

Shoreham and District
Ornithological Society
Spring Newsletter
2021



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Editorial

It is now officially Spring here in Pulborough and the first Chiffchaffs are establishing themselves in the wayside trees on my cycling route. Chiffchaff is clearly an example of an onomatopoeic bird name and there are others too; Cuckoo, Curlew and Peewit, the alternative name for the Lapwing, spring to mind. Pipit is to be counted here also but perhaps is a bit less obvious.

Nouns in English are often derived from Latin by way of Norman French or from a Scandinavian or Germanic language via the Anglo-Saxons. Bird names don't seem to be much different.

One doesn't need to be much of an etymologist to work out that the name Guillemot is a French import but Eagle (Old French aigle), Buzzard (Old French busard), Vulture (French vultur), Bustard (Old French bistrarde), Falcon (Old French faucon), and Martin (Old French martin) all share the same French and Latin roots. The Corvus Marinus in Latin was the Raven of the Sea translating into French as Cormoran, becoming the English Cormorant. Like beef and cow Pigeon is pigeon from French whilst Dove is coming in from the Old English Dove and the Old Norse dofa.

Many seabird names derive from the north, perhaps not unexpectedly. Gull and Skua are Norse words. Skua is coming in from the Faeroese skugvur whilst Auk is Icelandic. Tern is from a Scandinavian language. Gannet is from German. Amongst landbirds Owl is Norse 'ugla' or Old German 'uwila'. Tit is of Norse origin too. Goose (gos) is old English from German as is Duck. Chough is Middle English from Old English whilst Finch is Old English too.

The name Godwit seems to be an enigma so perhaps we will leave it there!

Best wishes to you all.

Roger

The Origin of My Favourite Species!

John Maskell

Whilst my passion for birding was ignited by my wife Shena and late father-in-law, more than 40 years ago, I have recently realised that my interest was kindled many years before. The peaceful passing of my mother at the age of nearly 93 on Valentine's Day has naturally led to some reflection and reminiscing.

As a child I grew up in a small cottage on the southern edge of Ryde on the Isle of Wight with open countryside virtually on our doorstep. My childhood often resembled an episode from the tales of the Durrell Family. My Mum could never ignore a human or animal in distress and our life was periodically punctuated by the admission into our home of some waif or stray that Mum just happened to have rescued. I recall a delinquent hen, several hedgehogs, a dog or two and various moggies. Most dramatic of these temporary "pets" was a fully-fledged Herring Gull that Mum encountered one day whilst collecting my younger sister from her infants' school. The poor bird had a damaged wing and was clearly distressed. Despite the pouring rain Mum managed to catch the injured gull and brought it home under her arm. Then using some planks from Dad's shed she constructed a temporary pen in our tiny kitchen. I recall my trepidation as I was left in charge whilst Mum walked to the nearest telephone kiosk, more than a quarter of a mile away, to phone the RSPCA. To my young eyes this Herring Gull, with its gaping mouth and constantly agitated flapping, was terrifying and left me feeling anxious for several days afterwards. Mercifully we were relieved of our new tenant a few hours later when the RSPCA van arrived. Phew! These varied creatures' stays with us were, like the Herring Gull's, usually short-lived once they had recovered or new homes found. However, there was one creature that ended up staying far longer than any of us could have imagined.

One spring day Mum heard some plaintive calls coming from the common passageway that separated our house from our neighbours. Upon investigation

she discovered that a fledgling had fallen from a nest in our neighbour's roof and was clearly in a sorry state. It can only have been a few days old as it just had the beginnings of a few feathers and I remember that it resembled a miniature plucked chicken. On its breast was an open wound. Its life-expectancy was zero. But Mum was a great believer in the old adage "where there's life there's hope". The tiny mite was soon nestled in a small cardboard box encased in cotton wool with a hot water bottle underneath. Mum then began administering through a small dropper the family's "cure all" of bread soaked in warm milk and brandy! Many of our temporary pets would surely attest to its efficacy if they were able. Further investigations confirmed that our convalescent was a House Sparrow chick. Having survived the night, the course of "medicine" continued and the chick slowly showed signs of improvement and the chest wound was replaced by a large scab! The near miraculous improvement aroused the admiration of the neighbours and a budgerigar cage was donated by one of them. The diet was also supplemented with more natural foods. Early on we named the chick Fred. It continued to flourish over the early summer and developed feathers, but the breast wound took a long time to fully heal. The young spug adapted well to living in a cage and seemed very content with its new family and surroundings. The cage was kept outside in our open-sided conservatory or suspended from the washing line during daylight hours. It was often brought indoors where the cage door was duly opened and our unusual pet would happily fly around the living room leaving the occasional "calling card", usually in inconvenient locations! Somewhere in our family archives is a photograph of "Fred" perched on Mum's forefinger. Dad's head was another favoured landing pad! It would then take itself back into the cage to roost. Amusingly Kitty, our pet tabby, seemed to know the bird's full-board resident status and never once attempted to interfere with these indoor flying sessions. Later in the summer when the sparrow was fully fledged a kindly neighbour discreetly pointed out that we may now wish to rename our bird Freda!

Freda was plainly a contented bird and happy with its domestic arrangements. Feeding her and supervising her indoor flights soon became part of our daily routine. Then one day the following spring she became very agitated. Clearly

the sap was rising and when Mum opened the cage door Freda flew off to join the local parliament. The call of the wild!

Although the generally accepted advice is to let nature take its course, should you discover a fallen nestling, in my experience there are sometimes happy exceptions to this rule. In this case Mum's compassion gave me a lifelong love of House Sparrows. They are my favourite bird and I often sport one of the RSPB's pin badges to prove it!

Conservation Update: Spring 2021

Tim Holter

There is lots happening locally at the moment with some exciting new projects and potentially more to follow.

RSPB Adur Nature Reserve

Due to the persistence of the four RSPB Volunteer Wardens (SDOS members who formed a local RSPB action team), the long-awaited interpretation panel is now erected on Coronation Green with SDOS credited on the board alongside the RSPB. Publicity has been shared with the Shoreham Herald and SDOS now has a mention on their website.

Further signage is being pursued that will hopefully discourage disturbance of roosting birds and damage to saltmarsh habitat by entry from land access points and from the river. Also, a roosting raft is being considered to replace the old boat hulks that have rotted away, together with a viewing screen at the observation point by the A259

The Adur Estuary and Site of Special Scientific Interest

The RSPB Reserve and wider river are within the Adur Estuary SSSI. A positive meeting has been held with Natural England whose approval is required for any work within the SSSI. As they are responsible for establishing that the SSSI

status is 'satisfactory' we have raised other local issues with them which we believe are detrimental at present.

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust oversee a number of focus groups for local projects and environmental issues. The RSPB are already represented and we have requested SDOS participation in relevant projects that may help to protect the entire SSSI of which the RSPB Reserve is a part.

We have accepted responsibility from the Sussex Ornithological Society for local conservation issues with recourse to their resources and support if needed.

Education and raising awareness of the importance and fragility of the SSSI and RSPB reserve are the preferred protection strategies of the statutory bodies. Our approach is based on schemes in the Exe Estuary and Solent. We have started to form relationships with local paddleboard and kayaking clubs, instructors and the Tourist and Watersports Development Officer at Adur & Worthing Council. We hope soon to have developed a voluntary code of practice with a poster and leaflet for digital distribution. Printing will need to be paid for and graphic design assistance is being sought.

Adur and Worthing District Council Nature projects

Following the announcement of the acquisition of New Salts Farm in September 2020, much to our surprise and delight, two further projects had been announced by January 2021. These are Pad Farm, Lancing and Shepherds Mead in the Findon Valley. At last, the threat of global warming and the importance of stemming nature losses has justified Local Authority spending on initiatives to promote biodiversity and tackle climate change. Section 106 compensation and other building development funding has enabled this to happen.

SDOS has registered as a wildlife stakeholder for each project. We are grateful to Adrian Thomas who will use his nature reserve creation ecological skills to act as our lead at stakeholder meetings.



