

Shoreham and District  
Ornithological Society  
Spring Newsletter 2016



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## EDITORIAL

### Roger Smith

In this edition we have a splendid range of articles that I am sure you will enjoy. The photography team has expanded of late and this time we have contributions from Val Bentley, Ron Bewley, Patricia Hall, Sue Miles, Dorian Mason and Ian Redman. I received more photos than I can publish but the selection hopefully catches the flavour of the past winter: the large movement of Siskins in the early autumn, the long-staying Ring Ouzels and the super-abundance of Short-Eared Owls. Two of the latter even flew together past the bottom of the garden here in Pulborough, a welcome addition to the list.

The articles capture details of local observations, our travels, the conservation activities of the Society and the ringing activities in our area. In establishing the newsletter it was the committee's intention that it should be a publication of record, and thus the ringing articles contain an abundance of detail. I am aware that, in this respect, the need to publish at A5 presents a legibility challenge on occasion, but remember that the PDF version can be downloaded and enlarged on a computer screen. Finally, in recognition of the fact that we have recruited a number of new members recently, Sue Miles has written a profile of the Society's President.

Your contributions are welcomed so keep them coming. The deadline for the next Newsletter is 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016.

## BERNIE FORBES: OUR PRESIDENT

Sue Miles

The seed for this article was sown by Tim Holter in a Usergroup posting headed "How Do They Do It?"

We are lucky to have some excellent birders in the SDOS but one that stands out is Bernie, our President. Any of you who have been on his walks will appreciate his expertise in identification from a quick burst of song or call, a bird flying overhead or a rustle in a bush. This is followed by Bernie happily imparting valuable information about the species. So "How Does He Do It". The answer is years of experience and a deep love of nature.

It all began in 1960 when at the age of 12 Bernie became curious about the birds in his garden in Worthing. With no family influence Bernie developed his interest with the help of his first bird book, Field Guide to the Birds of Britain & Europe by Roger Peterson, plus books loaned from the library and a pair of opera glasses! The cold winter of 1962/63 brought a greater variety of birds into the garden and with his local patch at Brooklands his knowledge increased.

At that time membership of the SDOS had a minimum age of 13 with any applicant being interviewed by the formidable Miss C. M. Biggs. At the age of 13 Bernie duly attended his interview armed with his notebooks of birds seen and their habits. To his delight he was accepted and 55 years later remains a stalwart member of the society. He expanded his patch by cycling to Widewater and Shoreham harbour armed with his trusty opera glasses! He joined the SDOS outings where he was encouraged to learn and observe.



At the age of 14 Bernie was given a pair of heavy Carl Zeiss binoculars and birding became easier. At this time Bernie's father decided to take an interest in his son's hobby and so began many years of outings together. Bernie recalls his first sighting of a rare bird when, on the beach with his father, a hoopoe flew overhead. Bernie grabbed his binoculars and cycled to the marshy area at the far end of Brooklands, now part of the factory

estate at Lancing, where he relocated the bird, showing that at a young age Bernie had the determination to find the bird and to use his local knowledge.

In the 1970s Bernie began to lead outings for the SDOS & SOS which he continues to this day. He is now on his third term on the SOS records committee spanning over 13 years. For 5 years he was the recorder for SDOS and has also been Chairman. At an early age Bernie wrote articles for the Shoreham Bird Report and is still an active contributor to the Sussex Bird Report. For 8 years Bernie has led trips abroad which provide an opportunity for him to share his love of birding and to pass on valuable information. In recent years he has been active in conservation work around Pagham Harbour. With the help of Dorian Mason access has been improved by building stiles and steps plus providing benches and maintaining the hide at Church Norton. Over the years Bernie has made some very good friends through birding with Owen Mitchell and Colin Messer going back to those very early days. As Bernie says Birdwatching friends last forever.

## RETURN TO FALSTERBO

### Clive Hope

In the 1990s whilst working in Malmo, I had the opportunity to make three day visits to Falsterbo at the south-west tip of Sweden where there is a bird observatory and migration watch point. In the autumn counts are made of migrating birds passing over or through the peninsular on which Falsterbo is situated.

Those visits were made by bus from Malmo so I arrived around 0830 or so in the morning but this still enabled me to experience some impressive

and exciting birding. The first visit was a 'taster' and enough to get the geography of the place and its characteristics into my head. The second on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1992 was a day to remember. The weather had been unsettled for several days previously but then turned out sunny and warm with light winds. I covered the main sites on foot apart from a lift at the end that put me on my way to the bus that I would need to return to Malmo and thence to Copenhagen Airport.

Although just 36 species were noted, the numbers of some were way beyond anything I had ever witnessed. The first three hours were spent at the Nabben, the tip of the peninsular, where large numbers of finches, larks, hirundines and Sparrowhawks passed over heading south-west over the sea. A good variety of wildfowl and waders were on the sea or shore and late in the morning the first Buzzards and Red Kites were seen. Remember that in those days neither of these were common at home (not in Sussex anyway).

The real excitement came in the afternoon when I had re-located to the Llungen ('Heath') along with other birders. Thermals are generated on the heath so it was here that in about three hours, over 250 each of Buzzard and Sparrowhawk, 35 Red Kites, ten each of Rough-legged Buzzard and Kestrel, four Marsh and three Hen Harriers and singles of Montagu's Harrier, Merlin and Hobby made their way south-west. Finally the walk along a wide path to my bus-stop added overflying Lesser Spotted Eagle, Osprey and more Kites, Buzzards and Hobbys.

The final trip, until last autumn, was in October 1995. The species count went up to 64 with the highlights being a Spotted Eagle near the heath, flocks of 35 and 26 Cranes, ten Woodlarks in a flock over the Golf

Course and close views of perched Rough-legged Buzzards. By October, too, wildfowl had increased in variety and number.

I have always wanted to return and a conversation with John Newnham, Chris Fox and Brian Clay in Dorset in October 2014 led to me organising a trip in September last year. We flew Easyjet to Copenhagen, hired a car and stayed in an apartment in a village not far over the Oresund Bridge that links Denmark to Sweden for five days. Unfortunately Brian could not come because of ill-health. It was rather windy but mainly dry and we finished with a respectable combined list of 114 species. It was not ideal weather for raptor passage whilst we were there but around 400 Sparrowhawks in a day, a total of 35 Honey Buzzards and some very close encounters with hunting Hobbys were memorable. Unfortunately the one or two White-tailed Eagles that were around eluded us.

The finch movements in the mornings were mind-blowing, with thousands of birds at different heights passing over. Yellow Wagtails at times covered the Golf Course. Some nice passerines were Red-Breasted, Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, a Red-backed Shrike, Red-throated Pipits and a Marsh Warbler in the hand. A Black Woodpecker, which took quite a long time to find, was a new bird for Chris! Swifts continued to be seen right up until our last day, long after we'd last seen them at home. The most impressive sights in many ways though, were the large flocks of Barnacle Geese on fields to the north of Skanor and huge numbers of wild Greylag Geese passing over the sea.

After we returned home, we saw from the daily on-line log that some big raptor days had occurred following our visit. On the domestic front, we found catering for ourselves and having lunches out in one of the cafes in



the area inexpensive and our apartment good value with everything we needed.

We have to go again!

