wood's Mill on 16 th and again on May 1 st was the peak count. Five in Edburton on May 15 th was also noteworthy.
Black Redstart	There were 33 reports from 14 locations between Jan 15 th and May 4 th (Wild Park, Brighton) of single birds other than two at Cissbury and Ferring, on Apr 2 nd and 4 th .
Common Redstart	Records of singles from seven locations from Apr 15 th (Goring Gap) to May 17 th .
Whinchat	Reported from five sites, Apr 25 th (Patching Hill) to May 9 th .
Eurasian Stonechat	There were 15 at Lychpole on Jan 5 th , the max. count from 40 locations.
Northern Wheatear	A late arrival after the first two at Shoreham Harbour on Mar 14 th since no more until 24 th

	and the first and only, double figure count of 12 at Lychpole on May 5 th .
Desert Wheatear	One was found on the beach at Goring Gap by an SDOS member and WeBs counter on Mar 20 th .
House Sparrow	Reported from 100 locations with a count of 200 at New Salt's Farm on Jun 3 rd .
Dunnock	Max. count was of 43 in Sheepcote Valley on Mar 4 th .
Yellow Wagtail	Seven singles between Apr 18 th (Goring Gap) and May 1 st .
Grey Wagtail	Records from 23 sites of mostly single birds but four in the Lower Adur on Jan 26 th .
Pied Wagtail	At Portslade Foredown, there were 35 on Jan 10 th . The wintering total at Goring Gap reached 100 on Feb 3 rd .
White Wagtail	One in Brighton Mar 30 th .
Meadow Pipit	Records from 59 sites. Generally less than a dozen anywhere until late Mar when migrants at Sheepcote Valley 45, and Goring Gap, 50.
Tree Pipit	First was one at Goring Gap on Apr 20 th , then Worthing beach on 21 st , Highdown on 24 th and at Devil's Dyke on Jun 13 th .
Water Pipit	One at Rye Farm, Henfield on Mar 24 th and one Wyckham Wood on 20 th .
Rock Pipit	Twenty-four records from the Marina (seven on Feb 21 st), Southwick Beach, Shoreham Harbour and the Lower Adur were expected but one in Sheepcote Valley on Mar 20 th was unusual.
Chaffinch	With 389 reports from 89 sites, remains generally fairly common but as last year, much scarcer at coastal locations. Perching Sands Farm, Edburton held a massive 320 on Jan 28 th . There were 36 at Rye Farm on Feb

12th and 17 at Cissbury on Mar 6th. Coastal movements West Worthing 70 on Mar 25th.



Brambling

Records of one or two birds at 12 sites but 41 at Perching Sand's Farm, Edburton on Jan 28th.

Bullfinch

Fifty-five reports from 23 locations with five at Cissbury on Jan 16th. Only site south of the Downs was Highdown where one to three noted on various dates.

Greenfinch

Reports from 91 sites with 20 at Apr 7th at Shoreham.

Linnet

Widespread reports with the largest congregations being 340 at Perching Sand's Farm, Edburton on Jan 28th, 100 at Devil's Dyke on Feb 7th and 99 at Applesham Farm on Jun 21st.

Goldfinch	Nearly 800 records from 120 locations of up to 40 birds testifies to its abundance.
Siskin	Noted at seven sites away from the coast with one to three birds. Movement over Worthing / Goring amounted to 228 between Mar 22 nd and 27 th .
Corn Bunting	Noted at 32 locations with 180 at Lychpole on Jan 15 th .
Yellowhammer	At Chantry Hill, 35 counted on Jan 15 th , 32 at Edburton on Mar 18 th and 20 at Devil's Dyke on May 4 th .
Reed Bunting	Noted from 30 sites with 12 at Perching Sand's Farm, Edburton on Jan 28 th .

Escapes

Violet Turaco	One at Offington, Worthing on May 7 th .
Alexandrine Parakeet	One in the Shoreham area between Jan 2 nd and Jun 26 th .

The Area Action Plan for the Shoreham Cement Works

SDOS Council

In June 2022 the South Downs National Park released an Area Action Plan for the re-development of the Cement Works. This was a 73 pages document accompanied by other material and posed a series of questions to which consultees were asked to respond. SDOS registered as a consultee organization.

In the National Parks' view doing nothing was not an option. Any development, however, would need to be substantial to pay for itself and in planning terms therefore would be considered a 'major development'. These are generally avoided in National Parks but the general thrust of their proposal was to accept

the need for a major development in order to deal with a large and problematic site.