Scrub colonising grassland at New Salts Farm

New Salts Farm, Lancing comprises 70 acres of farmland lying south of the railway line from New Salts Farm Road to the rear of the Hasler Estate in Lancing. The eastern side is very open and has been grazed by sheep. The west end is not secure for grazing livestock. Part of this area appears to have been cropped for hay. A further large section has been unused for some time and is reverting to nature which fits with re-wilding intentions.

Currently the land is private with no public right of access and is subject to an agricultural tenancy which is being re-negotiated. Members of the action team will request entry permission in order to assess the farm's value as bird habitat and we hope to conduct a bird census during March to June. An initial visit has revealed a number of damp areas and reed filled ditches with possibilities for enhancement in addition to the developing wild area. Including We have met via Zoom with Adrian Thomas and Laura Brook from the Sussex Wildlife Trust to share our aspirations and to discuss any support we can provide.

The acquisition of Pad Farm, Lancing was announced in December 2020. This 45 acre site has been purchased from Ricardo's as compensation for habitat loss between the A27 and the harbour. The land is to the north of the A27 flyover between the Adur and Coombes Road and extends northwards to Cuckoo Corner. In conjunction with the Environment Agency, the South Downs National Park, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust a floodplain management scheme is proposed that will create new mudflat and saltmarsh habitat in place of the existing agricultural land.

The project at Shepherds Mead was announced in January 2021. This site comprises 100 acres of mainly open grassland lying behind houses on the east side of Findon Valley and beneath Cissbury Ring. A public right of way crosses the site. AWDC have owned the land since 1970 but now have the opportunity to 'take back' the agricultural tenancy. A rewilding scheme is proposed. The SDOS Conservation team anticipate needing local members support for this project.

Bramber Brooks

This is a privately-owned site and new nature reserve where Brianne Reeve has been providing advice. SDOS has already funded a Barn Owl nest box supervised by Barrie Watson. Wetland creation work is due to be carried out by the Environment Agency. There is a possibility of a floodplain management scheme on part of the site adjacent to the river.

EPIC Sompting.

The EPIC scheme (Enhancing Spaces, Inspiring Communities) is a partnership between the Sompting Estate and the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust. Financed by a National Lottery Heritage Grant major ground works have taken place to reinstate a formerly culverted stream which flows from the Downs to Brooklands Park. The project will also provide public access to this private land

which lies south of the A27 at Sompting, and north of the railway line. We have placed ourselves on a mailing list in order to monitor progress.

Further flood management projects

The Environment Agency's River Adur Catchment Flood Management Plan aims to manage run-off in order to reduce flood risk or provide environmental benefits. The Adur Valley section of the plan refers to the potential to improve biodiversity leading to an eventual increase in the extent, quality and diversity of wetland habitats. These aims would be delivered through ecological surveys and agri-environment schemes to encourage the uptake of whole farm plans. SDOS, in liaison with SWT, will watch for opportunities to promote and monitor benefits for wetland and other birds.

A footnote

Tim Holter has written this article but other members have contributed substantially to the work described.

Widewater virtual January bird walk

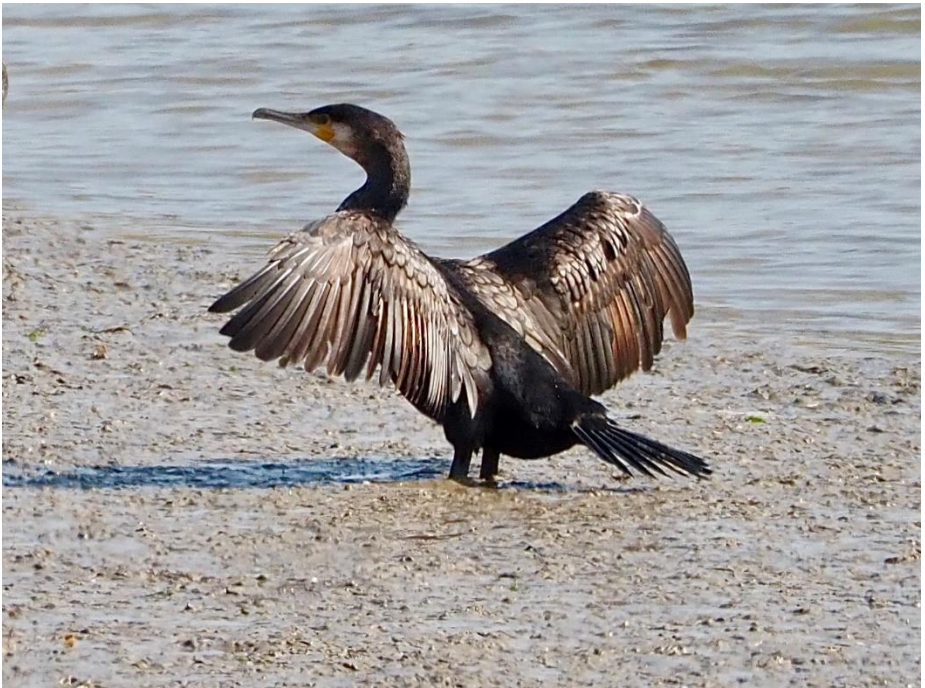
Jo Procter

Lockdown 2.0 arrived as widely expected and has once more resulted in an influx of walkers and cyclists taking full advantage of the peace of the Widewater for their daily exercise. The weather was a bit variable but January is one of the peak times for bird activity (resident and visiting) on the lagoon so there was plenty to enjoy.

Indeed, January is the time WoW members usually congregate for the annual bird walk. Sadly this could not happen this year so we thought that with the help of our friends and regular expert guides Tim Holter and Tony Benton from Shoreham and District Ornithological Society and also some photographs

from Dave Hoggen we would invite you to join us on an imagined stroll through the local nature reserve to see what can be seen.

As we walk westwards, Tony spots and points out Cormorants ducking and diving. 'They are unmistakable,' he says 'and visit the lagoon to hunt for fish or to rest and sleep! When fishing, they can be submerged, like a submarine, for 30 seconds or more, often resurfacing some distance from where they dived. And when in resting mode, they are seen perching on posts in the water, often with their wings open and looking rather prehistoric. Cormorants seem to find plenty of fish to eat at the lagoon and can sometimes be seen tackling a large flounder or similar: the fish always seems to come off worse.'



Moving on, Tim raises his binoculars and spies a Little Grebe. With its 'powder puff' rear this tiny grebe could be mistaken for a newly hatched duckling. Commonly known as 'dabchicks' they are the smallest and most common

grebe. During the winter they are found on open water bodies such as lagoons and reservoirs. During the breeding season they retire to sites providing cover for nesting such as the Mill Pond at Sussex Wildlife Trust's Woods Mill reserve. In some years up to thirty are present on Widewater but they are not easily seen as they repeatedly dive for small fish or loiter under bushes and landings around the edge of the lagoon.

We pass the footbridge and the weekend-silent heavy machinery that will provide our new crossing. Tim spots two Red-Breasted Mergansers. One of the three European 'sawbills', Mergansers are a maritime species outside the breeding season and are generally found close to land in bays, estuaries, lakes and brackish waters. They nest in northern Europe but are widespread around the British coast in winter and are regularly present near our local coasts with several often visiting Widewater.



They are distinctive with their thin red bills and 'scruffy crests'. When several are present the males display by furiously chasing each other with rapid movements along the water. In some years the freshwater preferring Goosander also appears. The males are distinctive. Females are similar but have a clear divide between their chestnut head and white breast.

Tony scours the north side of the lagoon looking for Kingfishers. On a gloomy winter's day, the sight of a Kingfisher will always lift the spirits: but they are not easy to see! At the lagoon, scanning the vegetation over hanging the water provides the best chance of seeing one. Also look carefully at the decking and other perches at the end of the gardens. They often sit motionless for minutes at a time, before plunging in for a fish, or speeding away to the next vantage point. The flight is low and fast, wings whirring, interrupted by short glides. Kingfishers don't breed at the lagoon and winter offers the best chance of seeing one of these fabulous birds.