## DEFENDING GORING GAP

### Patricia Hall

Goring Gap is delimited by Sea Lane, Ferring to the west and Aldsworth Avenue to the east and bounded to the north by Ilex Way and to the south by the sea. It covers an area of 120 acres and forms a vital gap between Ferring and Worthing. From the sea it allows us a view of Highdown Hill. Most of the open area is owned by Persimmon Homes Ltd. They have proposed building 700 homes. At present it is preserved as open countryside by Arun D.C. and Worthing B.C. but these councils are under severe pressure to find sites for more houses. So the Gap is under threat.

There are several distinct habitats: Ilex Way runs for nearly a mile from St Mary's Church, Goring-by-Sea due west to the village of Ferring. Ilex Way is a long avenue of Holm Oaks, (*Quercus ilex*). This evergreen oak, a native of the Mediterranean, provides shelter for birds but is not often used as a nesting site. The Holm Oak also provides an excellent habitat for Stag Beetles. The only other trees are a few mature conifers and small elders.

The Plantation forms the eastern boundary from Ilex Way to the coast and consists of a more diverse range of trees including Sycamore, Sweet Chestnut, Turkish Oak and Beech. It is managed by the Ilex Conservation Group who are planting new trees to improve biodiversity. Green and

Great-spotted Woodpeckers breed here as well as Stock Dove, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Treecreepers. Nuthatches have sometimes bred. This is interesting because Nuthatch is an unusual bird so close to the coast.



The trees and hedges along Sea Lane, Ferring form a valuable wild-life corridor, a mixture of native and non-native trees which have replaced the elms that once thrived here. A fairly sympathetic grass-cutting regime has resulted in the spread of an unusual plant called Salsify, *Tragopogon porrifolius*, related to Goat's-beard, but with purplish-pink flowers. This can be seen, together with 30 or more other wild flowers species, just north of the blue boat. In the north-west corner there is a rough, overgrown area which has Elder, Privet, Bramble and a little Hazel and this provides a

breeding habitat for common woodland birds and a stop-over for migrants.

The arable fields create the much-loved gap looking from the coast up to the Downs. True, there are houses behind Ilex Way but they do not show from the beach and an illusion of space is created. The fields are sown with winter wheat year after year with no suggestion of crop rotation. Once criss-crossed with hedges, this is hardly prime habitat for birds, although Skylarks do breed. Buzzard, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk are frequently overhead. Sadly, in 2012, the farmer ploughed up 2 remaining small flowery meadows along Sea Lane in which orchids grew. These were also good for butterflies.

However, the Gap has always been a regular roost for gulls and waders, particularly in the south where there is often flooding. In the spring of 2014, the fields nearest the beach were so flooded that the wheat failed. When these fields are flooded they are particularly attractive as a roost. In February 2014 over 1000 waders were regularly present at high tide: 500 Dunlin, 330 Sanderling, 270 Turnstone, 120 Grey Plover and 100 plus Ringed Plover. These are nationally important totals.

In the spring of 2014, the farmer replaced his failed wheat with Common Flax or Linseed, *Linum usitatissimum*. This crop used to be grown for its fibres which were made into linen products but is now mainly cultivated for its linseed oil. The flowers are a beautiful pale blue and are followed by large round fruits containing the oily seeds. This is a crop which should be encouraged as it grows rapidly, needs little in the way of pesticides or fertilizers, and its flowers are attractive to bees. In 2015 it was sown in three fields in the Ferring / East Preston Gap.



This last winter, 2015/2016, has seen flooding again with huge numbers of gulls: 500 plus Black-headed Gull, 1000 plus Common Gull, 100 plus Herring Gull, together with smaller numbers of Great and Lesser Black-backed. In January 2016 a Glaucous Gull arrived, staying well into February. Many other species use these fields whilst on migration: for example Brent Geese, Sandwich Terns (Spring 2013) and Wheatear, Whinchat and Spotted Flycatcher.

Dave Smith has studied and recorded birds at the Gap since 1976 (40 years!) and he recently submitted an impressively comprehensive list of birds recorded as evidence for keeping this strategic open space. Other members of the society do regular WeBS counts and keep valuable records. These provide concrete evidence for the importance of the Gap as a habitat for birds. But, not only is the Gap vital for wild life, it is vital for

us humans too. We need space to live and breathe. We need these spaces between our towns and villages. They are good, perhaps essential, for our well-being.

(thanks to Clive Hope, John Newnham and Dave Smith for information supplied)

## WIDEWATER SALINE LAGOON LNR - WINTER 2015/2016

Tim Holter

The 2015/2016 winter season has generally seen milder temperatures than usual accompanied by higher rainfall and occasional storm force conditions and this has had an impact upon avian events at Widewater.

The area of exposed mud, attractive to waders, has been low since the sea defences were improved a decade ago and the 'mitigation' pipe installed. This winter the remaining mud has been underwater for most of the season due to the higher than normal rainfall, hence minimal wader presence in the lagoon. The usual few Redshanks have been seen and occasionally a single Greenshank has appeared which is probably the same bird reported regularly from the nearby RSPB Adur Nature Reserve by Jess Aidley viewing from her houseboat. This bird has also been an interesting addition there to the usual species featuring in the Adur Estuary Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS). The Greenshank would normally be foraging in the estuary mud but is possibly prompted to explore further afield at high tide. An example of this scenario occurred on 28<sup>th</sup> October when many Redshanks, which are abundant in the estuary, transferred to Widewater upon a 'Spring' high tide of an exceptional 6.9 metres (a 6.5 metres tide completely covers the estuary mud and

saltmarsh). Jim Steedman reported 36 Redshanks in the lagoon on that day.



Little Grebes were present in numbers up to about 30 early on in winter but were reported at lower figures as the season progressed. Teal have not been a regular feature this year although have been regularly observed in the estuary. This winter's lower showing may have been the result of several episodes of storm force winds causing many birds to relocate to more sheltered sites. Adverse weather, however, often has its benefits at Widewater by producing birds not regularly seen.

Early in January, during a period of high winds, an exhausted Gannet took temporary refuge in the Lagoon, an occurrence last recorded by Cyril Leeves on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001. In the same storm period a fall of numerous Little Gulls occurred along the coast. Some winter appearances have

been recorded but more normal are individuals or very low numbers migrating northwards in April and May. During a gale on the afternoon of 4<sup>th</sup> January Brianne Reeve observed 18 whilst Jenny and I saw four within as many minutes close inshore at Widewater.



On 1<sup>st</sup> January, Widewater birders provided the first report of a first winter Glaucous Gull. This all 'white' gull, standing out from the crowd due to its large size and distinctive plain colour, remained along the coast for several weeks. It was later found once on an Adur mudbank viewed from the SDOS seat, and also occurred near the harbour mouth. It was most often seen and photographed at the high tide gull and wader roost in the wet field at Goring Gap.

Once again Red Breasted Mergansers have been present most of the season together with a few appearances of a drake Goosander to



represent the other British breeding member of the photogenic 'Sawbill' family. An occasional Brent Goose has been seen grazing on short grass at the lagoon edge and a skein passed overhead in the wind driven 'mizzle' during an unpleasantly wet New Year weekend bird walk attended by a few brave members of SDOS, WOW & FOSB.



Finally, the ever present pair of Mute Swans have reared seven cygnets which, to the date of writing (late February), have all survived. By the time this newsletter is read the 'ugly ducklings' may have been driven away by their parents who will become territorial prior to the commencement of the 2016 nesting season. Their current nest site has been fenced to protect it from predation by foxes or other disturbances.



