

Shoreham and District
Ornithological Society
Autumn Newsletter
2023



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Editorial

Producing an editorial requires a bit of thought and effort so I decided for this edition I would try out Artificial Intelligence to make it easier. In no time at all I found a website called deepai.org and typed Birdwatching in Pulborough into the Travel Guide section. Getting this far took about five minutes as I hadn't attempted this sort of thing before. The response wasn't instantaneous – maybe a few seconds – but steadily onto the screen the following appeared.

“If you're interested in birdwatching in Pulborough I recommend visiting the RSPB Pulborough Brooks nature reserve. It is situated in the Arun valley and has a variety of habitats for birds. Some of the birds you can spot include Lapwings, Redshank, Gadwall and Teal.

If you're looking for other bird watching destinations nearby I suggest checking out Amberley Wildbrooks which is about 10 miles away. This reserve is managed by Sussex Wildlife Trust and is known for its wetland birds like Wood Sandpipers and Water Rails.

Another great option is Knepp Wildland which is only 7 miles away. This reserve is a pioneering rewilding project, where you can spot a variety of birds such as Turtle Doves, Nightjars and Buzzards.”

One can quibble with some of the finer detail in the above but overall the process and output is rather amazing.

So I have managed to produce an editorial using Artificial Intelligence. Mission accomplished!

Best wishes to you all

Roger Smith

Spring Migration around the Adur Estuary

Richard Allan

I am fortunate in being able to observe from my Waterfront apartment a section of the Adur Estuary SSSI from the Railway Bridge to the Old Toll bridge. In addition, I often walk to places like the Norfolk Bridge, Town Quay, Coronation Green or over to Widewater. Here is an account of some of the migrating birds which I saw, or in a few cases heard about, passing through the Adur Estuary from March to end of May.

March

The first sign of Spring migration for me was the brief appearance of twelve Black-tailed Godwits in the morning of the 12th on the east bank by the Railway Bridge. Sadly, they quickly departed, being flushed by a dog racing onto the mudflats.

Two Grey Plovers (12th), included the distinctive white-headed individual which had over-wintered in the area and another, possibly north-bound bird. The white-headed bird was last seen around mid-March. On the 22nd in the late afternoon there was a Grey Plover showing signs of breeding plumage. The light and weather were poor and I hoped it would stay overnight but alas it departed.

Also on the 12th were seventeen Dunlin and a single Curlew. The Curlew is likely to be one of the two birds which had mainly wintered on the RSPB section but during March became a more frequent visitor to north of the Railway Bridge.

The 15th and 16th saw me heading down to Widewater as a Little Ringed Plover had been reported. I failed to see the plover but found two migrant Firecrests and a Chiffchaff in the tamarisk bushes which had likely just flown across the channel. On the 16th, I returned to Widewater and saw the Little Ringed Plover plus one of the Firecrests, with both Firecrests being seen



again on the 17th. There was also a notable movement of Chiffchaffs in mid-March, with around half a dozen birds fly-catching from the trees and bushes around the apartment and more birds along the Downs Link path towards the Amsterdam Pub.

March 18th provided a classic sight from the apartment of eight Sandwich Terns flying directly north up river about 50-60m high, disappearing out of sight beyond the Old Toll Bridge. It was one of those brief sightings where I was in the right place at the right time to witness this up-river migration movement. Around mid-March Mediterranean Gulls, mainly adults or near adults, were seen on several days as they moved along the coast to their breeding areas with some individuals, recognisable by their plumage characteristics, stopping on the estuary for several days.

March ended with two more breeding plumage Black-tailed Godwits (29th), again just north of the Railway Bridge on the east side in the early morning. Again they quickly departed as activity on the footpath increased.

April

'Our' Greenshank faithfully spent the winter in the Houseboat Channel, rarely seeming to stray from there, so a Greenshank on 4th and 5th opposite the Waterfront was of note for me. It may have been a migrant bird or perhaps just the Houseboat Channel bird starting to venture further afield. Two Greenshanks on 20th must have involved at least one migrant with single birds seen on 21st, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th April and three birds on the 23rd.

Two Avocets arrived on the 5th and spent most of the day feeding either side of the Toll Bridge. They appeared very relaxed but departed overnight.

My last record of Curlew was on the 9th with a bird feeding in the salt marsh on the airfield side which was likely the over-wintering bird and not a migrant. Even a big bird like a Curlew can disappear from sight into the channels with the best chance being to see a bird land on the mudflats before walking into the salt marsh or one washing and preening in the freshwater flow at low tide.

The 10th saw a Brent Goose briefly south of the Toll Bridge, a Grey Plover which was different to the wintering birds and best of all a Sanderling and a Knot. The Sanderling was a pale bird still in its winter plumage as was the Knot. Both were feeding with a Dunlin and Ringed Plover around the gravel patches on the east side north of the Waterfront. The Knot quickly departed but the Sanderling stayed for some time.

On the 20th I saw my first migrating Whimbrel with five birds resting on the west side north of the Railway Bridge. Whimbrel became a frequent sighting through to mid-May.



Towards the end of the month, Bar-tailed Godwits were seen on April 23rd, 26th, 27th, 28th and 30th and this reflected groups moving east along the coast. Of these sighting the highlight must be from the 26th with five birds, three of which were in full brick-red breeding plumage. As the tide rose late afternoon they were resting on the west bank and were joined by seven Whimbrel and two Oystercatchers. As the tide continued to rise the Bar-tailed Godwits

departed north along with most of the Whimbrel. At one point ten Whimbrel were resting or feeding on the section between the Railway and Old Bridges which was my maximum Spring count.

Common Sandpipers made their first Spring appearance between the Railway and Toll Bridges with three birds on 30th.

Throughout April small numbers of Ringed Plover and Dunlin were seen on several days but disappointingly never in large numbers.

On April 18th a Spoonbill was reported by Tony Benton on the mudflats just north of the Railway Bridge around 4pm. I was driving back after doing my weekly nature conservation work in the Weir Wood SSSI area. I thought "Great, will be home in fifteen minutes" knowing it would be easily visible from the balcony. Sadly, it departed a few minutes after Tony found it, which again makes me wonder how many birds don't get observed. It probably emphasises too that the Adur Estuary is a busy, crowded place and many birds don't settle and quickly move on.

May

May started with seven Whimbrel recorded on the 5th with my last Spring record of three birds on May 12th.

Common Sandpiper were seen on several days with a maximum of 4 towards the end of the month on the 26th. Common Sandpipers always seem to favour the west side and can be easily overlooked when using binoculars. They seem to be either right on the water's edge or on the interface of mudflats and salt marsh.

Two Greenshank, the last of the Spring migration were seen on the 26th.



A personal highlight of the Spring migration was the appearance of a pair of Little Ringed Plovers at Widewater from 18th May for a few days. They favoured the muddy patches just west of the bridge and were often present with a Ringed Plover. This allowed some side-by-side photos of the two birds which make up our SDOS logo including when the larger Ringed Plover tried to chase off the Little Ringed Plovers. There was a hope that the Little Ringed Plovers would stay and attempt to breed but they departed after a few days.

As Spring migration started to come to an end another Black-tailed Godwit appeared between the Railway and Toll Bridges (24th). It was not showing any signs of breeding plumage and may have been a young bird undertaking one of its first migrations northwards.

Small numbers of Ringed Plover and Dunlin were seen on a number of days throughout May although numbers felt low with a maximum of eight Ringed Plover (22nd) and probably no more than five Dunlin on any single day.

Spring Summary

As I have only been in Shoreham since 2021 it is hard for me to know what is a normal Spring migration on the estuary in terms of timing, bird species and numbers.

This Spring had a good range of species with migrating waders represented by Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Avocet, Little Ringed and Ringed Plovers, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Sanderling, Knot, Whimbrel, Curlew, Greenshank, Redshank and Common Sandpiper.

Numbers of some of the commoner birds seemed low such as Dunlin and Ringed Plover and that was probably reflected in the numbers which overwintered too. On the other hand, numbers of Whimbrel seemed good, with a maximum count of ten for me on the small section between the Railway and Old Toll Bridges.

One or other of the Godwit species stopped to feed and rest on ten days in the March to May period although it is noticeable that the Godwits can be wary birds and many quickly depart.

Avocets seem to be occasional visitors and are always a delight to see and to point out to the public. With increasing numbers breeding at inland sites perhaps we will see more of them on the Adur.

Sanderling is a common bird on the Sussex coastline in winter as is Knot which can be seen in good numbers at places like Pagham. However, in the Adur Estuary SSSI area they are just occasional visitors so it was good to record one of each this Spring.