Looking away from the lagoon and towards the sea for a moment we see some Gannets. This winter there have been huge numbers of Gannets diving for Herrings out at sea off shore at Lancing. Back on the lagoon, there are other birds that are typical at this time of the year too: Little Egret, Black headed Gull, Herring Gull, Redshank, Teal, Mallard and Grey Heron are seen in a swift scan.

Finally as we near the Lancing end of the lagoon; what of our resident Swan family? Jo Procter says: 'The Widewater resident Mute Swan pair can be seen all year round but in the late winter months they chase their young away ahead of the next breeding season. This year's surviving cygnet, now a fine, healthy juvenile Swan showing much white adult plumage, is flying well and will be leaving the lagoon to join the local flock of swans on the river Adur and a new life in the wild.'

Maybe in 2022, you will be able to join our real bird walk with our expert leaders Tim Holter and Tony Benton and other members of SDOS.

Dartford Warbler at Shoreham Beach

Michael Ball



This handsome Dartford Warbler was wintering on the beach edge at Shoreham-by Sea at the end of January 2021. I was astonished to see and picture such a rare Warbler in such an exposed hostile environment so far from their usual habitat on the inland Sussex Commons. It only stopped its energetic flitting very briefly for me to photograph it on the top of a clump of Sea Kale

Editor's note: the Dartford warbler at Shoreham Beach attracted a lot of photographic attention: below is another study of the bird from Les Binns.



Species List for September to December 2020

Clive Hope

This report aims to list interesting species occurring in the SDOS area in the period under review. It mainly concentrates on last dates for migrants, unusual sightings (in bold below) or exceptional numbers of any species. Records have been extracted from members' submissions to the SDOS User Group, the Worthing Birdlife blog and SOS website reports. Apologies for any omissions!

September and October (peak Migration for most species)

Nightjar

Late report: One in a N Lancing garden on Aug 31st.

Red-throated Diver

Singles offshore.

Little Grebe

Seven at Widewater on Oct 13th.

Great Crested Grebe
Gannet
Sooty Shearwater
Grey Heron

Great White Egret
Brent Goose

Eider

Wigeon

Tufted Duck
Red-breasted Merganser
Goosander

Marsh Harrier
Hen Harrier
Osprey
Merlin
Hobby

Water Rail

Golden Plover
Grey Plover

Dotterel
Knot

Sanderling

Bar-tailed Godwit

Curlew
Greenshank
Common Sandpiper

Singles or pairs offshore.
Small numbers offshore.
One flew E off Widewater on Oct 2nd.
A flock of eleven flew W past Ferring on Oct 3rd.
One flew inland at Widewater on Oct 14th.
Passage west along the coast with 350 on Oct 12th.
Two flocks of 15 and 14 flew W off Goring on Oct 12th.
One at Widewater in mid October was unusual for the site.
One at Brooklands on Oct 4th.
One was on Widewater on Oct 5th.
A female flew S down Ferring Rife on Sept 26th and one was on the Adur north of Cuckoo Corner on Oct 12th.
One near Lancing Ring on Oct 11th.
A ringtail at Steyning Roundhill on Oct 11th.
One over Cissbury on Oct 5th.
One at Chantry Hill on Sept 14th.
One nr Lancing Hill on Sept 1st and two nr Chantry Hill on 14th.
Two at the Mumbles on Oct 11th. One Cuckoo Corner on 26th.
One on Goring beach on Sep 27th and 28th.
Two on Adur at Shoreham on Oct 20th, two Goring Gap on 27th.
Three near Ditchling Beacon Sept 1st to 7th.
One Adur Shoreham and Goring beach in mid October.
Between 12 and 20 Adur at Shoreham and Goring beach.
One Widewater on Oct 5th and later on the Adur at Shoreham.
One returned to the Adur in October.
Three around the Lower Adur on Oct 9th.
Up to four along the Lower Adur.

Grey Phalarope

One at Widewater on Oct 13th and 14th.
Another found on flood water near Henfield
on Oct 27th was later taken by a
Sparrowhawk.



Turnstone
Great Skua
Yellow-legged Gull

Caspian Gull
Mediterranean Gull

Little Gull
Common Tern
Sandwich Tern
Short-eared Owl
Wryneck
Swift
Woodlark

A high count of 230 at Goring Gap on Sept 9th.
Two flew W off Worthing on Oct 31st.
An adult at Shoreham on the Adur Oct 20th
and Goring Gap on 22nd and 24th.
One Goring Gap on Oct 17th.
250 on sea off Goring on Sept 29th. 95 at
Goring Gap on Oct 26th.
One flew E off Goring beach on Oct 21st.
One at Shoreham harbour on Oct 1st.
Six at Shoreham Harbour on Oct 1st.
One arrived from sea over Goring.
One at Ferring Rife on Sept 9th.
One over Worthing on Sept 19th.
One Cissbury Sept 29th.

Swallow

A late rush with a combined total of c.1600 of this and the next species on Oct 17th at Goring Gap. C.250 there on 18th. Seven at Ladywell on 31st.

House Martin

High numbers in area in October. (see above species). C.50 still on 18th over Goring Gap. One at Ladywell on 31st.

Tree Pipit

One Goring Gap on Oct 5th.

Black Redstart

One Cissbury Oct 16th and 24th, one at Brooklands on 25th and a male at Cissbury on 26th.



Redstart

20 Cissbury and ten Findon Gallops Sept 5th. Last were three at Cissbury on Oct 5th.

Whinchat

Up to six along Monarch's Way in early Sept. One Goring Gap on Oct 7th.

Stonechat

A notable influx with over 30 in the Beeding Hill and Thundersbarrow Hill area, also at Truleigh Hill, 25 at Cissbury Oct 1st, 32 there

Wheatear

on 5th with seven more by Monarch's Way.
Groups of up to six at several other sites.

20 at Findon Gallops on Sept 5th and good numbers at several other downland localities. In Oct, two Goring Gap on 14th and one at Cissbury 24th and 26th.

Yellow Wagtail

30 along Monarch's Way on Sept 12th

Ring Ouzel

One or two at Cissbury intermittently Oct 5th to 21st.



Fieldfare

Sixty over Cissbury Oct 15th.

Redwing

Flocks were passing over Lancing Ring from mid October.

Reed Warbler

A late bird at Brooklands on Oct 12th.

Whitethroat

Last was 9th Nov at Brooklands

Lesser Whitethroat

Last was one at Cissbury on Oct 5th.

Blackcap

Large numbers trapped at Cissbury e.g. 79 on Sept 13th and Ladywell, 42 on 29th.

Dartford Warbler	One at Widewater on Oct 7 th and one Cissbury on 15 th .
Yellow-browed Warbler	One Cissbury on Oct 5 th when also one trapped at Ladywell. One at Findon on 26 th .
Chiffchaff	161 trapped at Ladywell on Sept 29 th and 136 on Oct 5 th with another 86 on 7 th .
Firecrest	A few were caught at Cissbury and Ladywell in the period e.g three at the latter on Oct 31 st .
Spotted Flycatcher	One Cissbury Oct 1 st
Bearded Tit	Two at Brooklands on Oct 17 th .
Brambling	Seven near Beggar's Bush on Oct 27 th .
Goldfinch	Large passage along coast in Oct with 1150 E on 14 th .
Siskin	High numbers passing along the coastal strip and over Cissbury (e.g 225 W on Sept 12 th), where seven were trapped on Sept 13 th , and Lancing Ring.
Linnet	400 near Chantry Hill on Sept 14 th and 100 plus Monarch's Way through October.
Lesser Redpoll	Birds were heard or seen passing over at the coast and Cissbury and Lancing Ring in good numbers in October. 53 were trapped at the former on Oct 7 th and 22 at the Mumbles on 11 th .
Crossbill	Small numbers flying over our area in both months.

November and December ('Tier 4' restrictions)

Rose-ringed Parakeet	One at Brooklands on Nov 1 st .
Ring Ouzel	Male at Nepcote on Nov 1 st .
Merlin	One flew W at Goring Gap on Nov 2 nd .
Mediterranean Gull	Five hundred and ten on fields at Goring Gap on Nov 2 nd (a site record).