## SHOREHAM ADUR TIDAL WALLS

Tim Holter

It is well known locally that the Environment Agency plans to strengthen and raise the sea defences in the estuary from the harbour entrance (Fort Haven) to a point just south of the A27 flyover. This scheme is currently awaiting planning approval. The proposals are divided into seven reaches for the full length of the west side and three reaches on the east side from Coronation Green northwards. The remaining downriver element on the east side will be dealt with separately to include other development proposals in the harbour.

Our principal birding concern has been **Reach W7** (west bank) from the railway bridge to the Old Toll Bridge. A significant change will occur here. To compensate for saltmarsh habitat lost elsewhere in the scheme the riverbank will be re-aligned close to the airfield perimeter road such that the existing laybys will disappear. Due to a new drainage ditch between the re-aligned bank and the road, parking may be impractical. The existing bank will be used to infill the current ditch and will become extra saltmarsh. Representations have been made concerning details. One concern was that cyclists may use the improved bank-top footpath making walking potentially hazardous and spooking wildlife. The latest plan now includes 'no cycling' signage at access points. The footpath, currently the narrow and uneven slabs from the demolished First World War 'Mystery Tower', will be 1 ½ metres wide increasing to 2.5 metres at four passing points. There will also be two observation points, one being a retained pillbox on the line of the existing bank.

**Reach E3** (east bank) extends from the railway bridge to a point north of the Old Toll Bridge. This will retain the existing bank line which includes

the Downslink Path. Concerns are allayed to a certain extent as the plans undertake to retain the existing vegetation along the bank, as far as possible! Let us hope the reality is not too disastrous as many birds are found in these bushes and larks have been recorded in the saltmarsh below the bank. This has included Wood Lark during heavy snowfall inland.

Once the plans are approved the scheme is scheduled to take about two years to complete but may take up to three. Due to the SSSI status north of the Ferry Bridge Natural England have specified that work should take account of disturbance to birds at critical times and work must not take place on opposite sides of the river simultaneously. Inevitably there will be disruption to access around the riverbanks. Hopefully we can obtain advance notification of blockages.

The Environment Agency have been asked to either carefully store the SDOS bench in Reach E3 for re-instatement if it matches the local council's street furniture plans or to return it to us in good condition to be placed elsewhere. This was an expensive seat paid for with SDOS members' donations.

The Environment Agency's five minute video was shown at our Christmas social. To view this on your computer search under 'You Tube'. Once on the main 'You Tube' web site type 'Shoreham Adur Tidal Walls' into the search bar. Several Shoreham videos will be showing. EA's should be six down. This does not give the detailed plans which are within the Adur and Worthing planning application papers.

## VISITORS TO THE GARDEN AT COOMBES

Brianne Reeve

In the last few months I have been unable to get out as much as I would have liked due to both the weather and my physical ability. Therefore you adapt and take your pleasures where you can, and in my case, this is in the garden. In the past I have had feeding stations for the birds in the front of the house near the small pond but we saw unwelcome visitors there in the form of two rats so I stopped the feeding and gradually set up a new area at the back of the house. This has worked well for me and the birds as I spend more time in the kitchen which overlooks the back garden and allows me to monitor what is happening. It is only an area of about 20 square feet; maybe because it is so small the birds are more concentrated and viewable.

But I do find making an accurate count of what I see to be very challenging. The two Great spotted Woodpeckers are not a problem; it is easy to tell them apart - no red on the head of the female and she has a slightly biscuit-coloured underside which is unlike the male's purer white plumage. He has been drumming since well before Christmas and comes to the feeders more frequently than the female. The brightly arrayed Jay is a singleton and not seen every day. I have three Chaffinches, one male with signs of the dreaded disease affecting his right leg. There are five Woodpigeons, which clear up on the ground and one of these has a damaged wing. It is noticeable that any injured bird is harassed by other birds making them very nervous as they attempt to feed. If I see a movement of flirting wings in the hedge I know it is one of the three Dunnocks which seem to stay in a very small area of the back garden.

This brings me the ones I cannot count with accuracy. As soon as I put out food and disappear back into the house birds arrive from everywhere: over the top of the house, from left and right a small flock out of the hedge where there has been no sign of anything a few minutes earlier. I simply do not understand the way the message is passed on – in seconds!



Dorian suggested I put out a log and used that as a small bird table. Blue Tits are usually the first to get to the foot-high log with a hole in it, which I stuff with peanuts, sunflower seeds and suet, closely followed by Great Tits. But counting them is hopeless as they flick up and down (I worry about the amount of energy expended against the snippets of food they collect each time). Blue Tits usually outnumber Great Tits, seven and five, and a welcome addition are the Long-tailed Tits, not such regular visitors, but up to seven at a time. It is strange how some birds never go on top of the log: Chaffinch, House Sparrows, Blackbirds, Wren and

Woodpigeons but all the others seem to enjoy picking the food out of the hole.

Since the end of January I have been noticing a mini-murmuration of Starlings which arrives over the garden in the late afternoon. It involves about 70+ birds, always taking the same route, always performing for about ten minutes, sweeping up and down, over the garden, over the fields just below us, dividing into two parts and then coming together in a gentle whoosh of wings. Recently, five Starlings have decided to sit in the top of a Sycamore in the garden, watching their peers and only joining them as they suddenly fly off towards Brighton. This sequence of events has taken place for so many weeks that I know almost to the minute when to look out for them. I never have Starlings in the garden except when they are looking to move into the house for nesting purposes but this year they have arrived early, two or four have been coming to the feeding station regularly since February 4<sup>th</sup>. I shall never know if they join the group going to Brighton and the murmuration there of many thousands.

Then on January 13<sup>th</sup> I was surprised to hear the call of a Marsh Tit as I was putting out the first morning rations. Surprised because, although I didn't see the bird immediately, I knew I had never had one in the garden since we came in 1976. I went indoors and turned to see a Marsh Tit down on the ground feeding with other tits, less than four yards away. For the following few days I noted in my diary: 'Marsh Tit still here many times a day'. As it happened John Newnham posted the ringing records of the eight years in the Ladywell at Lancing College at the same time, and I noticed that Marsh Tit did not appear at all. I wrote to ask him why this was and he told me that Marsh Tit is not a common bird on or near the coast and that he thought he might have heard one in the Ladywell but was unable to verify it. When he was at the Sanctuary (close to the A27 flyover on the opposite side of the valley) only two birds had been

trapped: in September 1986 and July 1990. So this Marsh Tit was interesting, is the first to be recorded in this part of the Adur valley since 1990 and has caused quite a lot of discussion. To date I have seen it every day (47 days as I write) as many as 50 + times a day! Yes it is a big time-waster! It always comes in from behind the house, always from the left and returns the same way (only once has it flown off to the right when it was chased by the officious Robin)!



Dorian has taken some superb photos and these drew attention to the fact which Bernie raised, a whitish mark on the upper mandible, which has only very recently been noted as the definitive difference between the Marsh and very similar Willow Tit. (NB Marsh Tit Page 419 SOS The Birds of Sussex). It is not a feature you will find mentioned in guide books

unless it is possibly a very new publication. In fact it is very clear in Dorian's photos that the pale mark is on both the upper and lower mandible but this can only be seen when the bill is open. The Marsh Tit is on the UK Red list. In Sussex the status has been revised from 'common' to 'scarce'.