Dudman Group own the site and the Area Action Plan suggested that the re-development needed to be largely self-financing. Little or no public money subsidy was available. The clear up cost before re-development was said to be £26 million so a lot of value needed to be extracted from the re-development to make any scheme viable. The Area Action Plan suggested that housing development was the most efficient way of raising money. The Plan generally seemed to be envisaging a mix of housing and high-technology 'industry' to provide finance for the re-development and also some local employment. In our response SDOS Council broadly accepted the National Park's suggestion that a 'major development' was necessary and we made a variety of suggestions to mitigate the impact of the development on birds and nature. We also drew attention to the possibility of enhancing the ecological potential of the site and the need to consider the development in the context of other ecological and environmental schemes proposed or taking place in the Adur valley.

In order to help the reader to understand our submission we have summarized in the next few sentences the Area Action Plan's Zonal classification of the site and their assessment of appropriate uses for the Zones.

The SDNP document divides the site into five Zones. These are west to east - the 'Riverside', the 'Cement Works' buildings, the 'Bowl' behind the cement works which is a large area contaminated with kiln dust, and finally at ground level the 'Moonscape' - an area of exposed Chalk benches and ledges left by excavation processes. The 'Moonscape' is the oblong quarry extending a long way back into the hillslope. Surrounding all this are the 'Clifflands' of the quarry faces.

The Riverside is considered to be the best area for housing, the Cement Works might incorporate some housing with commercial space, the Bowl might be suitable for light commercial activity and the Moonscape would be an area

where ecological interest would be preserved. The Cliffs are considered a no-go Zone and the danger of slope failure constrains the use of areas close to the cliffs. These Zones can be identified on the Google image below.



The SDOS Response to the SDNP – our submission

Shoreham Cement Works Area Action Plan – Issues and Options consultation

Introduction

The Shoreham and District Ornithological Society (SDOS) is a community group of over 250 members. In addition, SDOS has created a private Facebook group, Shoreham Birding, with 850 members to raise awareness of birds in the local area and promote a love of nature.

SDOS is very involved in local conservation work and citizen science. We contribute to significant levels of bird recording work and surveys in the local area, and we work with a range of other organisations.

The Society is based in Shoreham-by-Sea but the SDOS Bird Recording Area covers a broad region of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) including Upper Beeding, Steyning, Storrington, parts of the Henfield parish and Brighton. Most members are drawn from the area within boundaries from Brighton Marina to West Worthing. We thus bring to this consultation a wealth of local knowledge.

Based upon our local ornithological knowledge and focus on conservation we request SDNP consider the potential for detrimental impact that the development of the Cement Works may have on birds known to be present from records and surveys.

In our submission we also seek to draw the attention of the SDNP authority to the potential of this site for the enhancement of nature-based recreational activity in the lower Adur Valley. In addition to the birdwatching opportunities that we evidence here, it is likely that the site also has the potential to be botanically interesting and to provide a habitat for various insect species. Further, we consider that plans for the site might be developed with reference to the Adur Landscape Regeneration Project and we include a short comment on water related impacts.

The potential impact of re-development on birds known to be present at the Cement Works

Birds of the “Cliff-lands”, “Bowl” & “Moonscape” sections

Peregrine Falcon

Listed on Schedule I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which gives them protection against disturbance of the nest site and their dependent young.

Overall, Peregrine has been recorded in the Cement Works in at least thirty different years although access restrictions make viewing and recording challenging. At times, two pairs of Peregrines have nested within the Cement Works. More recently, a pair of Peregrines have used the same nest site within the chalk quarry and in June 2022 an SDOS member confirmed a female Peregrine on the nest site. The nest is on a Cliff face that faces into the “Bowl”.

In the vicinity of the quarry, young Peregrines are often seen interacting aerially and perching on nearby pylons. From above the chalk pit and from paths in the river valley, the adults are regularly seen perched on a ledge a few feet below the top of the Works chimney. Such prominent high points are typically favoured by Peregrines and is justification for retaining this feature in addition to this local landmark's historical industrial value.

Raven

Ravens are a scarce local resident whose numbers are still recovering after decades of persecution. Gamekeeping in the 19th century pushed Raven almost to extinction in most of England including Sussex. Therefore, the long-term presence of a nest site within the quarry is of high ornithological value. To allow development which could cause abandonment of the Raven's Cement Works nest site would seem contrary, in our view, to a basic purpose of the National Park.

The Raven cliff nest site faces into the “Bowl”, not far from the Cement Works and on 26th June 2022 an SDOS member undertaking a regular survey of the

Adur valley observed three Ravens tumbling and perching on the Cement Works building. They were thought likely to be juveniles from this year's nest. Adults were also seen in June perching and on the ground in the Cement Works. Ravens have been recorded using the Cement Works in seventeen different years.