Hen Harrier	One nr. Annington Barn on Nov 3 rd , nr. Chanctonbury on 11 th and No-Man's Land in Dec.
Swallow	Three W at Goring Gap on Nov 3 rd . One E Brooklands on 8 th .
Great Northern Diver	One flew E off Worthing on Nov 14 th .
Red-throated Diver	One W off Ferring on Nov 3 rd and two W off Worthing on 14 th . Regularly offshore in Dec at several coastal locations. 15 W off Ferring on 29 th .
Goldfinch	On Nov 7 th and 8 th a total of 6000 flew E at Brooklands!
Redpoll	75 flew E at Brooklands on 7 th /8 th Nov.
Siskin	44 flew E at Brooklands on 7 th /8 th Nov.
Brent Goose	26 flew S at Brooklands on Nov 8 th . Small numbers W during rest of month. An unusual passage of birds flying E along the coast between Dec 15 th and 17 th totalling in excess of 300.
Common Whitethroat	One at Brooklands on Nov 8 th and 9 th (latest for our area).
House Martin	Five E at Brooklands on Nov 7 th .
Gadwall	Two Brooklands Nov 7 th .
Teal	12 Brooklands Nov 7 th .
Pochard	A drake on Brooklands from Nov 24 th into 2021.
Velvet Scoter	Two flew W off Goring Gap on Nov 10 th and six flew W on Dec 28 th .
Great Skua	One was off Worthing on Nov 11 th and 14 th .
Goosander	Up to three on the Adur between Bramber and Cuckoo Corner in Nov, with one remaining in Dec to end of year.
Eider	One flew W off Goring Gap on Nov 10 th .
Red-breasted Merganser	Ten off Goring Gap on Nov 10 th , two at Widewater and regularly offshore in small numbers in Dec.
Dartford Warbler	One or two birds at Cissbury in Nov.

Sandwich Tern	One passed Worthing on Nov 14 th .
Arctic Skua	Two were off Worthing on Nov 14 th .
Black Redstart	An arrival along coast in second half of Nov with two at Shoreham Harbour and singles elsewhere to year end.
Gannet	c.320 flew W off Worthing/Goring on Nov 11 th .
White-fronted Goose	Six in fields near the Adur at Botolphs and one Goring Gap on Dec 1 st .
Great Skua	One flew W past Worthing on Dec 16 th and one E past Widewater on 27 th .
Yellow-legged Gull	Singles on Goring Gap on several dates in Dec.
Tufted Duck	A drake was on Patching Pond on Dec 15 th .
Caspian Gull	Singles on Goring greensward on Dec 27 th .
Woodcock	One was seen Dyke Rd Brighton on Nov 30 th and one at Cissbury Dec 12 th .
Little Egret	Eleven in the Lower Adur Valley on Dec 24 th .
Chiffchaff	12 trapped at Ladywell on Dec 14 th (late date for so many).
Slavonian Grebe	Two were on the sea off Brooklands on Dec 29 th .

Since compiling this, John Newnham has provided me with a total list of species recorded in the SDOS area in 2020. This amounted to 202 species.

Notable additions to those already listed in this and previous newsletters are as follows.

Garganey	Two on Henfield Levels on Apr 21 st
Scaup	One at Southwick on Apr 5 th
Nightjar	Four at Stanmer High Park Farm on May 30 th .
Little Ringed Plover	One over Offington, Worthing on July 18 th .
Jack Snipe	One Ferring Rife on Jan 7 th .
Iceland Gull	One Shoreham Beach on Apr 16 th
Balearic Shearwater	One off Widewater on Aug 21 st
Goshawk	One at Chanctonbury Ring on Feb 27 th
White-tailed Eagle	One over Findon on Oct 11 th



Ringling at Cissbury 2020

Val Bentley

Despite the various Covid-19 restrictions in place, 2020 was a productive year at Cissbury with the highest number of birds trapped (1783) and new birds ringed (1593) since 2011 and the second highest total this century. In addition there were 185 retraps and 5 controls. The bulk of the ringing activity was carried out by myself, C ringers David Campbell and Domnhall Finch (known just as Finch), and trainee Peter Denyer. Trainee Mya Bambrick was also able to come on three occasions. Sue Walsh, from the team at Ladywell, joined us for two sessions and Brian Clay kept his secretarial eye on proceedings by paying a couple of impromptu visits. There were three “solo” sessions, two by

myself in early September and one by David just before the November second “lockdown”.

Table 1: Captures at Cissbury

The final column Table 1 is the figure for the total captures (including retraps and controls), the penultimate column shows new birds ringed and in brackets the number of different individuals of the species trapped where this is different, that is including retraps from previous years and controls. For comparison, also shown are totals for new birds ringed during each of the previous four years. Species with names in *italics* were ringed in at least one of the previous four years, but not in 2020, while those in **bold** were ringed in 2020 but not in the previous four years.

Species	2016 New	2017 New	2018 New	2019 New	2020 (New Year) New for	2020 Total Captures
Blackbird	20	14	18	20	19 (29)	31
Blackcap	288	335	294	527	741 (752)	798
Blue Tit	11	18	21	39	14 (18)	22
Bullfinch	23	19	12	14	27 (30)	40
Chaffinch	10	5	10	4	9	9
Chiffchaff	178	198	97	142	244 (247)	251
<i>Coal Tit</i>	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dunnock	24	22	16	35	30 (41)	60
Firecrest	2	7	4	9	3 (5)	5

Garden Warbler	2	9	13	10	10	10
Goldcrest	37	104	36	92	24 (27)	31
Goldfinch	9	5	2	3	13	13
Grasshopper Warbler	2	-	-	1	2	2
Great Tit	11	11	27	27	9 (12)	12
Greenfinch	13	2	4	1	9	10
House Martin	-	-	-	-	6	6
Kestrel	1	-	-	1	1	1
Lesser Redpoll	-	19	-	-	63	63
Lesser Whitethroat	4	1	4	3	5	5
Long-tailed Tit	14	23	25	61	16 (19)	32
Magpie	-	-	-	1	1	1
Marsh Tit	1	1	-	2	4 (5)	6
Nightingale	-	-	-	-	2	2
Redstart	-	3	-	1	1	1
Redwing	1	7	2	19	13	13
Reed Warbler	4	11	11	5	5	5
Robin	48	25	43	47	62 (65)	76
<i>Sedge Warbler</i>	3	1	-	2	-	-
Siskin	-	-	-	-	19	19
Song Thrush	28	10	17	17	22 (24)	29
<i>Sparrowhawk</i>	-	-	-	1	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	-	1	1	2	4	4
<i>Stonechat</i>	-	1	-	-	-	-

<i>Swallow</i>	3	21	-	-	-	-
Tree Pipit	-	-	-	-	3	3
<i>Treecreeper</i>	2	2	3	3	-	-
Whitethroat	23	59	47	45	53	57
Willow Warbler	55	124	115	118	135	135
Wood Pigeon	-	-	1	2	1	1
Wren	21	15	22	20	23 (24)	30
<i>Yellowhammer</i>	-	3	-	-	-	-
Total	838	1076	845	1275	1593 (1653)	1783

Winners and Losers

By far the most numerous species trapped was Blackcap. There were 214 more new birds in 2020 compared with 2019, a 41% increase, and an astonishing 150% more than in 2018. The total number of new Chiffchaffs ringed was 244, 72% higher than in 2019, and also 150% more than in 2018. This is despite there being the same number of sessions on similar dates during late September and early October in 2018 and 2019, the time of their main passage through the site. Preliminary results from ringing at Constant Effort Sites (CES) in 2020, released by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), suggest that, as far as adult abundance was concerned, “the largest increases were recorded for the short-distance migrants Chiffchaff (21%) and Blackcap (39%)”, though breeding productivity for Blackcap was recorded as 13% lower than in 2019.

Of the resident species Bullfinch and Robin numbers were higher than in the previous four years, but Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits were rarely encountered in the nets. The BTO CES Preliminary Report indicates that Bullfinch at 37% and Blue Tit at 61% were among the species showing the greatest increase in adult abundance, though breeding productivity for Blue and Great Tits was down by 55% and 39% respectively.