I have no idea what the end of the story will be but I do know this visitor has given me, and many others, a great deal of pleasure and I shall miss him when he goes – unless of course he finds a mate.....!

## AUGUST 2015 TO JANUARY 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

Stephen Simpson

### **August 2015**

On 1<sup>st</sup> eight Common Sandpipers were on the Adur near the Cement Works and on 3<sup>rd</sup> a Greenshank was at Widewater. On 5<sup>th</sup> 46 Little Egrets were seen flying from Ferring beach towards Goring. Four Common Terns and two Sandwich Terns were sitting on rocks close to the sea.

Two Whinchats were beside Monarch's Way near Cissbury on 7<sup>th</sup> and six were in the same location on 15<sup>th</sup>. A Wheatear was west of Steyning Round Hill on 9<sup>th</sup> and two at Goring Gap on 10<sup>th</sup>. There were further records of these species throughout the month and other species recorded on migration included Redstart, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Reed Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher.

A Hobby was seen near the Adur just north of the A27 on 9<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile Yellow-legged Gull was at Shoreham near the footbridge on 10<sup>th</sup>. A Swift and a Sand Martin flew E at Goring Gap and a Common Sandpiper was on the beach there on the same day. 34 Ringed Plovers and 19 Turnstone were there on 12<sup>th</sup>. On 13<sup>th</sup>, 33 Common, nine Sandwich Terns and the first two Grey Plover flew E off Ferring. Green and Common Sandpipers were seen on Ferring Rife on 21<sup>st</sup>. A Honey Buzzard flew over Brighton on 16<sup>th</sup>, a juvenile Kittiwake was at Brighton Marina on 23<sup>rd</sup> and a White Stork flew over Brighton on 24<sup>th</sup>. Ringed Plovers had increased to 67 and Turnstones to 26 by 23<sup>rd</sup> at Goring Gap. Four Common Sandpipers were on the breakwaters off Ferring and Kingston on 24<sup>th</sup>.

A Black Tern flew E at Widewater on 26<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey flew over Southwick on 29<sup>th</sup>. A Firecrest was at Hove on the same day. Approximately 1200 Swallows flew E at Shoreham on 30<sup>th</sup> and Hobbys were at Shoreham and Patching Hill also on 30<sup>th</sup>.

On 29<sup>th</sup> 17 Common Sandpipers were on the Adur near the Cement Works and an Osprey passed over North Lancing on the same day. A Swift was seen heading SW with Swallows at Coombes on 30<sup>th</sup>. Twenty Little Egrets used the Goring Gap fields to roost at high tide on 31<sup>st</sup> with ten more passing over W.

## **September 2015**

On 1<sup>st</sup> at Goring Gap there were four Spotted Flycatchers, ten Wheatears, three Whinchats and a Redstart. Nine Sand Martins flew NW. 500 Swallows and 50 House Martins were feeding over the fields there on 3<sup>rd</sup>. Also there on the beach on the 5<sup>th</sup> were 80 Ringed Plover and 14 Dunlin. At Wild Park on 6<sup>th</sup> there were four Redstarts, three Wheatears



and around 40 Siskins flew over. Siskins also flew over Woods Mill on 7<sup>th</sup> where there were one or two Spotted Flycatchers and two Little Grebes on the lake. Siskins were also recorded at Ferring beach on 9<sup>th</sup> (95) and 10<sup>th</sup> (28). A Stonechat and a Whinchat were at Goring Gap on 7<sup>th</sup> and an estimated 3500 Swallows flew E there on the same day. At Cissbury on the 8<sup>th</sup>, there were 15 spotted Flycatchers, eight Redstarts, one Whinchat, two Tree Pipits and a Wheatear.



A Greenshank was recorded at Widewater on 4<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. A Hobby flew SE over Shoreham on 5<sup>th</sup> and one was near Cissbury on 15<sup>th</sup> as were at least 30 Yellow Wagtails. A Green Sandpiper flew W over Cissbury on 8<sup>th</sup>. On 20<sup>th</sup> a Black Tern and two Shags were at Brighton Marina. A Black Tern was also seen from Ferring beach on the same day. Two Kingfishers and a Wheatear were at Shoreham Harbour on 20<sup>th</sup> and a Wheatear was

recorded at the Fort on 26<sup>th</sup>. One Swift and eight House Martins flew E with 123 Swallows at Goring Gap on 28<sup>th</sup>. 65 Siskins flew over there on 29<sup>th</sup> and with 75 Swallows one all-white Swallow was seen.

## **October 2015**

Visible migration at the coast involved reasonable numbers of hirundines, finches, wagtails and pipits on 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. A Common Tern was at Shoreham Harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> and two Sandwich Terns were there on 14<sup>th</sup>. An influx of Stonechats to the coast was apparent on 8<sup>th</sup> with 5 or 6 between Ferring and Kingston and four more at Goring Gap.



At Cissbury Ring Ouzels were recorded from 8<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> with a maximum of five on 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. A Yellow-browed Warbler was there on 8<sup>th</sup>. Also on 8<sup>th</sup> a Whinchat was at Ferring Rife. Five Crossbills flew over Lancing

on 11<sup>th</sup>. Around 100 house Martins in one flock flew W at Cissbury on 13<sup>th</sup>. The Goldcrest invasion of the east coast was being felt locally by 11<sup>th</sup> with many being trapped at Ladywells and birds seen in bushes along the coast and in gardens. On 13<sup>th</sup> a Short-eared Owl came in off the sea at Ferring and it or another was seen there on the next two successive days.



Approximately 660 Redwing and 35 Fieldfare flew NW at Wild Park on 14<sup>th</sup>, where there was also a Black Redstart. A flock of 20 Redwing flew W over Shoreham on 14<sup>th</sup> and 206 Fieldfares moved N at Cissbury on 16<sup>th</sup>. Firecrests were at Lancing on 15<sup>th</sup>, Long Furlong on 17<sup>th</sup> and Cissbury on 23<sup>rd</sup>. On 28<sup>th</sup> at Widewater there were 36 Redshank.

Nine Egyptian Geese flew W at Goring Gap on 20<sup>th</sup> and a Black Redstart was at Worthing on 30<sup>th</sup>. Roosting on the fields at Goring Gap on the 30<sup>th</sup>

there were 73 Turnstone, 44 Ringed Plover, 18 Grey Plover and six Dunlin.

## **November 2015**

On 1<sup>st</sup> a Black Redstart and a Rock Pipit were at Southwick beach. A Rock Pipit was at Brighton Marina on the same day as well as a Shag and five Purple Sandpipers. A Caspian Gull was on the Adur at Shoreham on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Two Swallows flew over Cissbury and Southwick on 8<sup>th</sup>. Also on 8<sup>th</sup> 23 Little Grebes were at Widewater and 28 were there on 16<sup>th</sup>.

32 Ringed Plover were roosting on Shoreham beach on 11<sup>th</sup> and there was a Purple Sandpiper at Shoreham Harbour near the fort, where there were two on 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and three on 24<sup>th</sup>. A Wheatear and two Rock Pipits were in the area of the fort and harbour arm on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. One Short-eared Owl was at Goring Gap on 17<sup>th</sup> and two were at Ferring Rife on 21<sup>st</sup>. A Great Northern Diver was recorded at Southwick Canal from 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>.