Black Redstart

Birds of Conservation Concern (BOCC) Amber listed - Schedule I

This species is mentioned in the consultation documents as having been recorded within the site. It is difficult to confirm the presence of Black Redstarts on a regular basis as direct site access is only available to the current tenants. Perimeter viewing points available to the birding community are very limited making it challenging to see or hear small birds like Black Redstarts. A specific survey would be needed.

In southern England Black Redstart has a close association with buildings, bare terrain and brown field sites typical of the Cement Works. Therefore, this site, on both sides of the A283, is likely to be attractive to this rare breeding species which forages for insects in nooks and crannies in rocky places and old buildings. Their presence would likely be discouraged by a setting of new buildings and car parks.

Disturbance factors at the present time

To date, Dudman's activities and noise generation appear to have been insufficient to disturb the Peregrine Falcons or Ravens. In our view, however, leisure or sporting activities such as zip-wire or ski-slope facilities within the Bowl and adjacent Moonscape would be highly likely to cause visual and noise disturbance that could result in the permanent abandonment of the nest sites of both Ravens and Peregrine Falcons.

Birds of the "Riverside" section

The consultation document, Section 5E – Nature Recovery, paragraph 5.63 describes the “Riverside” site as the least valuable habitat and therefore most suitable for development. We suggest, however, that the immediate riverside habitat is highly valuable for birds and somewhat unique in this area of Sussex.

This section of the site is important bird habitat, especially for Common Sandpipers, Kingfishers, Grey Wagtails, and wintering thrushes such as Redwings and Fieldfares. It is important to recognise that the trees and shrubs lying on both sides of the Downslink path at the “Riverside” section provide a shelterbelt that screens the "Riverside" section of river and an adjacent area of floodplain from activity likely to disturb birds. Such activity originates from the Downslink Path and from within the “Riverside” site.

The tree belt provides screening for Common Sandpipers, food for winter thrushes, plus nesting, perching and roosting sites for a variety of birds including Kingfishers. The “Riverside” section is the only section of this part of the lower Adur bordered by trees and shrubs. The "Riverside" section of riverbank is a low-lying cliff face and is an important roosting site for Common Sandpiper at high tide. We therefore suggest that the ‘Riverside’ section incorporates areas of valuable and sensitive bird habitat.

We would also have concerns about any proposal to enhance water-based leisure access in this area as this would impact upon bird habitat, particularly the Common Sandpiper roost.

Further information on the special birds and their habitats is include as Appendix I.

Opportunities to enhance Nature Based Recreation and Wellbeing

SDOS funded, constructed, and continues to maintain a seat close to the west side Adur riverbank opposite the “Riverside” section. This provision has been in place for many years. Walkers and birders can take a rest here with a pleasant view across to the greenery opposite, barely aware of the old industrial buildings behind. Users regularly observe the Peregrines on the chimney, Ravens around the works, Common Sandpipers on the river and Kingfishers perched on overhanging bushes. All this “wellbeing” benefit will be lost if development is permitted directly facing onto the river without the screen of existing mature overhanging vegetation or if the development is higher or more prominent than existing buildings.

The Society has for many years organized walks into Anchor Bottom to the north of the site to attempt to observe the special species associated with the quarry. Access to the Cement Works site, however, has always been problematic and we encourage the SDNP in the development of a plan to consider the potential of parts of the site for nature conservation and associated nature-related recreation. There is a substantial ecological literature on the nature conservation value of abandoned mineral workings and it is likely that areas such as the ‘Moonscape’ presently have ecological interest that might be developed by future sympathetic management. We are of the view that adventure based recreational activity at this site would result in disturbance to vulnerable bird species already present and that the Plan should therefore aim to enhance the ecological interest and accessibility of the site.

The Adur Landscape Regeneration Project

Within the consultation documents we were unable to find reference to the recently announced “Weald to Waves” project. We understand SDNP are one of several organisations collaborating with this. The local element of this

project is the “Adur Landscape Regeneration Project”. Farmers and others owning land adjacent to the Adur are committing to various nature regeneration schemes to provide a wildlife corridor from the Weald to the Sussex coast. The information which is available to us shows only Pad Farm and Ladywells as committed within the SDNP section of the watercourse. Presumably SDNP will have been encouraging further participation from landowners and farmers in the Adur Valley.