Finally, the star bird had to be the Spoonbill found by Tony Benton, just a stone's throw away from my balcony ...but which I missed. That's birding.

As I write this, the southerly 'Autumn' migration and even the return of wintering birds like Lapwings and Redshanks has been underway for quite a

few weeks. The first Lapwing was recorded on June 3rd while some birds like Ringed Plovers were still passing northwards. Fingers crossed for good numbers of birds this autumn indicating breeding success and a good range of species too.

A Roller Coaster

John Maskell

The SDOS Annual Report for 1986 contains an article that I wrote describing a holiday in Cyprus which Shena and I enjoyed with her parents in the Spring of 1981. Shena's late father was an avid birder and greatly influenced our own interest. This was my first foreign trip focusing on birding and we enjoyed many memorable experiences. However, the sighting of one particular bird has lingered long in my consciousness. As we were driving along the south coast of Cyprus near Pissouri one April day, from my back seat, I spotted what I described as "a turquoise crow" perched on a telegraph wire. It was my first European Roller! If birds could look like that then I was hooked!

We went on to see several more European Rollers that week. Apart from House Sparrows it is a bird that has remained my favourite. In the ensuing 40-odd years I have been fortunate to see a further dozen species of Rollers in other parts of the globe, but nothing has replaced the excitement of that first Roller until....

On 8th July this year Shena and I were birding on the Isle of Wight and had been intending to finish the day at our favourite location at the RSPB's semi-coastal Brading Marshes Reserve. However, an early evening shower changed our minds and we headed back to our base in Ryde. No sooner had we arrived indoors and our mobiles connected to Wifi when a message alert from the local birding group told of a European Roller at the Marshes. What?! I stared in disbelief at the phone's screen but there was a photo to prove it! Within a quarter-of-an-hour and an exhilarating fairground-like ride we were back at Brading Marshes enjoying views of the Roller through our 'scope! This



Brading Marshes from Bembridge Downs

represented a major twitch for the Isle of Wight with no fewer than half-a-dozen local birders in attendance! (How many birders would have assembled had the bird arrived on the mainland we wondered?) As in that earlier encounter in Cyprus the bird was making use of telegraph wires to perch and look for prey.

Fortunately, the Isle of Wight Roller stayed around for 4 days at Brading Marshes enabling the local birders an opportunity to see this national rarity and the Island's first.



European Roller, Brading Marshes, Isle of Wight

See it, record it, report it- job done!

Tony Benton

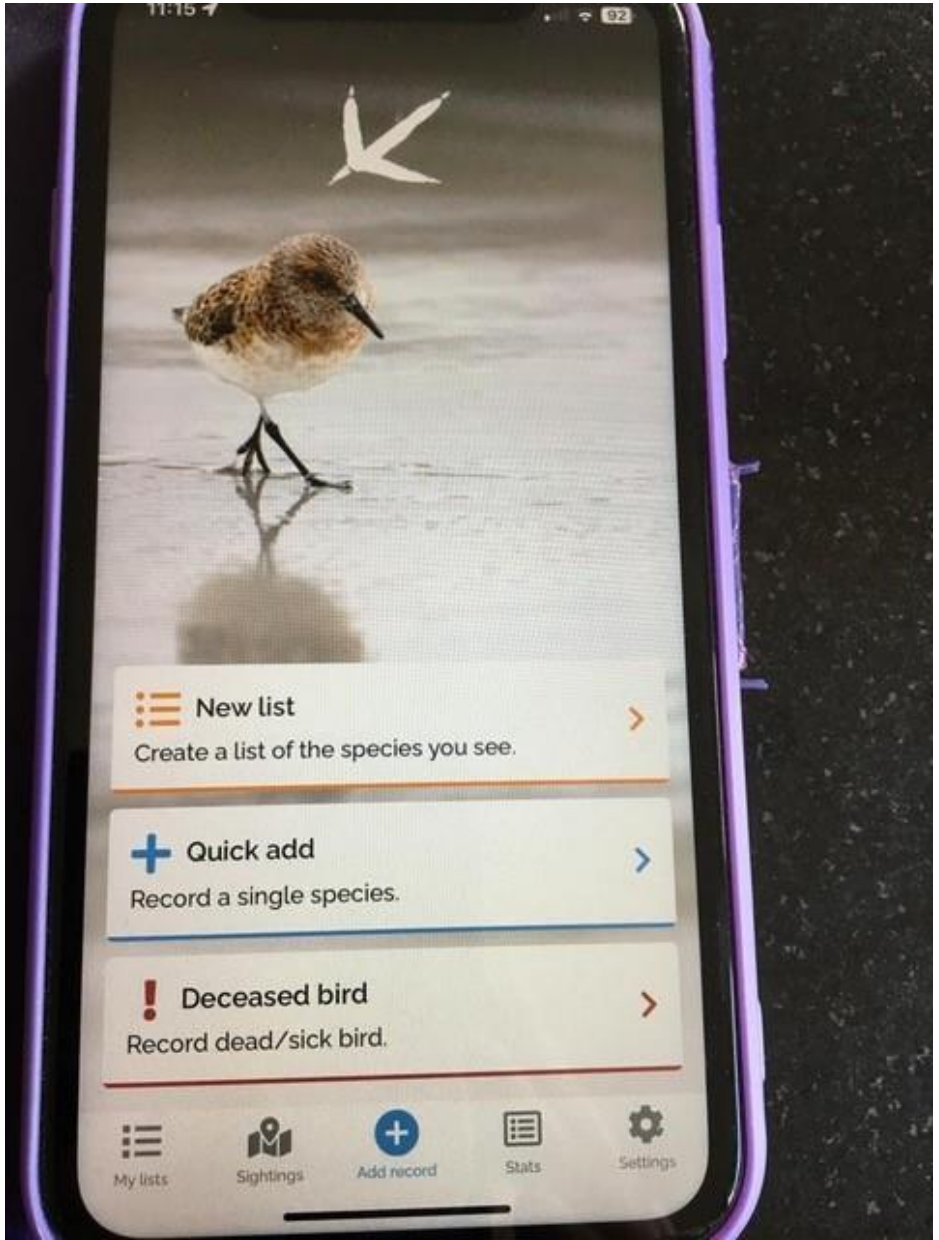
Since 2005 I have been intermittently submitting my bird sightings to the BirdTrack scheme, hosted by British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

The idea behind BirdTrack is that if you have been out birdwatching or simply watching the birds in your garden, records of the birds you have seen can be submitted and represent useful data. The scheme is year-round, and ongoing, and anyone with an interest in birds can contribute. Important results produced by BirdTrack include mapping migration (arrivals and departures), trends in abundance and monitoring scarce birds.

The success of BirdTrack relies on birdwatching lists submitted at all times of the year from throughout Britain and Ireland. BTO prefer what they call 'complete lists' of birds (all species seen and heard) because the proportion of lists with a given species provides a good measure of frequency of occurrence that can be used for population monitoring. Incomplete lists and casual records can also be entered because they too build our understanding of populations, distributions and movements.

Up until the beginning of this year I have been using my desktop computer to upload my sightings. But there was a problem: I would arrive back at home with my sightings scribbled on a note pad, full of good intentions. But unfortunately I would then often forget to follow through, and the sightings would remain in my note pad.

And so to the point of this article - earlier this year I discovered the BirdTrack App, and my life was transformed!



The App works on any smartphone, and includes the following features:

- Quick and easy list creation with an illustrated checklist of the most likely species
- A single record can be submitted with the 'Quick Add' option, perfect for one-off sightings
- It is possible to add optional information like breeding behaviour and plumage to any sightings
- Automatic weather information is generated, including cloud cover, temperature and wind direction for each list (this can be edited if required)
- Amphibian, butterfly, dragonfly, mammal, orchid, and reptile records can also be submitted
- Previously submitted lists can be edited
- It is possible to produce life and year lists

The App also has a pinpoint function, but I must confess that I have not checked its accuracy.

The App can be downloaded free from both the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#). Once installed on your device, you need to enter your BirdTrack username and password (case sensitive), via the Settings page.

I have become evangelical about the App because of its ease of use. It has boosted my productivity and it fits with a busy life. Now my sightings are uploaded before I have even started my journey home, or popped into the Co-op for some shopping! If you are not already contributing to citizen science please consider using BirdTrack and the immensely convenient BirdTrack App.

Here's my new mantra:

See it, record it, report it- job done!