Autumn finch flocks were more abundant generally, resulting in 63 Lesser Redpolls and 19 Siskins being captured after a few blank years. Only 24 Goldcrests were ringed, but there were only three visits in October, and just a single “solo” session in November; late September to early November is normally the most productive period for catching this species.

Winter, Spring & Early Summer

For the first time a ringing, rather than management, visit was made in January, on the 11th. Previously the only birds ringed during January had been during clearance sessions when a single net was set if the weather was favourable. Of the 18 birds trapped, five were Bullfinches of which three were new birds.



Autumn finches pictured above. A first year Lesser Redpoll on 7th October and a female Siskin on the 8th September.

Another attempt a week later was less successful, with only eight birds, though two Woodcocks were disturbed while putting up the nets. The Worthing Conservation volunteers came along and carried out some valuable ash and sycamore clearance on 12th February. Their hard work is much appreciated and the occasion was a good opportunity to explain both the ringing scheme and some of the techniques used to determine the age of a bird. I was able to show them close up views of Dunnock, Song Thrush and both male and female Bullfinches.

On the single March visit, on the 7th, two Marsh Tits, two Redwings, a Chiffchaff and a Firecrest were amongst the species trapped. A pair of Mallards flying past was an unusual sighting. This however was the last ringing activity at the site for over two months, as the country went into lockdown shortly thereafter, with instructions to “stay at home”.

Sessions resumed with a single visit in May on the 24th. A juvenile Blackbird and two very young Blackcaps were ringed. Previously the earliest date for ringing young Blackcaps was 4th June; the adults must have paired up, built their nest and laid eggs by about 1st May. June saw three visits and 88 birds trapped. The 6th was the day of the retrap Dunnock, with 5 different birds recaptured. Juveniles that day included Blackbird, Chiffchaff and Greenfinch. A report of Shelducks with young on a nearby dew pond came from some passing walkers as we left the site. A week later a six-year-old Blackbird was retrapped, nine juvenile Long-tailed Tits and a rather tatty 2nd year male Lesser Whitethroat were ringed, the only one of this latter species encountered during the breeding season. On the 20th an even older Blackbird found its way into the nets, while juveniles included three Robins, three Wrens and the first young Song Thrush. At the end of the month the total for new birds stood at 107, two more than by the same time in 2019.

Late Summer and early Autumn

By July everyone was optimistic that we were on the way to recovery from the Covid situation, and it looked as though the rest of the ringing year would be

unhindered by restrictions – how wrong we were. Only two sessions were carried out in July, often a quiet month at Cissbury, but the 26th brought the first juvenile Bullfinch of the year, the first passage Willow Warblers, and the first Nightingale since 2011.

August was much busier with a total catch of 583. Seven visits were made, including one on the 27th when Finch and I processed 166 birds, of which only three were retraps; these included 93 Blackcaps, 41 Willow Warblers, three Reed Warblers and singles of Redstart, Nightingale, Grasshopper Warbler and the first “autumn” Goldcrest. Not a capture, but one of the best sightings of the year was on 1st August. David was walking back up to the car park when he found a juvenile Cuckoo perched on a fence post.



An adult Whitethroat with fresh plumage and amber iris on 5th September

Seven sessions in September included three more days in which over a hundred birds were processed. David, Finch and I processed 123 birds on the 9th. Of the 85 Blackcaps trapped the lightest weighed 16.1g and the heaviest 25g, the latter obviously ready to migrate. David tuned in to some Siskins overhead, and we were able to attract 12 to the nets, the first ringed at the site since 1997. On the 13th Peter joined David and myself and 110 birds were ringed, including seven more Siskins, but the strangest, and very sad, occurrence of the day was when Peter found a dead Wheatear and a Magpie in one of the nets. The site is in fairly luxurious scrub, not the usual habitat for a Wheatear, so we surmised that the Magpie had already despatched the Wheatear, was transporting it, and dropped it when it flew into the net. From the wing measurement of the Wheatear, it was likely of the Greenland race. A quieter day on the 15th saw six House Martins and a Spotted Flycatcher ringed, plus of course, more Blackcaps. The busiest session of the year was on the 22nd, and it was Finch and myself on duty again, processing 178 birds, of which 100 were Blackcaps and 54 were Chiffchaffs!

Late Autumn and Winter

Only three visits were made in October, but another 255 birds were processed. Blackcap numbers were reducing, but by way of compensation there were 53 Lesser Redpolls and the sixth Kestrel of the decade in a total of 128 on the 7th. Another lockdown started on the 5th November, but David was able to do his first “solo” session at the site on the day before, and brought the Lesser Redpoll total for the year up to 63. We were “released” from lockdown for a while in December, but after at least two months lack of practice putting the nets up proved a real challenge for both Pete and myself on the 12th. A first year male Blackcap was, surprisingly, still in post-juvenile moult, but was a good weight at 21g. Eleven Redwings were ringed, one of which proved to be the longest winged (126mm) and heaviest (79.6g) of the 120 Redwings trapped at Cissbury over the years.

Year/s	Blackcap	Chiffchaff	White-throat	Willow Warbler
2000-2004	25.5	13.7	6.9	6.8
2005-2009	30.6	15.9	5.0	5.8
2010-2014	30.5	18.4	5.5	6.6
2015	38.3	14.2	5.0	4.6
2016	34.4	21.2	2.7	6.6
2017	31.1	18.4	5.5	11.5
2018	34.7	11.5	5.6	13.6
2019	41.3	11.1	3.5	9.3
2020	49.7	15.0	3.3	8.5

Table 2: Totals of Four Passage Species (as percentages of total number of all birds ringed)

Comparison of Main Passage Species

Table 2 shows the inexorable rise of the Blackcap! Now up to nearly 50% of the total ringed at the site, the abundance of autumn berries providing good feeding for the species. This rise obviously impacts on the percentages of the other main passage species and in terms of numbers actually ringed, figures for the past four years are given in Table 3, and all show a numerical increase.

Year	Blackcap	Chiffchaff	White-throat	Willow Warbler
2017	335	198	59	124
2018	294	97	47	115
2019	527	142	45	118
2020	791	244	53	135

Table 3: Totals of Four Passage Species (as actual numbers of birds ringed)

Residents

Species	Number of juveniles and first year birds (to 30/9)						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Blackbird	22	12	5	2	6	8	11
Blue Tit	14	12	5	8	8	20	10
Dunnock	29	19	11	13	10	22	20
Great Tit	16	14	9	4	15	15	7
Robin	43	28	24	12	27	27	44
Wren	22	22	13	6	14	12	20

Table 4: Productivity of six resident species

Though our sample is small, from the numbers of juveniles ringed it appears that Blackbirds, Robins and Wrens enjoyed a good breeding season, Dunnocks an average one, while Blue and Great Tits had a poor year. As well as decreases in productivity for Blue and Great Tits, referred to earlier, the preliminary BTO CES results also indicate decreases from 2019 levels for Blackbird (17%), Dunnock (19%), Robin (11%) and Wren (4%), though ours mostly seemed to fare somewhat better.

Note: Only juveniles and first year birds trapped until the end of September are included in Table 4 as these are most likely to have been hatched on or near the site. Long-tailed Tits are not included as both adults and juveniles undergo a complete moult in the summer, and hence offspring look identical to their parents after this!

Our Song Thrushes had a reasonable year, and 12 juvenile or first year birds were trapped before the end of September, double the number in 2019. The weak call of the Bullfinch is heard on virtually every visit, and in 2020 we trapped 15 different adults (eight females and seven males) and 15 juvenile or young birds.

Survivors and Movers

Ringling gives us a chance to tell how long birds live. Passerines, which make up the bulk of birds ringed at Cissbury, moult their plumage annually and once they have undergone a complete moult it is not possible to tell in which year they hatched. Table 5 shows examples of older individuals recaptured in 2020, with estimated age.