In planning to re-develop this site we encourage SDNP to place the site, or parts of it, within the context of the Adur Landscape Regeneration Project. This suggestion particularly applies to the “Riverside” section adjoining the river as the riverside vegetation is of significant value to the birdlife of the valley.

In our view, any new buildings fronting onto the river and prominently visible from within the valley and surrounding downland, together with any associated removal of the riverside vegetation would seem in opposition to the aims of the Adur Landscape Regeneration Project.

Impacts related to Water, Drainage and Flooding

Section 5C: Water, drainage, and flooding

From our perspective the higher level of discharges from new residences and facilities raises significant concerns about pollution in the river, particularly if treatment capacity is exceeded or fails. The likely higher flows from outfalls into the river Adur could impact riverside foraging habitat and the mudbank profile. We recommend that consideration be given to avoid detrimental effects on sensitive areas, for example to the low-lying river cliff habitat where Common Sandpipers are regularly recorded and to the riverbanks and mudflats further downstream that are of high ornithological value.

Conclusion

We have suggested in our submission that the development of the Plan should consider the need to conserve the present ornithological value of the site but also grasp the opportunity to enhance the ecological interest of those large areas of the site that will remain unsuitable for development. We believe there is an opportunity here to develop a large site for quiet nature-based recreational activity which would be an appropriate use, both from the perspective of minimizing disturbance to important breeding species, and in the context of the ambitions for ecological regeneration and rewilding that are implicit in the Adur Regeneration Project. Such a strategy would seem to us to be in keeping with the purposes of the National Park: to conserve and enhance the natural wildlife and beauty whilst also promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities.

This concludes the submission from Shoreham District Ornithological Society.

We are very happy to engage in further discussions and consultations and look forward to the next steps.

Tony Benton, Chair, Shoreham District Ornithological Society (SDOS)
For, and on behalf of, the SDOS Membership

SDOS Garden Birds 2021

Sim Elliott

This year I took over coordinating the SDOS Garden Bird from Val Bentley and this is my first report. As the excellent Excel spreadsheets that Val set up for data analysis work so well, I have continued to use Val's systems for analysing the data and I am following the way that Val presented the data in her reports, with a few additions.

I started by finding the Top 15 Species (Table 1). One individual of a species only has to be seen once to count for that particular garden in a quarter, but abundance of the species can be seen by averaging out the number seen per week in all the gardens. For example, in 2021, at least one Dunnock was seen in 93% of the gardens in each quarter, with an average of 0.97 birds per garden per week. I hope all our participants enjoyed seeing their 0.97% of a Dunnock each week! Of course, in your gardens, some participants will have seen more Dunnocks and some will have seen few or none. The BTO Garden Birdwatch survey reports headline percentages of average birds per garden per week so I think it is a good way of reporting on abundance.

I have added the rankings from the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden Birdwatch for 2020 (the most recent year for which published data is available) for comparison purposes. SDOS's rankings are very similar to the national picture from the BTO, except for Herring Gulls and Magpies; many more gardens in the SDOS area are visited by Herring Gulls than nationally. But that shouldn't be a surprise as we are all near to the coast. I hope we don't see a reduced number due to the impact of Avian Flu which has spread across the country in 2022.

I have also added a table showing our birds ranked by the total number of birds seen in all the reporters' gardens (that is the totals of the largest number of each species seen at one time in a week in everyone's gardens). This is a slightly different way of looking at the abundance of species in SDOS gardens and

shows some interesting things. For example, although Blue Tits were seen in every garden; they are only 5th in the ranking of total birds seen. Whilst 1471 Blue Tits were seen in 2021; a thumping 4958 House Sparrows were seen, but “only” in 92% of Gardens! Well done House Sparrows. As House Sparrows are on the Red List of species in the UK, due to population decline in the UK, it is pleasing to know that there were so many of them in SDOS gardens. Likewise, Starlings and Goldfinches were only seen in 55% and 84% of gardens, but they were very abundant in total. The most obvious explanation of this is that these are birds that often flock so, if you see them in your garden, you are likely to see quite a few.

We should not draw too much significance to increases or decreases in numbers of birds in our area year on year, as our dataset (number of participants and birds) is too small to be enable our data to be statistically significant. We need to look at the much bigger data sets of the RSPB and BTO garden bird surveys to find out what is going on with garden birds in the UK. However, I think that there is much value in the SDOS Garden Bird Survey, as it gives us some information about abundance and diversity in the SDOS recording area. As an example, the numbers of House Sparrows in the SDOS area provides some optimism that House Sparrows are doing well locally. I found reading the records sent in by participants fascinating as so many of the forms contained anecdotes about unusual sightings, or nesting information, in addition to the numerical data. These anecdotes show the participants’ love for the birds that come to their gardens.