The Steyning Downland Scheme

Libby Hartzhorne

The Steyning Downland Scheme (SDS), www.steyningdownland.org, manages 165 acres of the Wiston Estate, owned by the Goring family. The scheme which is within the South Downs National Park was created in 2007 to fulfil a vision of the Goring family, supported by volunteers, with the aim of meeting the needs of people and wildlife. It became a charity in 2009, and there are now a variety of community and conservation activities that take place throughout the year, including regular bird, botany and butterfly surveys, bushcraft days for children, mountain biking in a designated area and conservation grazing. More recently bat and moth monitoring groups have started up, and the Estate has allowed the SDS use of an additional 7 acres of land which will be managed as an undisturbed wildlife haven. Most of the site is accessible to the public by means of bridleways and footpaths.

Habitats include woodland, chalk grassland, scrub and water, the last in the form of two ancient millponds connected by a chalk stream. Work has recently been undertaken to restore the Upper Millpond, including repairing leaks, putting up a fence around the northern side to prevent disturbance of the water by dogs (an area on the south side of the pond has been left accessible for dogs), and, in partnership with Wakehurst Place, reintroducing a rare plant called Starfruit which is currently extinct in Sussex. Almost all of Starfruit's habitat requirements are met by this Millpond. Ongoing work is also undertaken to prevent scrub encroaching over the chalk grassland areas (while leaving some scrub intact). Of note is the effect of this on butterflies – the SDS is considered to be one of the best sites in the UK to see the Brown Hairstreak, and a new Duke of Burgundy colony was found on the site in 2020.

The number of regular bird survey volunteers is currently around 15 and over recent years an increasing number of Shoreham District Ornithological Society members have also joined this survey group. The bird surveys take place early



on the second Sunday of each month, lasting for about two hours. On meeting, the volunteers usually divide up to walk around two set routes. The birds seen and/or heard are recorded on BirdTrack - the number of bird species recorded so far is an impressive 104!

The species recorded include a good number of raptors. Kestrel, Buzzard and Sparrowhawk are regularly seen, with smaller numbers of Red Kite, Peregrine and the occasional Hobby. In Autumn there are Hirundines taking a final feed before their long journey south. There are Grey Wagtails around the water and Teal in winter, Marsh Tits and Firecrests in the woodland areas, and a good number of warbler species on migration with Blackcap, Common Whitethroat and Chiffchaff staying to establish breeding territories. Other birds include local Stonechats, Yellowhammers, Linnets and Skylarks. A few Wheatear and Spotted Flycatchers are seen in spring and autumn, Other typical Autumn migrants are Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, Ring Ouzel and Whinchat.

My involvement with the SDS bird survey group began five years ago after I attended a “Songs of the Dawn” event run by the scheme. Bird song had always been something that caused me to stop and appreciate the beauty and peacefulness of it, but for most of my life I could probably count on one hand the number of songs that I recognised. I was therefore so happy to find an opportunity to be able to start learning a lot more, and since then have been appreciating and benefiting from the friendliness and generosity with which everyone shares their knowledge and experience –during both SDS and SDOS activities. There is no cost to joining or volunteering with the scheme, though supporters are encouraged to become a Friend for a small monthly contribution.

Thank-you to Bob Platt and Andrew Armitage for their organisation of the bird surveys, and their wider involvement in the SDS. Thanks also to them, and Alan Sweetman, for the information they supplied that helped with the writing of this article.

An interview with Val Bentley

Tony Benton

You're a well known ringer, could you tell us how you got into it and how your role as a ringer has evolved?

I was born and brought up in Sussex, but only had a general interest in birds. However, when living in North Devon in about 1982 a ringer (also my GP) came and gave a talk to the local RSPB group and invited the audience to get in touch if they wanted to go along to see some ringing. It took me a while to pluck up courage but I went along to a mist netting session at Braunton Burrows and was hooked! I moved to North Somerset in September 1983 and was able to start training with Pete Rock and the Chew Valley Ringing Group.

My husband Roger and I moved back to Sussex in 1986. Barrie Watson took me on as a trainee, then I gained a C permit and transferred to Phil Clay when I started doing more ringing with the Steyning Ringing Group. I was quite happy to potter along as a C permit holder until the Group needed someone based mainly at Cissbury to get an A permit and then become a trainer. So rather reluctantly I was assessed for both and am currently the lead ringer at Cissbury, with Phil as the group leader.

What keeps you motivated - especially given the early mornings?

You never know what might turn up. Years ago I got very excited that I might ring my first Kestrel when we caught a female in October 1991, but it had already been ringed ... in Strathclyde, Scotland as a nestling in June! We have controlled a Song Thrush and a Robin both ringed in France, and a Blackcap



ringed in Algeciras in Spain. More recently, we have ringed our first juveniles of both Firecrest and Redstart last year, and our first juvenile Nuthatch this year. Occasionally we find the more unusual species which always bring a frisson of excitement, Woodcock, Yellow-browed Warbler and the rarest of all, a Barred Warbler.

It's also good when long-lived birds reappear at the site, or "our" birds are found elsewhere. One of the oldest birds we captured was a Garden Warbler ringed as an adult in 1999 which returned to the site almost every year until 2007, and had therefore survived for at least 9 years since hatching and had undertaken 9 return journeys to sub-Saharan Africa! One nice control for me was a Blackcap we ringed in 2020 which was found by a ringer during the 2022 breeding season in Auchenhew Bay, Isle of Arran, which I had visited while on holiday there in 2016.

Are you seeing a good level of interest in ringing amongst young people?

There are currently three registered trainees who are all in their twenties. Two of these are at university. Another potential trainee is in the same age group. We hope that some of these will become qualified ringers and stay around to build on our work over the past 40 years.

Is technology impacting in a positive way in the world of ringing and migration studies?

Certainly the advent of geolocators and satellite tags have advanced the knowledge of what routes certain species take, and where they winter. Two Cuckoos with satellite tags which had been captured a mile or so apart on Ashdown Forest surprised everyone when one took a route to the Congo rainforest via Spain and Morocco, while the other went via Croatia and the Eastern Mediterranean! Further afield, Bar-tailed Godwits have astonished scientists by travelling from Alaska to Tasmania, nearly 8,500 miles in 11 days without stopping. No doubt technology will improve and smaller, lighter devices will become available for use on smaller birds. As I am getting on now, I'll stick with the mist nets and rings!

The birding world has really changed over the last few years, with more and more female birders on the scene. I'm interested to know if being a woman has had it challenges? And if so, how you navigated any obstacles or challenges?

Maybe just me, but I never found anyone looked askance because I was female – maybe I just didn't notice! Everyone was always very helpful, particularly when I was doing my ringing training with the Chew Valley group. I was a novice

birder when I started ringing, so needed a lot of help, which was given kindly. Also if you have small children, a supportive and sympathetic partner is essential – though that should apply equally to male ringers!

What has been your most memorable UK birding experience?

This has to be when I went on a field trip with some SOS members to Mull at the end of the 2008 - 2011 BTO Atlas survey, when they were trying to fill in gaps in the tetrad surveys. Pete Denyer and I climbed up to the top of a cliff to a plateau with lochans, where the only sounds were the calls of Golden Plover and a displaying Dunlin. Not a soul in site, beautiful sunny day, with a view over a clear blue sea.



What's your favourite snack when you're out ringing?

Just sarnies – I alternate between peanut butter or Philly & Marmite. And plenty of tea!

You always seem to be on the go - how do you relax?

It used to be going out with the dog, but she's too old to walk far now. So a nice doze on the sofa after lunch on a ringing day, tackling a cryptic crossword with Roger (as neither of us can complete one on our own), or watching the old Rupert Davies Maigret episodes we've got stored up! Plus getting away from the computer when on holiday and getting my head into a good book.

If you were Prime Minister for the day, what one thing would you change in the world of conservation?

There's so much that could be improved, but my general beef with the world today is that we aim for growth and expansion all the time at the expense of the environment. We should instead focus on reducing consumption and exploitation, and respect the natural world, rather than regarding it as a vast playground for humans. After all, it is the only home we have!

News from Widewater

Jo Proctor

This breeding season has been successful for the young Widewater pair of Mute Swans . Nine cygnets hatched in early May and nine are surviving well at seven weeks old.

One of the Widewater Mallard ducks hatched 9 ducklings but after only 3 days she disappeared leaving the ducklings on their own. I am not sure what happened to her but it is likely that she was drowned by male ducks during mating. Male ducks can be very aggressive and often try to mate with a female as a group. Despite being on their own, seven ducklings survived and are still going strong at 11 weeks old and are now almost fully grown. It is unusual for ducklings to survive at Widewater as the open space allows easy predation by the larger gulls so these plucky ducklings have been named 'The Magnificent Seven' by local residents!

So if you are visiting Widewater, look out for the Magnificent Seven and the Noble Nine!