On 21<sup>st</sup> from Worthing beach two little Gulls, one Red-throated Diver, one Red-breasted Merganser and nine Kittiwakes were recorded. From Goring Gap on 22<sup>nd</sup> there were seven Red-breasted Mergansers flying W and 80 Brent Geese flying W including one flock of 55, also 12 on the foreshore and four on the fields. Included in the roost at Goring Gap on 26<sup>th</sup> there were 223 Dunlin, 26 Ringed Plover, 15 Grey Plover and two Mediterranean Gulls. From Worthing beach on 27<sup>th</sup> a Red-necked Grebe was seen to land on the sea. Also on the sea were 10 Red-breasted Mergansers and two Red-throated Divers flew E.

A Black Redstart was at Brighton on 26<sup>th</sup>. A Brent Goose was at Widewater from 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>. Also at Widewater there were a Knot on

28<sup>th</sup>, four Red-breasted Mergansers on 29<sup>th</sup> and also on 29<sup>th</sup> three Little Gulls flew E and there was a Slavonian Grebe offshore.

## **December 2015**

At Widewater there were two Red-breasted Mergansers on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, three on 7<sup>th</sup> and two on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. A Brent Goose was recorded there on the 5<sup>th</sup>. At least 14 Little Grebes were there on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 17 on 26<sup>th</sup>. A Greenshank was on the Adur at Shoreham on 4<sup>th</sup>. At Cuckoo Corner on 8<sup>th</sup> there were a Curlew, a Redshank and two Brent Geese. A high count of 320 Dunlin was on the fields at Goring Gap on 2<sup>nd</sup>. This had increased to c.450 by 12<sup>th</sup>.

A Kingfisher was at Brighton Marina on 7<sup>th</sup>. Two Firecrests were seen in Lancing on 10<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Three Purple Sandpipers were at Shoreham Harbour on 12<sup>th</sup> and six were there on 24<sup>th</sup>. Near Steep Down a Hen Harrier was seen being harassed by a Raven on 18<sup>th</sup>. At Goring Gap on 19<sup>th</sup> there were 50 Dunlin, 15 Ringed Plover, 3 Sanderling and 68 Grey Plover, over 900 Common Gulls and a Mediterranean Gull. A flock of 80 Brent Geese flew E at Worthing on 26<sup>th</sup>. At Goring Gap on 29<sup>th</sup> there were 336 Dunlin, 92 Ringed Plover, 27 Sanderling and 27 Grey Plover, 414 Common Gulls, two Mediterranean Gulls and two Stock Doves.

## **January 2016**

Purple Sandpipers were recorded at Shoreham Harbour throughout the month with a peak of four on 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Shag was at Southwick Canal on 1<sup>st</sup>. Unusual for the area were 25 Lapwings over Kingston also on this day. At Widewater up to four Red-breasted Mergansers were recorded through the month and a male Goosander was there on a number of dates. 18 Little Grebes were there on 1<sup>st</sup> and 21 on 28<sup>th</sup>. On 2<sup>nd</sup> two Little Gulls were offshore and a party of nine flew W and there were other records

up to 10<sup>th</sup>. A Great Skua flew W on 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Gannet was on Widewater on 4<sup>th</sup>.

Waders and Gulls were recorded at Goring Gap throughout the month with high counts as follows: 51 Turnstone on 1<sup>st</sup>, 62 Grey Plover on 24<sup>th</sup>, 484 Dunlin on 24<sup>th</sup>, 89 Ringed Plover on 24<sup>th</sup>, 159 Sanderling on 31<sup>st</sup>, 1500 Common Gulls on 17<sup>th</sup>, 93 Herring Gulls on 17<sup>th</sup>, 381 Black-headed Gulls on 17<sup>th</sup>, five Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 17<sup>th</sup>, around a dozen Great black-backed Gulls on 2<sup>nd</sup> and up to seven Mediterranean Gulls in the area on 12<sup>th</sup>. A Little Gull was there on 2<sup>nd</sup> and a Kittiwake was there briefly on 4<sup>th</sup>. A Glaucous Gull was there from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> and also on 31<sup>st</sup>.

Six Pochards were at Brooklands and a Chiffchaff was near the Ferring Country Centre on 11<sup>th</sup> with 13 Song Thrushes in the Rife / East Kingston area then and on 21<sup>st</sup>. Two Little Gulls were near Stretham Manor by the Adur on 14<sup>th</sup>. A Short-eared Owl was recorded near Shoreham Airport between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. A Shag was at Brighton Marina on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Two Firecrests were at Brooklands on 25<sup>th</sup>. A Marsh Tit was at Coombes daily from the 13<sup>th</sup>.

## RINGING AT CISSBURY 2015

### Val Bentley

The first four months of the year were mainly devoted to site management work removing ash and sycamore saplings, lowering the scrub layer, and preparing the net rides for the coming season. On several of these visits a single net was set and six new birds were ringed, including a Firecrest and a Redwing, and 13 retrapped, one of which was a Goldcrest ringed in autumn 2014. In addition there was one session using only the central area on 21<sup>st</sup> February. The first full session was on 4<sup>th</sup>

Species	Total	New	2014 New	<u>Retrap</u>	Control
Blackbird	59	29	40	30	
Blackcap	443	406	462	36	1
Blue Tit	38	20	25	18	
Bullfinch	49	29	34	20	
Chaffinch	6	6	2		
Chiffchaff	161	150	274	11	
Duncock	55	30	42	25	
<u>Firecrest</u>	10	7	8	3	
Garden Warbler	4	4	9		
<u>Goldcrest</u>	99	87	65	12	
Goldfinch	8	7	19	1	
Great Tit	36	24	19	12	
Great Spotted Woodpecker			1		
Green Woodpecker	1	1	1		
Greenfinch	9	8	15	1	
Jay	1	1			
<b>Lesser Redpoll</b>	2	2			
Lesser Whitethroat	1	1	4		
Linnet	1	1	1		
Long-tailed Tit	27	10	24	17	
<b>Marsh Tit</b>	5	3		2	
Redstart	1	1	1		
Redwing	10	10	8		
Reed Warbler	9	8	10		1
Robin	82	54	65	28	
Song Thrush	31	22	29	9	
<i>Spotted Flycatcher</i>			1		
<u>Treecreeper</u>			2		
Whitethroat	60	53	61	7	
Willow Warbler	49	49	53		
<b>Wood Warbler</b>	1	1			
Wren	50	35	30	15	
<b>Total</b>	1308	1059	1305	247	2

**Table 1: Captures at Cissbury 2015**

Species in **bold** were ringed in 2015 but not 2014

Species in *italics* were ringed in 2014 but not 2015

May, and the final on 8<sup>th</sup> November, with a little more “incidental” ringing during maintenance visits until the end of the year. In total 28 main visits were made, one fewer than in 2014 and 1308 birds were trapped, a lower figure than the 1577 from 2014, but still better than in the previous two years. Of these 1059 were new birds, 247 retraps, and two controls (a capture of a bird ringed elsewhere). Table 1 lists the species captured in 2015, and includes a column listing the new birds ringed in 2014 for comparison.