Covid-19 rules continued to keep us confined to our homes and local areas for parts of 2021, and the number of participants remained the same. There were 18 forms returned for the first three quarters and 19 for the last quarter.

Table 1 shows the 15 most frequently seen birds during the year, compared with the previous 3 years and Table 2 shows the numbers of birds seen.

Table 1. Top 15 Species (ranked by average % of gardens seen in)

Species	% of gardens birds seen in	Overall position (by % of gardens seen in)				
		SDOS 2021	SDOS 2020	BTO 2020	SDOS 2019	SDOS 2018
Blue Tit	100	1 ↔	1	1	1	= 1
Blackbird	99	2 ↑	3	3	= 2	4
Magpie	97	= 3 ↓	2	8	4	6
Robin	97	= 3 ↑	4	4	5	3
Woodpigeon	97	= 3 ↑	5	2	= 2	= 1
Dunnock	93	6 ↔	6	6	7	7
Great Tit	92	= 7 ↔	7	5	6	5
House Sparrow	92	= 7 ↑	8	7	9	12
Starling	84	9 ↑	10	13	10	10
Goldfinch	82	10 ↓	9	7	8	8
Carrion Crow	72	11 ↔	= 11	18	9	10
Collard Dove	69	12 ↑	13	9	11	12
Wren	67	13 ↓	= 11	16	12	13
Greenfinch	55	14 ↑		15	16	
Herring Gull	53	15 ↔	= 15	33	15	14

The rankings for percentage of gardens visited were mostly very similar to 2020 with only minor changes in position. Blue Tit has maintained the top spot for the past four years and Blackbirds have gone up one place to second position. Magpies are in the number three position, jointly with Robins and Woodpigeons. All the birds except Woodpigeons, Wrens and Greenfinches, were either in the same position as 2020 or moved one place up or down. The only species to creep back into the top 15 were Greenfinches, edging Long-

Tailed Tits out; a reversal of the 2020 situation. Woodpigeon climbed two places to third. Wrens dropped two places to thirteenth.

Table 2. Maximum and total numbers of birds seen

Species	Maximum number seen at one time (Observer & week)	Total number of individual birds seen
Blue Tit	15 Brian (08.08)	1471
Blackbird	17 John and Shena (05.09)	1347
Magpie	7 John and Shena (28.02)	1174
Robin	3 Mark T (29.08 & 3.10)	841
Woodpigeon	12 Marion (27.12 & 3.01)	2037
Dunnock	5 John and Shena (21.02)	962
Great Tit	6 John and Shena (08.08)	1046
House Sparrow	50 John F (03.01)	4958
Starling	73 Sheila (03.10)	4179
Goldfinch	23 Marion (01.01)	1863
Carrion Crow	4 Marion (11&18.07 & 01.08)	423
Collard Dove	4 Reg (17.10)	349
Wren	3 Val (27.06)	279
Greenfinch	8 Val (24.01)	562
Herring Gull	13 Laurie (21.03 & 14.03)	967

Table 3. Top 15 Species (ranked by total number of birds seen in all gardens)

Species	Rank (by total number of birds seen)	Total number of birds seen (largest number at one time in week)	Average number seen per week all gardens	From Table 1	
				Rank (by % of gardens seen in)	% of gardens birds seen in
House Sparrow	1	4958	5.02	= 7	92
Starling	2	4179	4.23	9	84
Woodpigeon	3	2037	2.06	= 3	97
Goldfinch	4	1863	1.89	10	55
Blue Tit	5	1471	1.49	1	100
Blackbird	6	1347	1.36	2	99
Magpie	7	1174	1.19	= 3	97
Great Tit	8	1046	1.06	= 7	92
Herring Gull	9	979	0.99	15	53
Dunnock	10	962	0.97	6	93
Robin	11	841	0.85	= 3	97
Greenfinch	12	562	0.57	14	55
Carrion Crow	13	423	0.43	11	72
Chaffinch	14	386	0.39	16	14
Collard Dove	15	349	0.35	13	69

Table 4. The “Also Rans”

This year I have included all the also rans to give you a picture of the diversity of birds seen in SDOS gardens.