In a previous article I described the battles between the old pair of swans and the newcomers. This year the older pair were unable to mate as they had been driven out of the water and on to the bank at the east end of the lagoon by the young male who now dominates the territory.

Stanley and Hilda took refuge in a resident's garden. They were safe in the enclosed space but no longer able to go on the water which meant that they could not wash and preen and they started to look in poor condition. I showered them with a watering can which did not go down too well but it helped. Every morning I fed them and filled up their water bowls and another resident would feed them in the afternoon but it was obvious that we could not sustain this situation and that it was time to find them somewhere else to go. I had spoken to local wildlife rescuer Billy Elliot about the swans and asked if he knew of anywhere they might be relocated to and he remembered that someone had offered a home to any rescue wildfowl as they had a large garden with a lake. We went to see it and saw that it was a perfect place for them to go. There was a large lake in a beautiful location with trees for shade and an island. The owner was keen to have a pair of swans as her new residents and said she would be happy to feed them and look after them. I had explained that Stanley was an elderly swan with arthritis and that they were both used to being fed. The bank of the lake was fairly steep so she kindly arranged for a

gardener to create a gentle slope up to her lawn so he could get in and out easily.

On 21st June 2023, Stanley and Hilda left Widewater after about twenty years in residence to start a new life. For me and for many residents, it was bitter sweet. After being with them every day for so long, I was going to miss them and there would be a gap in my life but I knew that they were going to a wonderful retirement home where they would be safe and cared for and that was what they needed. They would always be able to choose to stay or fly away.

We collected them and travelled to their new home. Billy released them on to the lake one at a time, with Hilda going first. She immediately started exploring the lake and surroundings. Stanley became agitated when he saw her go and was desperate to be with her, trying to get out of the crate he was in, but very quickly Billy returned to collect him and he was released on to the water too. We watched them swim to each other and bond with head turning, as swans do, then they started dipping and washing together. They were happy. We watched them for some time. There was no attempt to fly away. I think they knew that this was a new home for them and their own piece of paradise. It was the end of a chapter but not the end of the story as a new chapter was beginning. I held on to this thought as I left them. It would never be the same but, very kindly, I was invited to visit them as often as I wanted to and this is how it will be. Two weeks after they moved to their new home I returned to see how they were getting on. They were lounging on the lawn in the sun looking happy and content. When they saw me walking towards them, they waddled up to me and we talked together for a while. I knew they were settled and happy and so was I.

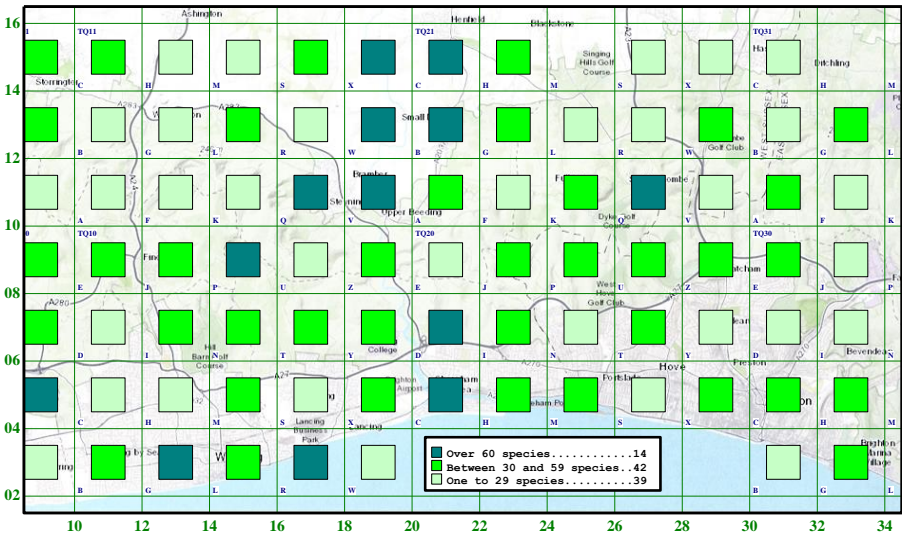
On Widewater, the younger pair are the new King and Queen of the territory which they fought for and won. This is nature and how it will always be. For Stanley and Hilda a new life has begun. They are lucky Swans, still safe and loved and I am very lucky to be able to visit and spend time in their company for the rest of their lives.

Birds recorded in the SDOS area between January and June 2023

Clive Hope and John Newnham

By mid-July there were nearly 26,000 records for the first six months of the year in the Sussex Ornithological Society's database from sites within the SDOS recording area. These observations have all been entered into the online systems and there are no records from the British Trust for Ornithology's national surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, Wetland Bird Survey or Garden Birdwatch. These records were submitted by approximately 280 observers with seven finders providing more than 1000 sightings during this period. The records come from 190 different sites; the top locations in terms of record numbers were Brooklands, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Tarring and the Henfield Levels.

SDOS January to June 2023 Species recorded in each tetrad



There were observations on every day during this period with 17th April (334 records) being the most popular and 12th January (6 records) the day with the least. About 78% of the records had a grid reference at tetrad or finer level allowing useful mapping. The figure above shows, in three bands, the number of species recorded in each tetrad (2km x2km grid square). Once again tetrad TQ20C (Adur estuary) with 101 species was the most diverse with, 91 species recorded in TQ1 IV (Upper Beeding) being just behind.

A total of 191 different species have so far been recorded in this period but assessment and verification of these observation is far from complete. Perhaps the most outstanding record is of a **Sardinian Warbler** which first appeared in a Lancing garden in November and remained until 17th January. Other species recorded on just one date, in chronological order, were a **Slavonian Grebe** at Brighton Marina on 2nd January, a **Jack Snipe** at Pyecombe Golf Course on 31st January and a **Black-necked Grebe** offshore at Lancing on 8th February. A **Caspian Gull** was on the river on 28th March. Then in April a **Great Grey Shrike** in Brighton on the 5th, a **Goshawk** over Steyning Round Hill on 7th, a **Manx Shearwater** off Goring Gap on the 14th, a **Serin** at Widewater on the 15th, a **Pied Flycatcher** at Cissbury on the 17th, a **Spoonbill** on the river on the 18th, a **Red-rumped Swallow** at High Salvington on the 20th, a **Tree Pipit** at Church Hill, Findon on the 22nd, a **White Stork** on the Henfield Levels on the 23rd, a **Hooded Crow** at Goring Gap on the 25th and a **Great Northern Diver** offshore at Worthing on the 29th. May was less prolific with two **Nightjars** recorded at Woods Mill on the 19th, a **Garganey** on Beeding Brooks on the 21st with a **Wood Sandpiper** there on the 26th and five **Common Crossbills** flying over Cissbury on the 28th. In June a **Marsh Warbler** was at Brighton Racecourse.

The following table lists the other species recorded in this period showing the number of days each species has been recorded, the first and last date and the maximum count for each. Where there are several days with the same maximum count, mostly one or two birds, then just one record is shown.