### **As the Year Unfolded**

An experimental February session on the 21<sup>st</sup>, with seven of the nets in use, saw a pleasing total of 20 birds captured, including a Redwing and a Firecrest, and a venerable Song Thrush which had been ringed as an 2<sup>nd</sup> year female in 2010, hence at least in its sixth year of life. The first full session was carried out by Brian and myself on the Bank Holiday of 4<sup>th</sup> May, by which time Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Whitethroats were back on the site. The following weekend the most notable retrap was a Blackcap (V945551) ringed as a juvenile in 2009 and seen almost every year since, and we trapped a pair of Goldfinches. Determining male and female would have been tricky using the normal method of whether the red feathering above the eye extends behind it (a male) – but we had the advantage of being able to see the brood patch! There were no visits between 11<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May, but on the 30<sup>th</sup> females of seven different species caught had well-developed brood patches, and the first juveniles were found, a Robin and a Song Thrush. Juvenile Chiffchaffs and Long-tailed Tits were first encountered on 14<sup>th</sup> June, but we were disappointed to report that neither Garden Warbler or Lesser Whitethroat had been heard. There have been other years when no birds of these two species in juvenile plumage have been trapped, but males have been holding territory. The first juvenile Blackbird, Dunnock and Great Tit appeared in



the nets on 21<sup>st</sup> June. Later in the month we trapped the first juvenile Linnet since 2003, one of only nine Linnets ringed this century, which is surprising after ringing 20 new Linnets in 1999. However, we often heard them calling around the site.

We were pottering along to a fairly modest total on 1<sup>st</sup> August when 14 birds at the end of the session brought us to respectability, one of which was only the 7<sup>th</sup> ever Wood Warbler ringed at the site, six of which have been caught in the window of 28<sup>th</sup> July to 14<sup>th</sup> August. Like five of the others, this bird was a first year; the other, however, was a spring migrant in 1994, and even sang briefly for us. With one in 2005, another in 2010 and now this one, is the next due in 2020?



The same day saw the arrival of the first of 49 passage Willow Warblers ringed between then and 6<sup>th</sup> September; the maximum daily total was 24 on 18<sup>th</sup> August. The third August visit, on the 9<sup>th</sup>, brought a passage Reed Warbler, a first year bird; another nine were trapped in the following four weeks, including one ringed at Ladywell. A second 2009-ringed Blackcap

(V945441) was retrapped in August, but unlike V945551 had not been seen since its initial capture, so presumably had been breeding elsewhere. As August progressed, Blackcap and Whitethroat movement increased as that of Willow Warblers declined, and on 22<sup>nd</sup> we ringed 19 new Blackcaps and 17 new Whitethroats. More Blackcaps arrived during September; we ringed 84 on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 79 on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A visiting ringer from Orkney that day was very pleased to encounter his first Bullfinch in the hand as the species does not venture that far north.

Blackcaps continued to move through the site, and 49 were ringed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October plus a single retrap which had increased in weight from 18.8g to 23.5g in the seven days since its previous capture. Forty-seven Chiffchaffs were ringed in the first week of October, but both these species then tailed off in number, whilst Goldcrests increased, 57 new during the month. The last full session of the year, on 8<sup>th</sup> November seemed to herald the start of winter, with eight Goldcrests, four Redwings and seven Song Thrushes.

## **Residents**

Five of our resident breeding species had a less productive year than in 2014; only Wrens maintained the same level. The table below shows totals of the numbers of juveniles plus first year birds ringed until the end of September over the past six years; other first year birds captured after that date could well be incoming individuals, particularly in the case of Robins and Blackbirds.

**Table 2: Productivity of six resident species**

Species	Number of juveniles and first year birds (to 30/9)					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Blackbird	3	17	17	8	22	12
Blue Tit	41	32	10	19	14	12
Dunnock	13	30	18	24	29	19
Great Tit	43	28	4	10	16	14
Robin	22	40	35	24	43	28
Wren	13	24	12	13	22	22

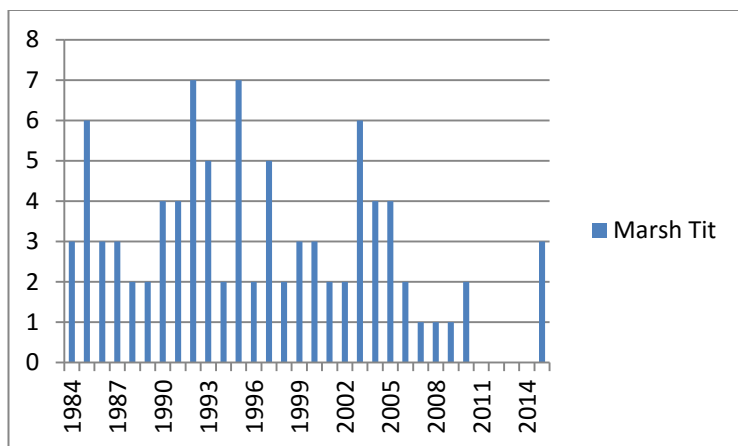
Bullfinches are not included in Table 2 as they breed later in the season, and birds caught until early November can still show signs of post-juvenile moult. Eleven adult Bullfinches were trapped in 2015, four females and seven males, and a total of 23 young birds ringed, slightly down on the 30 in 2014, but maintaining an improvement over the rather dismal year of 2013 when there were only 15 first year birds ringed. The first juveniles appeared on 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

Although nine adult Greenfinches were trapped between 21<sup>st</sup> February and 21<sup>st</sup> June, eight were males and only one female, and there were no juveniles caught. Two pairs of Goldfinches were also found in the spring, but only two first year birds were ringed, in late autumn. Two female Chaffinches were ringed early in the year, but no more appeared until December. Although we had been hearing Linnets nearby, a juvenile in the net on 26<sup>th</sup> June was still rather a surprise, and only the fifth Linnet ringed in the past 15 years.

One resident which we thought had disappeared from the area staged a comeback during 2015. At the end of September a first year Marsh Tit was trapped, and two others followed, on the 29<sup>th</sup> and on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

Always in small numbers and, in line with national trends, declining this century, none had been trapped or seen at the site since 2010 (see table below), so it was very good news to realise that a successful brood must have been raised not too far away.

**Table 3: Marsh Tits at Cissbury 1984-2015**



### Summer & Passage Migrants

As in 2014 there was an absence of breeding Garden Warblers and Lesser Whitethroats. Based on the number of females trapped which had well-developed brood patches, there were 11 pairs of Blackcaps in the area, two pairs of Chiffchaffs and one pair of Whitethroats. We ringed 39 Blackcaps in whole or partly juvenile plumage; one on 3<sup>rd</sup> October must have been from rather a late brood. Only six juvenile Whitethroats were ringed, but 34 juvenile Chiffchaffs indicates that there were more breeding on site than indicated by the known females caught.

It was only as birds were starting their autumn movements that we encountered our lone Lesser Whitethroat, in August, while of the four passage Garden Warblers ringed three were adults. If they had enjoyed a good breeding season then one would expect young birds to outnumber the adults.