Species	2021 % gardens	Rank	2020 % gardens	2019 % gardens	2018 % gardens
Long-tailed Tit	50	1	54		
Chaffinch	41	2	42	47	49
Blackcap	38	3	41	33	38
Feral Pigeon	29	4	30	24	27
Chiffchaff	19	5	31	35	24
Jay	19	= 5	25	32	34
Great Spot. W	19	= 5	29	36	41
Coal Tit	18	8	26	33	35
Jackdaw	17	9	22	30	28
Song Thrush	15	10	23	34	42
Sparrowhawk	13	11			
Goldcrest	11	12	22	33	36
Stock Dove	8	13			
Nuthatch	7	14			
Pheasant	3	= 15			
Redstart	3	= 15			
BH Gull	1	= 17			
Buzzard	1	= 17			
Firecrest	1	= 17			
Grey Heron	1	= 17			
Pied Fly.	1	= 17			
GBB Gull	1	= 17			
Tree Creeper	1	= 17			
Raven	1	= 17			
Redwing	1	= 17			
Yellowhammer	1	= 17			

All the “Also Rans” reported in 2021 were seen less often than they were in 2000, with the exception of Greenfinches. These finches moved up into the “Top 15” category. Some birds in this category, Jay, Coal Tit, Jackdaw, Song Thrush, Goldcrest, and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, showed marked declines. However, as the total numbers were relatively small in comparison to the top 15 birds, any reduction in numbers looks more significant than it may be. The reductions in the numbers reported may not be an actual reduction in abundance of these birds in the SDOS area. With rarer birds, it is much less likely that observers will see one when they happen to be observing their garden. With such small numbers their recording rates may be as much to do with chance as abundance.

As in 2020, the Song Thrush continued its decline, which is in line with the national decrease in Song Thrush numbers. It is sad to think that this once common garden bird is now quite a rare visitor to gardens. No-one reported a definite sighting of a Mistle Thrush, but Laurie may have seen one in March.

The Highlights

First Quarter

Many more Blackbirds visited Val’s Garden than anywhere else but in the lead for Goldfinches was Sheila, who had between 9 and 12 Goldfinches for the first seven weeks of the year. John Feest’s garden was the stand out garden for House Sparrows, with 60 visiting at one time in the week of 3rd January; although Reg, Cyril & Maureen, and John & Shena also saw good numbers of House Sparrows. Some large numbers of Starlings popped into John Feest, Anthony and Sheila’s gardens. Marion’s garden was the place where Woodpigeons liked to be with considerably higher numbers (between 8 and 12 at one time) than anywhere else. Val, Laurie, John & Shena, Mark and Rae saw Chiffchaffs and Laurie had the honour of seeing a Firecrest. Val, Brian, Laurie, John & Shena and Mark saw Goldcrests and Brian and Val saw

Nuthatches. Brian, Sheila and Marion saw Sparrowhawks in their gardens. Clive recorded Blackcaps (one or two) every week. They liked the apples he spiked onto a bush for them. Val, John & Shena saw one or two Blackcaps in some weeks too. Laurie saw a Raven in March which caused a commotion with the other birds in his garden. John & Shena saw a Little Egret in their garden. Who would have thought a few years ago a Little Egret would be in a garden in Worthing? Marion had a Buzzard sitting in the trees in her garden in Lancing, and a Tawny Owl flew through one morning, A Herring Gull in Vera & Gordon's garden took a liking to the Hedgehog food they put out

Second Quarter

Greenfinches were seen in nine gardens, which is pleasing following their previous national decline. Laurie continued to get the most Herring Gulls and Tony, John Feest and Anthony saw a lot of House Sparrows and Blue Tits fledged in Tony's garden. Reg, Brian, Cyril and Maureen, Anthony and Gordon & Vera saw many Starlings and Gordon & Vera observed between 15 and 30 for the last eight weeks of the quarter. Wrens were rarer, only being seen in 10 gardens. Brian saw a Green Woodpecker – a rare sighting, indeed, and Reg saw a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker. John & Shena saw a Willow Warbler. Laurie had a Common Gull in his garden (a much less common gull than our other gulls), and he saw his first Swift on May 17th. John & Shena noted a Blackcap and a House Sparrow bathing in the pond with lots of mutual splashing.