Species	Days	First	Last	Max. count
Brent Goose	23	07-Jan	04-May	681 on 16-Mar at Worthing
Canada Goose	49	01-Jan	10-Jun	209 on 08-Apr at Henfield Levels
Greylag Goose	43	01-Jan	28-Jun	135 on 11-Jan at Beeding Brooks
Mute Swan	134	01-Jan	28-Jun	17 on 06-Jan at Upper Adur Levels
Egyptian Goose	13	01-Jan	08-Apr	15 on 14-Jan at Stretham Manor
Common Shelduck	31	13-Jan	23-Jun	7 on 06-May at Worthing
Mandarin Duck	2	17-Jan	19-Mar	3 on 19-Mar at Sandgate Park
Shoveler	29	01-Jan	14-May	56 on 08-Apr at Henfield Levels
Gadwall	10	01-Jan	26-May	115 on 20-Jan at Henfield Levels
Eurasian Wigeon	25	05-Jan	08-Apr	600 on 23-Jan at Henfield Levels
Mallard	140	01-Jan	29-Jun	89 on 27-Jan at Henfield Levels
Pintail	17	05-Jan	19-Apr	274 on 20-Jan at Henfield Levels
Eurasian Teal	73	01-Jan	04-May	447 on 08-Apr at Henfield Levels
Common Pochard	4	05-Jan	23-May	5 on 05-Jan at Henfield Levels
Tufted Duck	7	01-Jan	28-May	6 on 15-Jan at Henfield Levels
Common Eider	2	06-Mar	09-Apr	3 on 09-Apr at Worthing
Velvet Scoter	3	28-Mar	04-May	3 on 04-May at Worthing
Common Scoter	25	04-Jan	04-May	178 on 17-Apr at Widewater
Red-breasted Merganser	31	01-Jan	04-May	40 on 24-Feb at Goring Gap
Grey Partridge	16	14-Jan	09-Jun	9 on 19-Jan at Steyning Round Hill
Common Pheasant	115	01-Jan	29-Jun	28 on 21-Feb at Highdown
Quail	17	01-May	29-Jun	2 on 08-Jun at Cissbury
Red-legged Partridge	42	02-Jan	26-Jun	15 on 02-Jan at Portslade Mile Oak
Common Swift	59	20-Apr	30-Jun	35 on 05-Jun at Fulking
Common Cuckoo	22	13-Apr	12-Jun	2 on 25-May at Henfield Levels
Feral Pigeon	165	01-Jan	28-Jun	100 on 21-Apr at Brighton
Stock Dove	138	01-Jan	30-Jun	50 on 16-Jan at Ditchling Beacon
Woodpigeon	181	01-Jan	30-Jun	210 on 01-Mar at Lower Adur Valley
Turtle Dove	17	30-Apr	09-Jun	2 on 25-May at Henfield Levels
Collared Dove	166	01-Jan	29-Jun	20 on 16-Jan at Ditchling Beacon
Water Rail	14	01-Jan	13-May	3 on 11-Jan at Beeding Brooks
Moorhen	134	01-Jan	29-Jun	15 on 06-Feb at Brooklands
Coot	93	01-Jan	29-Jun	45 on 06-Feb at Brooklands
Little Grebe	52	01-Jan	16-Jun	7 on 08-Jan at Widewater
Great Crested Grebe	52	04-Jan	07-Jun	15 on 28-Jan at Hove
Oystercatcher	112	01-Jan	23-Jun	32 on 18-Jan at Goring Gap
Avocet	3	05-Apr	03-May	2 on 05-Apr at R Adur

Species	Days	First	Last	Max. count
Lapwing	75	01-Jan	23-Jun	800 on 11-Jan at Beeding Brooks
Golden Plover	2	19-Jan	29-Jan	9 on 19-Jan at Steyning Round Hill
Grey Plover	32	06-Jan	04-May	29 on 04-May at Widewater
Ringed Plover	36	05-Jan	04-Jun	35 on 05-Jan at E Worthing beach
Little Ringed Plover	4	15-Mar	18-May	2 on 18-May at Widewater
Eurasian Whimbrel	23	28-Mar	12-May	117 on 27-Apr at Goring Beach
Curlew	36	01-Jan	04-May	4 on 03-May at Widewater
Bar-tailed Godwit	14	18-Apr	24-May	83 on 19-Apr at Widewater
Black-tailed Godwit	5	06-Jan	24-May	12 on 08-Mar at R Adur
Turnstone	69	04-Jan	06-Jun	68 on 13-Mar at Goring Gap
Knot	2	03-May	04-May	6 on 04-May at Widewater
Sanderling	28	04-Jan	29-May	150 on 04-Jan at Goring Gap
Dunlin	48	04-Jan	04-Jun	200 on 06-Jan at Brooklands
Purple Sandpiper	24	07-Jan	20-Apr	9 on 01-Mar at Brighton Marina
Woodcock	5	14-Jan	24-May	5 on 14-Jan at Kithurst Hill
Common Snipe	23	04-Jan	20-Apr	200 on 21-Feb at Adur Saltings
Common Sandpiper	22	22-Jan	28-May	15 on 26-Feb at Adur Saltings
Green Sandpiper	2	06-Mar	21-May	1 on 06-Mar at Woods Mill
Common Redshank	63	01-Jan	23-Jun	48 on 21-Feb at Adur Saltings
Greenshank	29	04-Jan	26-May	4 on 21-Apr at Lower Adur Valley
Kittiwake	13	01-Jan	23-May	15 on 23-May at Worthing
Black-headed Gull	125	01-Jan	23-Jun	600 on 09-Feb at R Adur
Little Gull	3	03-Jan	10-Apr	1 on 03-Jan at Widewater
Mediterranean Gull	57	04-Jan	29-Jun	105 on 16-Apr at Widewater
Common Gull	96	01-Jan	19-Jun	900 on 21-Feb at Lower Adur Valley
Great Black-backed Gull	128	01-Jan	28-Jun	69 on 28-Mar at Lower Adur Valley
Herring Gull	179	01-Jan	30-Jun	550 on 15-Feb at Lower Adur Valley
Yellow-legged Gull	2	08-Jan	28-Mar	1 on 08-Jan at Brighton Marina
Lesser Black-backed Gull	67	13-Jan	23-Jun	18 on 13-Mar at Lower Adur Valley
Sandwich Tern	36	09-Mar	19-Jun	116 on 29-Apr at Worthing
Little Tern	3	29-Apr	06-May	3 on 29-Apr at Worthing
Common Tern	9	12-Apr	23-Jun	53 on 27-Apr at Ferring
Arctic Tern	2	09-Apr	29-Apr	4 on 09-Apr at Worthing
Great Skua	2	14-Apr	01-May	2 on 01-May at West Pier
Pomarine Skua	3	03-May	06-May	6 on 04-May at Widewater

Species	Days	First	Last	Max. count
Arctic Skua	8	28-Mar	06-May	4 on 04-May at Worthing
Common Guillemot	5	01-Jan	17-Apr	3 on 01-Jan at Shoreham Harbour
Razorbill	3	03-Jan	05-Jan	1 on 03-Jan at Widewater
Unidentified auk species		01-Jan	04-May	10 on 03-Jan at Widewater
Red-throated Diver	18	03-Jan	06-May	12 on 06-Mar at Worthing
Black-throated Diver	2	16-Mar	28-Apr	3 on 28-Apr at Brighton Marina
Fulmar	19	05-Jan	23-Jun	7 on 04-May at Worthing
Gannet	37	03-Jan	19-Jun	53 on 04-May at Worthing
Cormorant	111	01-Jan	29-Jun	33 on 01-Jan at Southwick Beach
Shag	4	15-Feb	17-Jun	1 on 28-Mar at Widewater
Glossy Ibis	2	09-Jun	10-Jun	1 on 09-Jun at Beeding Brooks
Cattle Egret	4	01-Mar	22-May	1 on 06-Mar at Woods Mill
Grey Heron	95	01-Jan	23-Jun	7 on 13-Jan at Lower Adur Valley
Great White Egret	4	05-Jan	27-Apr	1 on 05-Jan at Henfield Levels
Little Egret	87	05-Jan	24-Jun	12 on 09-Apr at Applesham
Osprey	3	10-Mar	31-May	1 on 10-Mar at Clapham
Sparrowhawk	83	02-Jan	29-Jun	2 on 05-Feb at Steyning Round Hill
Marsh Harrier	6	18-Feb	12-Jun	2 on 18-Feb at Beeding Brooks
Hen Harrier	7	01-Jan	07-Apr	1 on 02-Jan at Kithurst Hill
Red Kite	113	02-Jan	30-Jun	8 on 01-Feb at Steep Down
White-tailed Eagle	4	05-Feb	14-Mar	2 on 05-Feb at Steyning Round Hill
Common Buzzard	153	01-Jan	30-Jun	9 on 27-Mar at Lower Adur Valley
Barn Owl	10	06-Jan	30-Jun	2 on 13-Jan at Beeding Brooks
Little Owl	3	23-Feb	23-Mar	1 on 23-Mar at Portslade Mile Oak
Long-eared Owl	8	10-Jan	13-Feb	2 on 13-Feb at Upper Adur Levels
Short-eared Owl	4	02-Jan	17-Apr	1 on 02-Jan at Kithurst Hill
Tawny Owl	8	02-Feb	02-Jun	2 on 02-Feb at Steyning
Kingfisher	20	02-Jan	25-Jun	3 on 02-Jan at Lower Adur Valley
Great Spotted Woodpecker	129	01-Jan	29-Jun	6 on 10-Feb at Henfield Levels
Green Woodpecker	144	01-Jan	28-Jun	6 on 10-Feb at Henfield Levels
Kestrel	144	01-Jan	30-Jun	3 on 02-Jan at Downs (Adur-A24)
Merlin	4	28-Jan	14-Mar	1 on 28-Jan at Beeding Brooks
Hobby	10	23-Apr	26-Jun	3 on 10-May at Beeding Brooks
Peregrine	57	01-Jan	29-Jun	4 on 05-Jun at Storrington
Ring-necked Parakeet	17	01-Jan	17-Jun	2 on 09-Apr at Shoreham-by-Sea
Jay	108	01-Jan	30-Jun	5 on 17-Apr at Woods Mill
Magpie	179	01-Jan	28-Jun	33 on 26-Feb at Shoreham-by-Sea