In part due to lack of coverage during the peak time for Chiffchaff migration the percentage of this species ringed was lower than in recent years, while Blackcaps reached their highest level (Table 3)

**Table 4: Totals of Four Passage Species (as percentages of total number of birds ringed)**

Years	Blackcap	Chiffchaff	Whitethroat	Willow Warbler
2000-2004	25.5	13.7	6.9	6.8
2005-2009	30.6	15.9	5.0	5.8
2010	25.7	11.8	8.3	11.5
2011	34.9	20.9	5.4	5.7
2012	24.1	15.3	4.5	7.0
2013	32.3	23.0	5.0	4.8
2014	35.3	20.9	4.3	4.0
2015	38.3	14.2	5.0	4.6

### Re-traps

While the majority of birds retrapped are from the current year, it is always pleasing to catch some from previous years which have demonstrated their ability to survive at least two winters, whether in the UK or elsewhere:

**Table 5: Selection of Re-traps 2014**

Ring No.	Species	Ringed	Recaptured	Minimum Age
EHA 550	Wren	01.10.13	03.12.15	2 yr. 63 d
X960754	Duncock	19.07.11	10.07.15	3 yr. 356 d
CF17974	Blackbird	27.08.11	21.06.15	3 yr. 298 d
CW11990	Blackbird	03.10.09	24.03.15	5 yr. 172 d (Only 3 <sup>rd</sup> recapture)
RT62595	Song Thrush	29.04.10	21.02.15	4 yr. 298 d (Only 2 <sup>nd</sup> recapture)
V945441	Blackcap	25.08.09	04.08.15	5 yr. 344 d (First recapture)
V945551	Blackcap	20.06.09	09.08.15	6 yr. 50 d
Y317355	Blue Tit	17.09.11	30.05.15	3 yr. 255 d (First recapture 2015)

### Controls

Apart from the Reed Warbler ringed at Ladywell 35 days before we saw it on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, we trapped a Blackcap on 21<sup>st</sup> June which had been ringed at Icklesham (East Sussex) on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. Two Willow Warblers from Cissbury were found by other ringers. One ringed on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2013 turned up at Bicester on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, and another ringed on 18<sup>th</sup>

August this year had made its way 496 km SSW to Les Sables D'Olonne in western France twelve days later. A shorter distance "migrant" was a Great Tit we had ringed on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014 which decided to pop over to Phil Clay's Mumbles site at Steyning where it was caught on the SDOS Open Day on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

Ringers at Cissbury during the year were Val Bentley, Brian Clay, Sue Walsh, Mark Mallalieu and James Dollow (trainee), with single visits from Laurie Jackson and Dave Wakefield. It was nice that Jane Cecil, National Trust General Manager- South Downs), was able to come to have a look at the ringing. We are very grateful to the National Trust for their permission to ring at the site, to Vic Oliver the NT Warden with whom we liaise with regard to site management, and to the owners of the track for allowing vehicular access.

## **Ladywell 2015**

### **John Newnham**

With the advent of a new calendar year now is a good time to review the effort of the past year and compare this with the eight previous years of ringing activity in Ladywell. Table 1 shows that the 38 ringing session in 2015 was above the average of 31 for the previous years, second only to 2011 but not wildly different from other years. Of course this is very dependent on weather and the availability of sufficient members of the ringing team. A report was created and circulated following each mist-netting session. Like previous years there were additional visits to the valley to maintain net rides, attend to nest-boxes and stock feeders and on several of these occasions details records of observations were logged

onto the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Birdtrack recording system.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number	22	29	33	34	39	31	37	25	38

**Table 1:** The number of mist-netting sessions held in each year 2007-15.

2015 turned out to be very good year with site records broken on a regular basis. The totals of birds trapped and ringed during 2015, along with those for previous years is shown in the large Table 2. The figures in the green cells refer to all birds trapped including birds retrapped whilst those in purple cells show the numbers of birds ringed. Thus for Kingfisher nine different birds were ringed in 2015 and on three occasions







**Previous page: Table 2:** The details of all species ringed in Ladywell showing the number of each species handled in each year (green) and ringed (purple)

a Kingfisher was caught in 2015 already wearing a ring, bringing the total of handlings to 12. The species in red print were new to the ringing in Ladywell and the Wood Warbler was a new species for bird recording in the valley.

The total of 2120 birds ringed was considerably greater than the previous best of 1602 in 2011 and 2015 just edged past, by 44, the 2738 handlings in 2011. Both 4<sup>th</sup> October (202 birds) and 8<sup>th</sup> October (191 birds) beat the previous 'top' day of 175 birds trapped on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Twelve species, shown in bold in the above table, were caught in record numbers; the most significant being the warblers and crests. Curiously whilst several of these insectivorous species were ringed in record numbers neither Sedge nor Grasshopper Warblers were trapped. Table 3 shows the species which have been previously ringed in Ladywell but not caught in 2015.

Species NOT trapped in 2015		
Stock Dove	Stonechat	Rook
Tawny Owl	Mistle Thrush	Carion/Hooded Crow
Swallow	Grasshopper Warbler	House Sparrow
Meadow Pipit	Sedge Warbler	Bullfinch
Redstart	Magpie	Reed Bunting

**Table 3:** The species not trapped in Ladywell during 2015.

Table 2 gives the details but the 'winners' and 'losers' are more clearly seen in Table 4 which shows the species with the greatest gain from the average (2007-14) (black) and those with the largest losses (red). Although five migrants are in the top slots there were reasonable catches

of four resident species. At the other end of the spectrum, with the exception of House Martin, it is the woodland species which were caught in smaller numbers. In the past Blue Tit was the most regular species visiting the mist-nets.

Handlings per species per year					
Species	Avr 2007-14	Difference to 2015	Species	Avr 2007-14	Difference to 2015
Chiffchaff	120	605	Blue Tit	361	-85
Blackcap	115	269	Great Tit	193	-42
Goldcrest	26	216	House Martin	17	-16
Willow Warbler	30	128	Treecreeper	21	-13
Reed Warbler	50	53	Greenfinch	20	-12
Robin	89	27	Nuthatch	10	-9
Blackbird	86	22	Long-tailed Tit	96	-8
Wren	62	22	Green Woodpecker	9	-6
Dunnock	93	15	Chaffinch	55	-5

**Table 4:** The species showing the greatest changes in 2015 from the average for 2007-14.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2007-14 sessions	16	11	17	24	19	22	22	27	30	27	20	15
Avr. sessions / year	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	2
Average catch	52	45	34	36	40	33	40	58	69	51	64	60
2015 sessions	0	1	0	5	3	2	4	4	6	7	3	3
Average catch		23		29	48	41	39	82	130	112	53	53

**Table 5:** The number of mist-netting sessions and average catch in each month.

Although the number of ringing sessions was not very different from other years the pattern of activity during the year may, in part, account for some of these changes. Table 5 shows the monthly effort during 2015 compared with that for previous years. Fewer sessions were possible in the early months with just one in the first quarter but more were conducted during the more productive autumn passage period.

This, however, is not the entire reason as the average catches in the autumn were nearly twice the average for the previous years. Although in the past sound lures had been used with little clear success they were deployed more regularly in 2015 but birds need to be present in the area for these to be of value.

Certainly the reed and willow growth was good and this habitat is ideal for aphids and other insects which clearly attracted large numbers of insectivorous birds into the valley. This is supported by looking at the net productivity; those near reed stands are shown in a darker green in the following table. Site L5, a single 18 metre net set at the eastern end of the valley was particularly productive during the autumn. Net K3 was only erected on a few occasions but accounted for all the Jackdaws trapped.