Third Quarter

Brian had many more Blue Tits in his garden than anyone else, with 15 in one week in August. House Sparrows were very abundant in Reg, Brian, Anthony, Cyril & Maureen and John & Jeanette's gardens. Cyril & Maureen had 27 in one week in August. John Feest got very large numbers of Starlings with more than 50 on some days. Reg, John & Jeanette and Gordon & Vera also saw many Starlings. Brian and John & Shena saw Pied Flycatchers; an unusual bird to see

in a garden. Mark saw a White Wagtail, an unusual visitor from Europe, and a Yellowhammer. He lives near Cissbury where Yellowhammers are quite abundant. Val, Brian and Mark were very lucky, and saw Green Woodpeckers in their gardens. Laurie saw a Peregrine Falcon flying over his garden and eight sightings of Buzzards over his garden. Val, Brian, John & Shena and Marion saw Willow Warblers; and Marion saw a Grey Heron. Mark was lucky enough to see a Redstart. Rae had a family of Great Tits and juvenile Coal Tits in her garden

Fourth Quarter

Brian continued to observe many Herring Gulls, and large numbers of House Sparrow, as did Anthony and John & Shena. Brian, Cyril & Maureen, Gordon & Vera and Sheila saw many Starlings. Sheila saw 73 Starlings in one week in October; a garden murmuration? That was the highest number of a single species seen all year. David saw a Green Woodpecker. David also saw a lot of Woodpigeons; 18 on one occasion in November. David saw a Collard Dove every day. Clive saw 10 Greenfinches on one day in December; 4 in his front garden, and 6 in the back garden, all on feeders. Laurie saw Firecrests two weeks running and saw an injured female pheasant. John & Sheena saw Redwing in December

In Summary

Forty-one different bird species were recorded in SDOS gardens in 2021; 26 “also rans” in addition to the top 15. This was a reduction from the 50 different species reported in 2019.

The locations of the gardens remained the same: Brighton (1), Ferring (1), Findon (1), Goring (1), Henfield (1), High Salvington (1), Hove (1), Lancing (3), Rustington (1), Shoreham (6), Steyning (1) and Worthing (1).

As in 2020, many stalwarts continued to send in their records. The bird surveyors during the year were Val Bently, Tony Benton, David Bettis, Reg

Bradbury, Brian Clay, Jay Cooper, John Cooper, John Feest, Clive Hope, Laurie Keen, Cyril & Maureen Leeves, Sheila Marshall, John & Shena Maskell, Anthony Robinson, John & Jeanette Simpson, Marion Taylor, Mark Taylor, Gordon & Vera Tickler, Rae Titcomb & Peter Whitcomb. Since January 2022 six new participants have joined, and their returns will appear in the 2022 report.

Thank you to all those taking part in the SDOS Garden Birdwatch for your observations and comments. The notes written about the birds you had seen were fascinating.

Chair's report for the reporting period 23 March 2021 to 8 March 2022

Tony Benton

As I write this, I'm nearing the end of my first year as chair of SDOS. Over the course of that year, COVID - 19 restrictions continued to cast a shadow over some elements of our events programme, particularly indoor meetings which have still not resumed. But we were not beaten by Covid!

Here are our four Aims for the year and you will see that an enormous amount has been achieved.

Aim 1 - To promote the study of birds, especially within the Society's Recording Area

- With the easing of lock down restrictions, we cautiously restarted our walks and public engagement events. By the end of this reporting period, we had delivered over 22 walks specifically for members; two public/SDOS events at Coronation Green and on the Adur SSSI; and participated in the 'Bees and Sea' event at Brooklands, where we engaged with members of the general public.
- We also supported a FoSB birding event on 18 December 21 and a World of Widewater event in early January 2022.

- Our indoor meetings were replaced by Zoom presentations and were generally very well attended. The most popular talk attracted around 70 participants.
- Our Facebook group 'Shoreham Birding' has helped us to reach an entirely new audience and more than 775 people have signed up as followers. Approximately eight new SDOS members have been recruited via this route.
- Two highly acclaimed bi-annual newsletters were produced with the Autumn edition boasting over 60 pages of informative content.
- We have actively encouraged more members to contribute records to Birdtrack and Swiftmapper, and there is clear evidence of several new SDOS members now contributing to the Sussex Ornithological Society records via Birdtrack.
- We have formalised our links with BTO and are now a registered partner.
- We successfully recruited a member to take on the management of our Garden Birdwatch Scheme from January 2022.
- We contributed articles to local magazines, the Brighton and Hove magazine BNI, and the Shoreham Herald.

Aim 2 - To promote the protection of birds and their environment, especially within the SDOS recording area

- We persuaded the RSPB to install a small number of signs around the Adur Estuary reserve.
- We contributed financially to the provision of a nest box at Brooklands Park and repaired nest boxes in the churchyard of St Mary de Haura, New Shoreham, in the spring and autumn of 2021.