Species	Days	First	Last	Max. count
Jackdaw	173	01-Jan	30-Jun	700 on 09-Jan at Lancing
Rook	137	01-Jan	30-Jun	150 on 18-Feb at Mill Hill
Carrion Crow	177	01-Jan	29-Jun	83 on 14-May at Stretham Manor
Raven	81	02-Jan	23-Jun	7 on 02-Jan at Downs (Adur-A24)
Coal Tit	51	04-Jan	27-Jun	7 on 23-Jun at Washington Common
Marsh Tit	8	13-Jan	27-Jun	5 on 19-Jan at Steyning Round Hill
Blue Tit	175	01-Jan	28-Jun	30 on 01-Jan at Toads Hole Valley
Great Tit	171	01-Jan	30-Jun	25 on 04-Mar at Stanmer Park
Skylark	154	02-Jan	30-Jun	48 on 16-Apr at Thunders Barrow.
Sand Martin	13	16-Mar	05-Jun	50 on 21-Apr at Rock Common
Barn Swallow	81	30-Mar	30-Jun	52 on 09-Apr at Steyning WTW
House Martin	39	19-Mar	30-Jun	30 on 06-May at Steyning WTW
Cetti's Warbler	103	01-Jan	25-Jun	9 on 16-Apr at Upper Adur Levels
Long-tailed Tit	123	01-Jan	30-Jun	45 on 21-Feb at Toads Hole Valley
Willow Warbler	28	16-Mar	01-Jun	5 on 07-Apr at Cissbury
Chiffchaff	139	01-Jan	30-Jun	20 on 30-Apr at Highdown
Sedge Warbler	22	14-Apr	19-Jun	3 on 14-Apr at Beeding Brooks
Reed Warbler	52	16-Apr	26-Jun	12 on 21-May at Ladywell
Blackcap	152	01-Jan	30-Jun	25 on 30-Apr at Highdown
Garden Warbler	11	22-Apr	18-Jun	3 on 25-May at Woods Mill
Lesser Whitethroat	44	18-Apr	29-Jun	3 on 21-Apr at Mill Hill
Common Whitethroat	73	07-Apr	30-Jun	20 on 08-Jun at Downs (Adur-A24)
Dartford Warbler	24	01-Jan	18-Apr	2 on 06-Jan at Brooklands
Firecrest	34	06-Jan	28-Jun	3 on 15-Apr at Stanmer Park
Goldcrest	84	01-Jan	26-Jun	15 on 04-Mar at Stanmer Park
Wren	168	01-Jan	29-Jun	32 on 30-Apr at Washington Cmn
Nuthatch	54	02-Jan	28-Jun	5 on 23-Jun at Washington Cmn
Eurasian Treecreeper	37	06-Jan	28-Jun	4 on 15-Apr at Stanmer Park
Common Starling	177	01-Jan	29-Jun	11148 on 04-Mar at West Pier
Song Thrush	159	01-Jan	30-Jun	25 on 04-Mar at Stanmer Park
Mistle Thrush	76	01-Jan	26-Jun	4 on 01-Jan at Toads Hole Valley
Redwing	53	01-Jan	26-Mar	60 on 20-Feb at Devils Dyke
Blackbird	177	01-Jan	30-Jun	36 on 16-Apr at Thunders Barrow
Fieldfare	25	01-Jan	08-Apr	100 on 20-Feb at Stretham Manor
Ring Ouzel	4	08-Apr	21-Apr	2 on 19-Apr at Devils Dyke
Spotted Flycatcher	5	01-May	29-May	3 on 24-May at Patcham
Robin	176	01-Jan	28-Jun	48 on 30-Apr at Washington Cmn
Common Nightingale	30	06-Apr	07-Jun	8 on 25-May at Henfield Levels
Black Redstart	25	05-Jan	03-May	2 on 22-Jan at Whitehawk

Species	Days	First	Last	Max. count
Common Redstart	5	02-Apr	27-Jun	1 on 02-Apr at Sheepcote Valley
Whinchat	2	29-Apr	22-May	3 on 29-Apr at Steep Down
Eurasian Stonechat	95	01-Jan	21-Jun	13 on 22-Feb at Goring Gap
Northern Wheatear	26	14-Mar	29-Apr	12 on 17-Mar at Widewater
Tree Sparrow	2	14-Jan	29-May	2 on 29-May at Upper Beeding
House Sparrow	181	01-Jan	30-Jun	200 on 09-Apr at New Salts Farm
Dunnock	176	01-Jan	30-Jun	18 on 17-Mar at Sheepcote Valley
Yellow Wagtail	4	09-Apr	06-May	3 on 16-Apr at Cissbury
Grey Wagtail	39	06-Jan	26-Jun	4 on 04-Mar at Stanmer Park
Pied Wagtail	121	01-Jan	26-Jun	50 on 28-Jan at Storrington
Meadow Pipit	115	01-Jan	29-Jun	80 on 23-Jan at Muntham Court
Water Pipit	2	04-Jan	29-Mar	1 on 04-Jan at Henfield Levels
Rock Pipit	31	05-Jan	01-Jun	6 on 25-Apr at Brighton Marina
Chaffinch	150	01-Jan	30-Jun	50 on 23-Feb at Highdown
Brambling	5	08-Feb	25-Feb	3 on 08-Feb at Highdown
Bullfinch	44	02-Jan	22-Jun	5 on 19-May at Fulking
Greenfinch	150	01-Jan	30-Jun	19 on 16-Apr at Thunders Barrow
Linnet	121	02-Jan	30-Jun	400 on 02-Jan at No-Mans Land
Goldfinch	175	01-Jan	30-Jun	80 on 02-Jan at No-Mans Land
Siskin	7	05-Mar	13-Jun	20 on 27-Mar at Brooklands
Corn Bunting	100	02-Jan	30-Jun	49 on 26-Feb at Steyning Round Hill
Yellowhammer	114	02-Jan	30-Jun	40 on 17-Jan at Devils Dyke
Reed Bunting	80	02-Jan	17-Jun	9 on 02-Mar at Beeding Hill

The presentation of records in this format is a far cry from the narrative of the systematic lists found in past SDOS reports which allowed more interpretation and comment. To precis the plethora of observation now available would be very time consuming. At least this summary, produced using computer technology, allows members to have some insight into the avifauna of our recording area. Anyone who would like to see more information about a specific site or species are welcome to request the details at data@sos.org.uk. Caution, however, as you may be asked to write up your findings!

Thanks to all the observers, far too numerous to name, who have contributed records in our recording area during this period.

SDOS Garden Bird Survey 2022

Sim Eliott

Thank you all those who returned data on your garden bird sightings for the SDOS Garden Bird Survey in 2022. Twenty people participated across the year; with some people joining mid-year. I received data from 18 people in Quarter 1, 17 in Quarter 2, 15 on Quarter 3 and 14 in Quarter 4. Whilst we do not have many people participating, the quality of anecdotal information, in addition to the number of birds seen, remains outstanding, and I have tried to capture some of the richness of this information in the highlights section below.

I have changed the way I process and present the data for 2022. For the report for 2021, the data for “top 15 birds” and “also rans” were processed in different ways. For 2022 I have processed all the data for all the birds in the same way, enabling both (a) the percentage of gardens birds were seen in and (b) the numbers of sightings (the 52-week-total of each weeks’ maximum number of sightings) to be reported for all birds. The total sightings number is not the total number of individual birds seen but the total of the maximum number of birds seen at one time in each week across the year: if you saw one Robin every day in Quarter 4 it is highly likely that that was the same Robin, not 13 Robins!

The numbers of sightings, and the average percentage of gardens in which those birds were seen, are a slightly different way of looking at the abundance of species in SDOS gardens and give us more information. For example, House Sparrows were only ranked fifth in terms of percentage of gardens seen in, but the numbers of maximum sightings (totalled for the 52 weeks the year) was 4404; much higher than for other birds, because they tend to be seen in flocks. Robins were third in the ranking of gardens seen in, but the numbers of maximum sightings (totalled across the year) were only a fifth of the totalled number of sightings of House Sparrows, as Robins are highly territorial and like

to have their own garden! Swifts and Swallows were seen in very few gardens, but when they were, they were seen in large numbers.

I have continued including the rankings from the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden Birdwatch, by percentage of gardens visited by birds, for 2020 (the most recent year for which published data is available) for comparison purposes. The SDOS rankings are again very similar to the national picture from the BTO, except for Herring Gulls, as usual. Many more gardens in the SDOS area are visited by Herring Gulls than nationally; but this is to be expected for a broadly coastal patch.