There was nothing too exciting with regard to controls, that is birds captured which had been ringed elsewhere. A Blackcap ringed at Ladywell in 2019 was at Cissbury on 24th May, two others ringed at Knepp found their way to us a week or so later, while another ringed at Icklesham on 11th September turned up in our nets on the 15th. A Chiffchaff ringed as a juvenile at Tisbury (Wiltshire) on 13th August had moved 121 km to Cissbury by 7th October.

Species	Ringed	Age/Sex (if known)	Retrap -ped	Notes
Blackbird	31/8/13	Juvenile female	20/6/20	Not retrapped since 2016, 8 th calendar year
Blackbird	17/10/13	First year male	4/8/20	First recapture, 8 th calendar year
Blackbird	4/5/15	Second year male	14/6/20	First recapture, 7 th calendar year
Blackcap	21/7/18	Adult female	20/6/20	Into its 3 rd calendar year
Long-tailed Tit	14/4/18	Adult	9/8/20	Into its 3 rd calendar year
Great Tit	2/9/17	First year male	13/9/20	Into its 3 rd calendar year

Table 5: Selection of Retraps 2020

The only one of our birds found elsewhere was a Blackcap ringed on 23rd August which decided to head NNW and was controlled by another ringer 276 km away at Whitwell (Derbyshire) just 14 days later.

The More Unusual

As migration gets underway there is always a sense of anticipation that something different from the usual run of Blackcaps may turn up, and 2020 did not disappoint, with House Martins (6), Reed Warblers (5), Spotted Flycatchers (4), the first Tree Pipits since the 1980's (3), Grasshopper Warblers (2), Nightingale (2) and Common Redstart (1). Rather sadly, Garden Warblers (10) and Lesser Whitethroats (5) are far less regular at the site than they were in the 1990s. Three larger species trapped were singles of Magpie, Woodpigeon and Kestrel, while autumn arrivals were Lesser Redpoll (63), Siskin (19) and Redwing (13).

Summary

We were able to carry out 28 ringing sessions during the year, two fewer than in 2019, but with obvious gaps in activity during the Covid-19 restrictions. With these again in place from the end of the year, we will not be able to make an early start to operations in 2021, either from a ringing or management perspective.

Thanks are due to our Group Secretary, Brian Clay who oversees the return of data to the BTO; to David, Finch, Peter, Mya and Sue for their involvement with the ringing operations during the year; to the Worthing Conservation Volunteers for their work clearing young ash and sycamore trees; to my husband Roger for carrying out tree and scrub clearance with me in winter and ride clearance in summer; to the National Trust for their permission to ring at the site; and to the owners of the track for allowing access so that ringing equipment can be transported to and from the site.



A Tree Pipit on the 23rd August

Ringling in Ladywell 2020.

John Newnham

This was the fourteenth year of ringling and study of birds using the Ladywell valley. A total of 23 mist-netting sessions were undertaken which is the lowest since the year the study started.

Like most recent years the ringling effort was not spread evenly across the year with few or no sessions in the early months and a concentration of effort during the productive early autumn season. These features are clearly shown in Table I.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2007-19 sessions	17	12	20	38	34	34	40	57	66	55	39	27
Average catch (2007-19)	49	43	32	33	41	34	41	61	88	72	57	57
2020 sessions	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	7	5	0	1
Average catch (2020)	75	0	0	0	0	0	94	103	149	134	0	66

Table 1: The number of ringing sessions in each month and the average monthly catch (2007-19 and 2020).

During January inclement weather and flooding in the valley prevented all bar one ringing session; then in February and March two team members were out of the country by which time Covid19 was rampant throughout Europe and the country was 'locked down' to limit the spread of the virus through the community. Lancing College remained closed to any visitors until early July but thereafter most of the autumn migration period was covered as usual until the next national lockdown in November. Despite November, often a fruitful



Early morning sun rays in Ladywell on 31st October (Clare Buckle)

month, being completely missed Table 1 shows that the autumn was particularly productive with the average number of birds trapped in each

month throughout this period being well above that for the previous years. Indeed the abundance of migrants during the autumn enabled over two thousand birds to be ringed for the sixth consecutive year (see Table 2). Once again September and October were the best months with the peak days of 28th September (244 birds trapped) and 5th October (227 birds trapped). On both days Chiffchaff was the most numerous species with 163 and 138 respectively. The session with the lowest catch occurred on 26th July when 57 birds were handled. A total of 35 different species were ringed during the year, an average of 15 species trapped in each ringing session with a range between nine (13th September) and 19 (29th July).

Table 2 shows the totals of each species ringed in Ladywell for the years 2007 to 2020 and shows that 2373 birds were ringed in the valley during 2020. This was just eight fewer than 2019 and the third highest annual total following the exceptional year in 2017. There were no new species ringed during the year and Table 2 shows, in yellow highlight, the exceptional points. The three Grey Wagtails ringed was a record, the other two highlighted species, Blackbird and Greenfinch, were ringed in record low numbers; the absence of Greenfinch on the year's ringing list reflects the marked declines recorded for this species. The red type shows the species on the red list of high conservation concern and, apart from Song Thrush, few, if any, were trapped in 2020.

The good autumn passage of warblers ensured that these occupied three of the top five species handled in the valley since 2007; Table 3 (page 42) shows those species for which over a thousand captures have been recorded; for several of the resident species retracts numbers are higher than ringing figures.



Grey Wagtail in August 2020 (Clare Buckle)



Grasshopper Warbler in July 2020 (Clare Buckle)

Table 2: The annual totals in each year (2007-2020) for each species ringed in Ladywell.

Species	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTALS
Sparrowhawk			2	3		2	6		2					1	16
Kestrel		2	1	1		1		2				1			8
Water Rail										1					1
Stock Dove				2			1	1			1	1			6
Woodpigeon	5	4	4	6	3	1	4	2	7	4	9	5	6	8	68
Tawny Owl				1						1			1		3
Kingfisher	1	2	4	2	5	1	4	8	9	7	10	1	4	0	78
Green Woodpecker	3	7	6	4	9	2	2	3	1	2		1	1	3	44
Great Spotted Woodpecker	4	4	5	5	7	9	9	7	5	3	5	10	6	7	86
Swallow						1	8								19
House Martin		2	34	29	12		62		1	4					144
Tree Pipit											2		1		3
Meadow Pipit							4								4
Grey Wagtail				1			1		2			2	1	3	10
Wren	24	26	31	43	45	32	33	31	52	64	63	59	52	45	600
Dunnock	34	31	33	38	47	37	37	22	48	34	45	45	60	57	554
Robin	40	39	44	37	57	37	49	30	59	77	49	52	76	1	707
Nightingale									1				1		2
Redstart	1				1	1	1			2	1	3			10
Stonechat								1							1
Blackbird	63	29	62	62	68	49	48	26	67	79	41	71	44	29	738
Song Thrush	9	14	23	19	42	12	23	19	28	43	35	58	39	37	401

Redwing		2	6	3	1	6		8	6	1	8	5	9	2	1	67
Mistle Thrush				2	3						1					6
Cetti's Warbler					4			3	1	4	3	5	0	9		39
Grasshopper Warbler					3		3			1				1		8
Sedge Warbler		1		2	6		2			4	7	0	6	3		41
Reed Warbler	1 8	2 6	2 2	6 1	5 1	3 5	4 9	2 3	6 9	7 1	0 5	9 9	1 5	6 8		812
Lesser Whitethroat		3	2		4	2		2	6	5	7	4	3			38
Whitethroat	6	3	5	2 3	4 3	1 5	1 6	3	1 8	1 8	2 8	2 5	2 3	1 8		244
Garden Warbler	1	1	2	2	3	1	1		0	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 2	1 1		83
Blackcap	2 5	3 1	5 1	4 5	7 9	7 0	0 9	8 0	3 5 6	2 2 9	5 7 5	5 6 7	6 1 0	5 8 5		381 2
Yellow-browed Warbler											1			1		2
Wood Warbler									1			1				2
Chiffchaff	1 6	2 2	7 1	2 6	2 4	6 5	1 1	1 4 5	6 7 3	6 7 9	0 1 0	5 1 3	5 0 5	8 2 1		510 1
Willow Warbler	1 9		1 4	3 8	6 4	3 0	5 7		1 5 5	2 7 4	3 5 0	1 9 1	3 3 4	3 1 6		185 5
Goldcrest	1	3 3	1 0	2 5	1 9	1 3	1 1	2 7	2 8	1 7 0	2 6 5	7 1	8 2	5 2		897
Firecrest		2	1	4	1	2	4	2	0	4	1 5	7	1 3	9		74
Spotted Flycatcher	1			2	3	3	3		2	2	2		1	1		20
Long-tailed Tit	2 1	4 7	6 4	4 7	5 6	1 8	1 4	2 8	4 0	3 0	3 2	2 6	4 7	1 8		488
Marsh Tit												1				1
Coal Tit									1	1		2				4
Blue Tit	9 8	1 1	1 4	2 3 4	2 3 9	1 1 4	1 3 9	6 3	1 6	8 5	1 4	1 4	1 4	8 4	8 1	188 6