- In March 2021, nine new nest boxes installed were installed in the churchyard of St Nicolas, Old Shoreham- six of which were handmade by one of our members.
- In May 2021, ad hoc surveys commenced of Shepherd's Mead, Findon. This activity was important as it provided us with a legitimate channel for influencing the direction of re-wilding at the site.
- SDOS became full members of the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust sub - group, collaborating with organisations like the RSPB, Natural England, Sussex Wildlife Trust and others to find solutions to the growing problem of recreational disturbance on the Adur SSSI.
- Five awareness raising workshops were delivered for local paddlers (kayak and Stand-Up Paddle Board instructors) reaching approximately 35 people, and resulting in some very positive social media coverage. The aim was to raise awareness of the fragility of the Adur Estuary SSSI and promote sensitive use of the river.
- In October 2021, and after two years of work, we finally got the 'paddlers' leaflet approved by the RSPB. This leaflet promotes responsible paddling and explains why the SSSI is so important and how inadvertent damage can be avoided.
- During 2021, we developed formal links with Adur and Worthing Council in relation to New Salts Farm (NSF) and submitted a vision document in the autumn of that year, designed to put birds centre-stage in the planning phase of this exciting project. We also formally registered our interest in the Pad Farm and Shepherds Mead re-wilding projects and have actively participated in stakeholder discussions.
- In 2021, we carried out a baseline survey of birds at NSF with weekly visits over ten weeks during spring and early summer, using a recognised survey methodology.

- We have contributed to World of Widewater and Friends of Shoreham Beach committee meetings and made a tentative link with Lancing Ring volunteers.

- In February 2022, we submitted a very detailed paper to Adur and Worthing District Council in relation to their public “call for green spaces” (a public consultation over green spaces for nature).

Aim 3 - To work with the local community to promote an interest in birds and their knowledge of local conservation issues

- In March 202, a digital archive of past reports and other SDOS publications was completed, with huge assistance from member Dr John Newnham. We are also digitally archiving a large number of historical newsletters and other written materials of interest and relevance to Shoreham and beyond.

- In September 2021, we delivered a birdwatching session to approximately 90 Primary School children, in conjunction with volunteers from World of Widewater. Very positive feedback was received from the school. In the same month a session for a U3A group from Brighton and Hove was delivered to great acclaim.

- Our Facebook group has been used to promote links with other nature focused groups such as Bramber Brooks Nature Reserve and Sussex Ornithological Society and to inform the wider general public of our conservation activities.

- In November 2021, SDOS contributed to an Adur and Worthing Council webinar, focusing on Sussex Bay and nature restoration and, in the same month, we were part of a COP26 twitter and YouTube video.

- In early December, we provided a tour of the Adur Estuary SSSI for members of the AWDC sustainability team. This was very well received and provided an opportunity for SDOS to raise awareness of how important the SSSI is and how and why it has deteriorated in recent years.

- We have refreshed our membership offer for children and young people and clarified our safeguarding stance for under 16s.

Aim 4 - To maintain systems and resources for the efficient running of the society

- Forty-six people joined the AGM via Zoom on 23 March 21 - a very impressive turnout for our first ever virtual AGM. More than 70 people voted, mostly using the electronic voting facility- a first!
- In the light of feedback from our AGM, the website was significantly enhanced to explain the 'SDOS recording area ', key birding sites and map references.
- Over the reporting period, we have attracted 54 new members, including five children.
- Our finances are healthy, and we have avoided raising our membership fees for at least another year.

Conclusions and Thanks

All of the above reflects hundreds of hours of volunteer time from Council colleagues and SDOS members and I thank you all. I must also give special mention and thanks to Val Bentley who has retired after 12 years at the helm of our garden birdwatch scheme. I also thank Sim Elliot for agreeing to take over the scheme. I am immensely proud of what has been achieved over the past year and I think that SDOS is reaching and influencing more people than ever before. Enthusing people about birding is what SDOS is all about and I'm sure that we will continue to flourish and welcome new people to the society in years to come.

Image Gallery



Photograph acknowledgments

The source of photographs is often clear from the context or other attribution and those are not listed here. Note also that some of the bird photographs are illustrative; they may not be of the actual bird referred to in the account.

Front cover: Red Kite – Ron Bewley

Page 33: Long-tailed Tit – Dorian Mason

Page 36: Brambling – Dorian Mason

Page 61: Coal Tit – Dorian Mason

Page 61: Firecrest – Dorian Mason

Back cover: Common Whitethroat – Dorian Mason

If you use an email address but are not a member of the User Group then please consider joining (<https://groups.io/g/sdos/join>) to make sure you receive up-to-date information about SDOS activities.

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Facebook Group - 'Shoreham Birders'	Tony Benton Jenny Holter	

23/3/2022