Net	K	K2	K3	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	P1	P2	P3
Total caught 2015	185	333	16	106	111	33	194	510	315	786	132
length (m)	24	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	54	72	18
Birds/metre	8	19	1	6	6	2	11	28	6	11	7

**Table 6:** The number of birds caught in each net site during 2015.

Although over 2000 birds were caught only three carried rings applied elsewhere (controls). These were all Chiffchaffs and are listed below. Whether it is pure coincidence or not, it is amazing two controlled on 27<sup>th</sup> September had both been ringed at the same location albeit a year

apart. Maybe, DLA390 (ringed as an adult) had returned to breed at or near Pitsford Reservoir and was migrating with one or more of its offspring (DAR884 – ringed as a juvenile).

Ring	Date	Species	Age	Ring date	Ring site
DAR884	27/09/2015	CHIFF	3	02/08/2015	Pitsford Reservoir, Northampton
DLA390	27/09/2015	CHIFF	4	05/08/2014	Pitsford Reservoir, Northampton
HEK316	11/10/2015	CHIFF	3	16/08/2015	Rye Meads, Hoddesdon, Herts.

**Table 7:** The details of the three birds caught in 2015 and ringed elsewhere.

So far there have been no significant recoveries reported of birds ringed in Ladywell during 2015.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of boxes available	11	11	23	23	24	29	32	32
Blue Tit	3	3	8	13	11	10	9	9
Great Tit			3	5	2	4	7	6
Nuthatch					1	1		
Total occupied boxes	3	3	11	18	14	15	16	15
Occupancy %	27	27	48	78	58	52	50	47
Total eggs laid	19	28	89	149	107	103	126	114
Total pulli	19	25	78	130	83	44	88	69
Total young fledged	19	23	75	102	56	42	55	25
% survival egg -> fledging	100	82	84	68	52	41	44	22

**Table 8:** Summary of the Ladywell's nest-box occupancy and success 2008-2015.

As before the nest-boxes sited in the Lancing College side of the valley were carefully studied and the details were recorded for the BTO's Nest Recording Scheme. Although 15 of the 32 available boxes were occupied by either Blue or Great Tits the breeding success was not good as only 25

birds were known to have fledged from 114 eggs. It is slightly worrying to note the trend shown in Table 8 and this, coupled with the decline in the number of tits caught, suggests something is happening in the area which does not favour these two species.

During the year the BTO organised a national survey of breeding House Martins, a species which is in decline in the UK. Both Applesham Farm and Lancing College were surveyed; as expected none was found on Applesham Farm but many of the college buildings supported breeding birds and the total of 28 occupied nests makes this one of the key sites in Sussex for this species.

Two ringing sessions during 2015 will last in the group's memories for non-avian and completely different reasons. The report for 22<sup>nd</sup> August observed that *'The ringing session at Ladywell today was overshadowed by the tragic air crash on the A27 very close to Lancing College.'* On a happier note the account for 9<sup>th</sup> December recorded - *'During the mid-morning we were joined by about twenty pupils from year three at Downsbrook School in Broadwater (Worthing).'* After several years of regular student involvement with the ringing in the valley this was the only time in 2015 such a group were able to join us.

At the beginning of the year Mark Mallalieu joined us as a trainee ringer and graduated to gain a C permit before the end of the year which allows him to operate by himself. My congratulations go to Mark and my thanks to him and the other members of the ringing team, Sue Walsh, Chrissi White, Adam Webster and Dave Boddington for their efforts throughout the year. I would like to extend our continued gratitude and thanks to the college authorities and staff, particularly Jon Hutcheon the farm manager, and to Hugh and Christopher Passmore of Applesham Farm for their on-going interest, help and support with the ringing in Ladywell.

## PHOTO-GALLERY







## CALL FOR A NEW CHAIRMAN

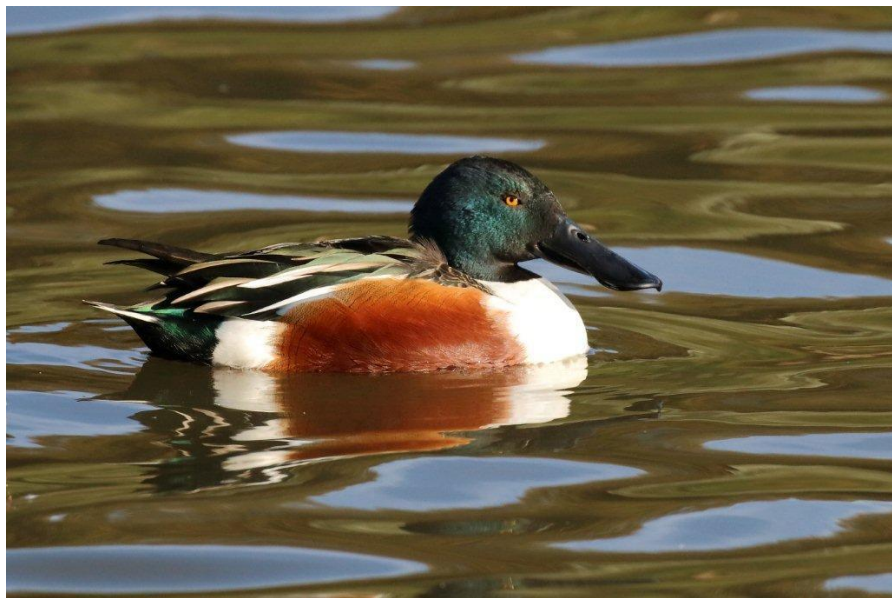
Brianne Reeve

I have been recycling old papers..... and I quote: ‘ **We are still looking for someone to take over from me as Chairman, please.**’

I have just found this in a Newsletter dated October 2009, nearly seven years ago. As you will realise no replacement has happened. I am just entering my 79<sup>th</sup> year and it is more than obvious I must be replaced for all kinds of reasons. It would be good to have some fresh ideas for the Society as well as keeping the things we know work and are enjoyed. We need someone who realises the commitment would be for three to five years and that necessarily means a slightly younger person.

Defining the scope of the job would be up to the new Chairman. There is no need to think that anyone willing to take over from me would be expected to do what I do from my own choice. I have been thinking that we could divide up some of the responsibilities so that it is not too onerous for one person. For example we could divide responsibility into a Chairman for the AGM and Council Meetings held three times year whilst another person could run the Indoor Meetings, introduce the speaker and arrange votes of thanks.

These are only my suggestions so please if you have any other ideas let us know.



## WOODS MILL WALK – DATE CHANGE IN MAY

The date for the Nightingale walk at Woods Mill has been changed to **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May** (instead of the 13<sup>th</sup>) – all other details remain the same.

## FRONT AND BACK COVERS

Front: Bewick's Swans, Arun Valley: Dorian Mason

Back: Ring Ouzel, Cissbury Ring: Ron Bewley

## Society officers

(Officers in post following the A.G.M. of 8th March 2016)

President	Bernie Forbes	bforbes106@outlook.com	01903 753876
Chairman	Brianne Reeve	briannereeve@yahoo.com	01273 452497
Secretary	Sue Miles	sdos.memsec@btinternet.com	
Treasurer	Tim Holter	sdos.treasurer@yahoo.co.uk	
Field Officer	Dorian Mason	dorianmason@sky.com	01903 414024
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Membership Secretary	Sue Miles	sdos.memsec@btinternet.com	
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Minutes Secretary	Audrey Wende	mauwende@delta18.plus.com	
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