Great Tit	45	53	55	68	13	57	90	65	61	67	70	109	78	59	990
Nuthatch		3	1	3	2	8	6	1			1				25
Treecreeper	7	2	7	1	17	1	7	4	6	6	4	6	10	6	94
Jay	2	2	2	4		4	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	3	27
Magpie		1	1	1	2		2	1				2			10
Jackdaw				1	3	1		15	9	1		5	6		41
Rook				1											1
Carrion Crow				1											1
House Sparrow	1														1
Chaffinch	11	42	37	31	82	58	63	19	44	30	17	22	15	16	487
Greenfinch	5	15	10	20	55	23	14	2	7	6	2	7	8		174
Goldfinch	11	29		7	42	7	4	4	15	9	24	71	21	28	281
Siskin						1			3						4
Lesser Redpoll						1			8	6	17			1	33
Bullfinch		2		3	1	2	1	2		1	9		1	1	23
Reed Bunting			1	4	6	3				2	2	1	1	3	23
TOTALS	472	600	764	122	162	719	1069	654	2107	2247	2291	2251	2387	2373	21198

Perhaps the most exciting aspects of ringing come from hearing that birds ringed in the valley have been found elsewhere (a recovery) or trapping a bird carrying a ring placed elsewhere (a control). It was an excellent year for movements to be recorded to and from Ladywell. Fourteen birds were trapped which had been ringed elsewhere (controlled) and nine ringed in Ladywell were recovered or controlled during the year. The details of these movements are shown in Tables 4 and 5 and a map following the tables plots further detail for Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs.

Species	New	Retrap	Total
Chiffchaff	5101	295	5396
Blue Tit	1886	2508	4394
Blackcap	3812	349	4161
Great Tit	990	1551	2541
Willow Warbler	1855	14	1869
Robin	707	698	1405
Dunnock	554	781	1335
Blackbird	738	517	1255
Reed Warbler	812	348	1160
Long-tailed Tit	488	667	1155
Wren	600	495	1095
Goldcrest	897	191	1088

Table 3:- The total number of handlings (new birds and retraps) for species with greater than 1000 handlings in Ladywell (2007-2020).

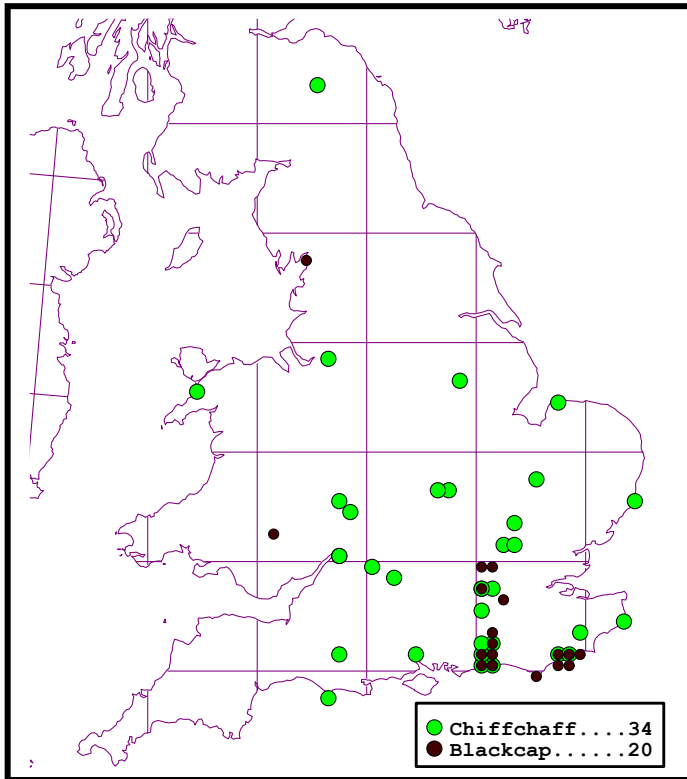
Ring No.	Species	Date Ladywell	Age/ Sex	Ring-ing date	Age/ Sex	Ring-ing site	Distance	Interval
AFL8 510	Blackcap	18/07/2020	3F	26/08/2019	4F	Knepp Estate, Castle West Sussex	16km SSE	327 days
ALJ2 566	Blackcap	13/09/2020	3M	09/09/2020	3M	Warnham LNR, West Sussex	25km S	4 days
AKC 5823	Blackcap	22/09/2020	2M	17/09/2018	3M	Leighton Moss, Lancashire	406km	736 days
ATK 7457	Blackcap	05/10/2020	3J	17/08/2020	3F	Gibraltar Point NR, Lincolnshire	254km S	49 days
ELV5 24	Chiffchaff	02/09/2020	3	28/06/2020	3J	Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire	143km SE	66 days
LRD 986	Chiffchaff	13/09/2020	3	21/06/2020	3	Stanley Downton, Gloucestershire	171km SE	84 days
LRK6 44	Chiffchaff	16/09/2020	3	27/08/2020	3J	Thorpeness, Suffolk	197km SW	20 days

LXA 665	Chiffchaff	22/09/2020	3	15/09/2020	3	Welwyn Gdb City, Herts	103km S	7 days
LYD 065	Chiffchaff	22/09/2020	3	28/06/2020	3J	Queen Mary Res, Surrey	65km S	86 days
LBH5 45	Chiffchaff	28/09/2020	3J	24/07/2020	3	Woolston Eyes, Warrington	321km SSE	66 days
LAL6 91	Chiffchaff	05/10/2020	3J	24/08/2020	3	Llangorse Lake, Powys, Wales	238km ESE	42 days
KXN 197	Chiffchaff	10/10/2020	3	07/10/2020	3	Warsash, Hampshire	70km E	3 days
LVR5 95	Chiffchaff	12/12/2020	3	07/11/2020	3	Hollesley Heath, Suffolk	180km SW	35 days
LKH 109	Willow Warbler	27/08/2020	3	24/08/2020	3	Sandwich Bay, Kent	127km WSW	3 days

Table 4: The details of birds caught in Ladywell during 2020 and ringed elsewhere (2=age unknown; 3= hatched in calendar year; additional J signifies in juvenile plumage; 4=hatched before current calendar year; 5=hatched last calendar year).

Ring No	Species	Ringing date	Age/ Sex	Recovery date	Age	Recovery location	Distance	Interval
AYE2 823	Blackcap	20/05/2019	4F	01/06/2020	-	Lancing, West Sussex	3km SSW	378 days
ADJ0 842	Blackcap	08/08/2019	3M	24/05/2020	5 M	Cissbury Ring, West Sussex	7km WNW	290 days
AYE2 830	Blue Tit	20/05/2019	5	22/03/2020	-	North Lancing, West Sussex	3km SSW	307 days
LDJ1 16	Chiffchaff	22/09/2018	3	30/08/2020	4	Squire's Down, Dorset	146km W	708 days
LEX4 97	Chiffchaff	31/08/2019	3	22/08/2020	4	Paper Court Marsh, Surrey	53km NNW	357 days
LPX9 70	Chiffchaff	20/10/2019	3	11/08/2020	-	St Boswells, Scottish Borders	547km NNW	296 days
LPX6 75	Goldcrest	21/09/2019	3F	13/03/2020	-	Brighton & Hove, Sussex	7km ENE	174 days
ADJ0 695	Reed Warbler	11/07/2020	3	24/07/2020	3	Pett Level, East Sussex	68km E	13 days
LEX2 62	Willow Warbler	03/08/2019	3	16/08/2020	4	Plas Worthy, Gwynedd, Wales	376km NW	379 days

Table 5: Details of birds ringed in Ladywell and recovered (all controlled elsewhere except those marked '-' in the recovery age column as the finder did not specify an age).