We should not attach too much significance to changes (increases or decreases) in abundance of garden birds in our area year on year, as our dataset (number of participants and birds) is too small to make increases or decreases in abundance statistically significant. We need to look at the much bigger data sets of the RSPB and BTO garden bird watches to know what is going on with garden birds in the UK. However, I still think that there is much value in the SDOS Garden Bird Survey, as it gives us some important information about abundance and diversity in the SDOS recording area.

Over the year a total of 54 different species of birds were seen. There were no large movements in rankings between 2021 and 2022, except Blue Tits, which slipped from first to fifth place, and Herring Gulls which rose from fifteenth to eleventh place, despite Herring Gulls being one of the birds affected by avian flu.

Notes relating to the table below:

- the order of birds in the table is by rank of percentage of gardens visited. Where several birds are of equal rank those birds are listed alphabetically
- the percentage of gardens seen in is the average of the averages of gardens seen in for each quarter. The average of the gardens seen in

for each quarter is the total number of sightings for the quarter of each bird, divided by the number of week reports for that bird, divided by 13 (the number of weeks in the quarter).

- the year total of weekly sightings of maximum birds per week is not a number of individual birds seen, as sightings may be (and will often be) of the same birds!
- the birds without a 2021 rank position were birds reported as “also rans” in 2021.
- the percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, as it makes the table easier to read (and it is the way the BTO report their results). The nearest whole number for singleton birds is actually 0 but it doesn’t make sense to report that a bird was seen in 0% of gardens, so I have reported singletons as 1%; but they are in significantly less than 1% of gardens
- ↑ = higher rank than last year’s SDOS rank; ↔ = same rank as last year’s SDOS rank; ↓ = lower rank than last year’s SDOS rank

Species	% of gardens birds seen in	Rank position (by % of gardens seen in)			Total of weekly sightings of maximum birds per week
		SDOS 2022	SDOS 2021	National BTO 2020	
BLACKBIRD	97	= 1 ↑	2	3	1173
MAGPIE	97	= 1 ↑	= 3	9	976
ROBIN	96	= 3 ↔	= 3	4	809

WOOD PIGEON	95	= 3 ↔	= 3	2	1978
BLUE TIT	93	5 ↓	1	1	1080
HOUSE SPARROW	91	6 ↑	= 7	7	4404
DUNNOCK	83	= 7 ↓	6	6	714
GREAT TIT	83	= 7 ↔	= 7	5	976
GOLDFINCH	76	= 9 ↑	10	8	1517
STARLING	76	= 9 ↔	9	13	3241
HERRING GULL	70	11 ↑	15	33	928
COLLARED DOVE	64	12 ↔	12	10	389
CARRION CROW	63	13 ↓	11	18	423
WREN	62	14 ↓	13	16	240
FERAL PIGEON	46	15		21	1826
CHAFFINCH	39	16		11	270
GREENFINCH	35	17		15	340
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	33	18		19	95

SPARROW HAWK	32	19		22	89
LONG-TAILED TIT	31	20		17	244
BLACKCAP	30	21		28	227
JACKDAW	28	22		14	198
CHIFF-CHAFF	27	23		35	61
SONG THRUSH	22	24		23	47
COAL TIT	21	25		12	83
JAY	20	26		26	49
GOLDCREST	16	27		34	48
WILLOW WARBLER	13	28		-	33
HOUSE MARTIN	10	29		-	10
STOCK DOVE	9	30		37	54
GREEN WOODPECKER	6	31		40	5
BLACK HEADED GULL	3	32		-	20

GARDEN WARBLER	3	= 32		-	4
GREAT BLACK- BACKED GULL	3	= 32		-	5
MALLARD	3	= 32		-	4
NUTHATCH	3	= 32		20	6
LINNET	2	= 37		-	2
SWALLOW	2	= 37		27	139
SWIFT	2	= 37		39	27
WOOD WARBLER	2	= 37		-	2
BLACK REDSTART	1	= 41		-	1
BUZZARD	1	= 41		-	1
FIELDFARE	1	= 41		-	1
GREY HERRON	1	= 41		-	1
KESTREL	1	= 41		-	1
LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL	1	= 41		-	1
MARSH TIT	1	= 41		-	2

PIED FLYCATCHER		= 4		-	
PIED WAGTAIL		= 4		32	
REDWING		= 4		-	2
REED BUNTING		= 4		-	
ROOK		= 4		-	
SISKIN		= 4		3	
Birds in Top 40 list of the BTO Garden Bird Watch not seen in SDOS gardens					
Bullfinch				24	
Pheasant				25	
Tree Sparrow				30	
Ring-Necked Parakeet				37	
Tawny Owl				38	

The Highlights

First Quarter

David saw a huge number of Wood Pigeons and an unusual, for his garden, Green Woodpecker. Reg had a Sparrowhawk in his garden for 8 weeks; he

also had a good number of Sparrows! Brian saw 13 Greenfinches one week; good to know that Greenfinch numbers are recovering. Starlings and Sparrows love John's garden; with over 80 Starling in one week, and 28 Sparrows in the same week. John & Shena saw a Redwing two weeks running; the only Redwing seen in 2022; they also saw two Marsh Tits, the first they had seen for 28 years, and the only Marsh Tits in 2022. They also had the largest number of Blackcaps seen in 2022. Typically, Blackcaps are summer visitors, but birds from Germany and north-east Europe are increasingly spending the winter in the south of the UK. Gill and Tim saw 2 Mallards (on their pond); one of only two gardens where Mallards were seen, the other being Reg in Quarter 2. John and Jeanette saw a Reed Bunting, the only one seen in 2022. Marion saw a Kestrel; the only one to be seen in 2022. Paul saw the largest number of Herring Gulls at one time for the year, 14.

Second Quarter

Tony B. had nesting Blue Tits. Reg had a Great-Spotted Woodpecker for 7 weeks. David again saw an unusual Green Woodpecker. Laurie had Blackcaps in his garden that nested in the spinney next door. Cyril and Maureen had a family of 6 Blue Tits feeding in the garden. Sheila had a Sparrowhawk; Sparrowhawks were seen in 32% of gardens; more gardens than Song Thrushes. John & Shena had nesting Blue Tits and Great Tits. Anthony had many Sparrows, and Herring Gulls every week; one of the few gardens where Herring Gulls were consistently. Marion had a Grey Heron; the only garden in which one was seen in 2022. Mark had one of the rare sightings of a Green Woodpecker. Rae had two Willow Warblers calling to each other. Paul had Blue Tits in his nest box, and a pair of Starlings that had four chicks

Third Quarter

Tony B. had three Goldfinches on his feeder; one of which was a newly fledged juvenile being fed. Tony also had 3 Hummingbird Hawkmoths in his garden. Hummingbird Hawk Moths are native to the Mediterranean and are long-distance migrants, but now Hummingbird hawkmoths breed regularly in the

UK in July and August. Jay had Robins and Blackbirds nesting, the later having two broods, and Sparrows with a liking for his lettuce! John had very large numbers of Sparrows with 52 seen in one week. Clive had Greenfinches every week. Sheila had 56 Starlings one week. In September John & Shena had 139 Swallows in their garden. Peter had high numbers of House Swallows in his garden in September. Laurie had a Pied Flycatcher and a Lesser Black-Back Gull; the only ones seen in our area's garden, and abundant Long-Tailed Tits.

Fourth Quarter

Val had 7 and 8 Black-Headed Gulls, the largest numbers seen in our Gardens. Clive saw a Song Thrush and noted that was the first he had seen for 11 months; which is sadly in line with national trends. The massive decline in Song Thrush numbers has probably been caused by the loss and degradation of preferred feeding and nesting habitats, mostly due to intensive farming. Vera and Gordon saw abundant Starlings. Rae saw the only Siskin seen in 2022. Tony Z. had good numbers of House Sparrows the whole quarter.

Summary

In the SDOS area House Sparrows and Starlings continued to be seen very regularly. Our House Sparrows are in line with the BTO average, but we see more Starlings than the BTO average. House Sparrow and Starlings are Red List birds so this is pleasing. We see many more Herring Gulls than the average for UK gardens; and in 2022 we saw some birds, for example Willow Warblers, House Martins, Black-headed Gulls, Garden Warblers, Great Black-backed Gulls and Mallards, that are not seen in the BTO list of the top 40 UK garden birds. However, in 2022 we did not see any Bullfinches, Pheasants, Tree Sparrows, Ring-Necked Parrakeets or Tawny Owls – which are in the UK-wide list of the top 40 birds.

Thank you to all those taking part in the SDOS Garden Birdwatch for your observations and comments; it is very clear that those submitting reports enjoy

doing the birdwatch, as so much more information than bird counts is included. And thank you Andy, my partner, for the hours of work he put in with data entry.

Barrie Watson – an appreciation

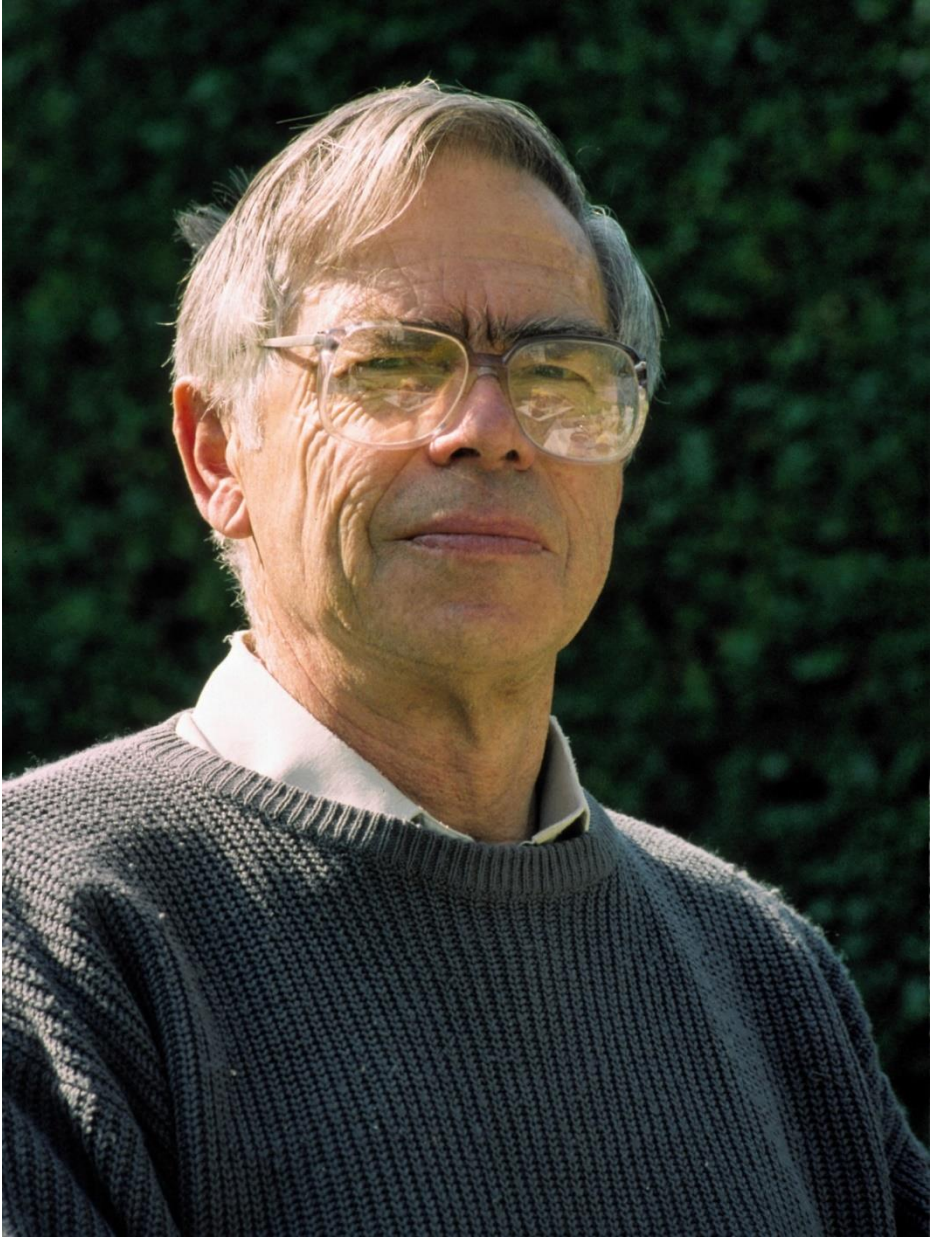
John Newnham

Dr Barrie Watson (ABW), a member of SDOS since 1967, passed away peacefully in Devon on the 1st June 2023 at the age of 93. Barrie moved to Shoreham in 1966 to join a Shoreham based general medical practice in partnership with Dr John Stafford, the founder of SDOS. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1993. Long standing members of the society will perhaps recall him in this role and Diane Hicks related *“We remember Barrie with his other hat on because he looked after me during my pregnancy with Helen. He was a real family doctor and turned up unexpectedly on our doorstep four days after Helen’s birth to check all was well: a truly professional family doctor and sadly the like of which are not seen in today’s world. In those circumstances I could never call him Barrie it was always Dr Watson.”*

Although Barrie did not hold any of the main officer’s post in SDOS (he was too busy with his activities in the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS), Sussex Wildlife Trust and British Trust for Ornithology) he was an active member attending meetings regularly until prevented by declining health. At many meetings he was accompanied by his wife, Anne, and occasionally his children. He often posed difficult questions to the speakers and occasionally made a presentation himself. John Maskell recalls one illustrated talk on bird ringing given by Barrie at the St Giles Church Hall and noted *“Until that time in the 1980s I’d thought of Barrie as a rather severe character but how wrong I was. In his rather dry delivery he gently introduced his next slide of a Herring Gull which showed him holding the bird with a thick glove whilst the gull was savagely munching on the un-gloved one! His perfect timing had the assembled throng in stitches and a hint of a smile showed that he’d thoroughly enjoyed telling that particular anecdote”*.

Barrie was a regular contributor to the society's e-user group; correspondence he enjoyed even in the later years of his life when in a care home overlooking Dartmoor. Shena Maskell highlighted this in her tribute *"It should also be mentioned that until quite recently Barrie, although in Devon, was keenly following our postings on the SDOS User Group. On several occasions I received private anecdotes from Barrie if in my postings I mentioned Barn Owls, gulls, unusual bird behaviour or Climping. The latter was where he had vivid memories from childhood outings."*

Barrie was part of the Sanctuary committee from 1973 until the Society was asked to leave the site in 2007. He visited this site regularly, often with his family, to ring birds and help with the maintenance. Barrie was a very active ringer, gained his 'A' permit in 1959 and taught these skills to many, including me. Several of the recollections from Society members were based on member's links with Barrie and ringing. Several memories refer to a period in the 1980s when Barrie was the lead and inspiration for a local cannon-netting project to ring thousands of gulls. This study clearly showed from where the local wintering gulls originated but one Common Gull trapped and measured in January 1987 was only the third in the country, based on the biometrics, to belong to the subspecies *Larus canus heinei*. In this context Brian Clay recalled *"getting frozen to the bone standing on the icy and windy slopes of Halewick Lane rubbish tip, Sompting waiting for the gulls to settle in the right place for a catch. I don't think they ever did that day – Gulls 1/Ringers 0!"*. Phil Turney echoed an earlier point in his painful experience: *"Struggling with a Herring Gull which was alternately snapping at my hand drawing blood and trying to peck my eye out. Barrie's dulcet tones coming to me "Get a grip Phil, the poor thing's getting into a bit of a state."*. Val Bentley also relates *"I remember afternoons on rubbish tips at Sompting (even taking my toddler daughter in her pushchair to watch there) and Washington"* but also recalls another incident *"Barrie once told me off for not looking properly at a "Black-headed Gull" I had just ringed, it was a Med Gull, and as I was a trainee at the time someone else should have had first dibs"*.



Once the work on the gulls ceased Barrie's attentions turned to Barn Owls and for much of his time during his long retirement he was busy erecting and checking owl boxes around the county. He pulled together the Sussex Barn Owl Study Group and became the county expert on this species. Even in his 90th year he was climbing ladders to inspect boxes. A fitting tribute to this work was pulled together by John Crix for Barrie's 90th birthday and can be viewed at:

<https://vimeo.com/416656127>

Barrie was always in good form when visiting ringing sites whether at the Sanctuary, the Swallow and Pied Wagtail roost by the Steyning road, visiting the team in Ladywell, catching gulls either on the local beaches or rubbish tips or at ringing sites in other parts of the county or abroad. His birding work across both county and nation was outstanding and a fuller appreciation of this will be published in the SOS newsletter. He will be greatly missed. Warmest condolences go to his children, Jane, Maggie and John and their familie

Photograph Acknowledgements

The source of photographs is often clear from the context or other attribution and those are not listed here.

Front cover: Little Ringed Plover – Richard Allan

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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