The map above plots the locations where Blackcaps (black) and Chiffchaffs (green) passing through Ladywell have either been ringed or recovered. Although there are Blackcap registrations in Lancashire and Wales most are clustered much closer than Chiffchaffs.

Additionally three Blackcaps have involved movements with continental Europe; a young male ringed in Ladywell in September 2011 was found near Seville in Spain in mid-October 2011, a young female ringed in August 2011 was at St Malo, France in April the following year and a young male ringed at Charente Maritime, France on 30th November 2011 was controlled in Ladywell in May 2012.

Also not on the map are a Chiffchaff ringed in Jaen, Spain on 22nd January 2017 and controlled in Ladywell on 25th November 2017 and one ringed in September 2017 and controlled on Alderney, Channel Islands on 19th April 2018.

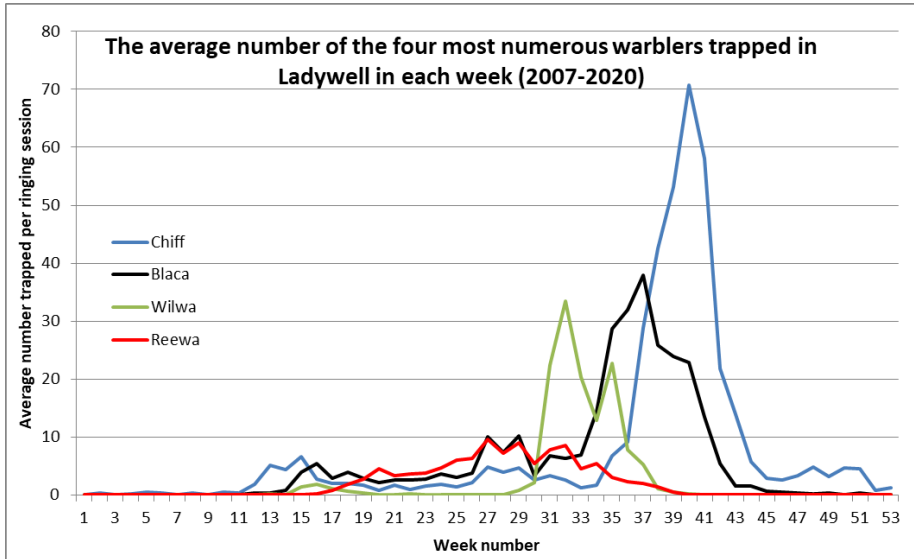
Although recoveries and controls are exciting the number reported is relatively small thus few conclusions can be drawn from those movements generated from ringing at a single site. However, when combined with the information across the country, and indeed other country's ringing/banding schemes a comprehensive picture can be drawn as shown in the BTO's *The Migration Atlas* (2002). Handling birds and ringing provides considerably more information about population size and structure, species longevity and other aspects of avian biology than just their movements. Retrapping individuals provide some interesting insights into individual's behaviour.

During the year 280 different birds of 22 species were retrapped, most, as shown in Table 6 were birds ringed earlier in the year with numbers decreasing rapidly for birds ringed in earlier years.

Year of ringing	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number	1	1	3	9	25	89	152

Table 6: The number of individuals from each year re-trapped in 2020.

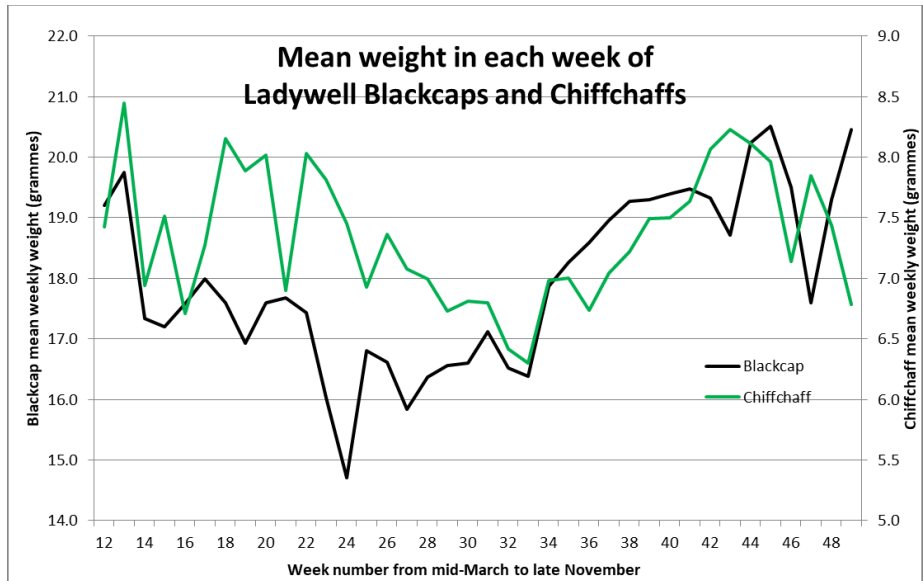
With over 12,500 records of warblers passing through the valley it is possible to plot the occurrence of each throughout the year and gain a clear impression about the abundance of each species.



The figure above shows a very small spring passage of Chiffchaff (blue), Blackcap (black) and Willow Warbler (green). Thereafter the first two mentioned species with Reed Warblers (red) remain fairly constant through the early breeding season with a small rise in numbers as young are fledging around week 26. Reed Warbler numbers then remain fairly constant through July and August and slowly disappear during September with no evident autumn peak. The other three species all show clear passage peaks with Willow Warbler in August, Blackcap in September and Chiffchaff marginally later in late September and early October. Chiffchaff is the only species which lingers on in reasonable numbers into November and December.

Throughout the migratory season the session reports have detailed changes in fat deposits and weights of migrants. Again with sufficient data now gathered it is possible to look at the changes in average weight in each week for the two most numerous species. The numbers in the first and last two or three weeks are small but for the rest of the year a similar pattern is shown for both Chiffchaff (green) and Blackcap (black) with a weight loss during the breeding season followed by a gradual gain in weight in preparation for emigration. For

Blackcap this seems to start a few weeks earlier than Chiffchaff; for both species approximately a 25% weight change.



For twelve of the past seasons nest-boxes sited in the valley have been carefully studied and the details of inspections were recorded for the BTO's Nest Recording Scheme. Absence from the valley during the spring in 2020 meant this was not possible. However an autumn review of the boxes was conducted. A total of 40 tit-type boxes are in the valley; 38 of these were found, two were inaccessible with one under a fallen willow and another totally enclosed in thick bramble. Of the 38 boxes checked eleven were completely empty; nine had some nesting material but probably insufficient for nesting activity. Twenty of the boxes suggested some occupancy with either a fully formed nest with signs of fledging or some cold eggs (nine eggs in four boxes) or dead chick remains (four from three boxes). Of course we have no idea how many young were fledged from the nest boxes this year. All the boxes were emptied and a fairly long list of repair tasks documented.



Yellow-browed Warbler in October 2020 (Sue Walsh)

Covid19 not only reduced spring fieldwork but also prompted the team to review health and safety procedures particularly with a view to maintaining social distancing. This was easily achieved whilst erecting, dismantling and checking mist-nets but additional chairs and tables were deployed to spread the ringing base to keep the team apart and copious quantities of sanitising gels were available. During the season some of the older radios, important pieces of equipment to keep in touch in the valley, became unreliable so a new set was purchased. As previously noted we require at least two permit holding ringers to be present at each session; the average number of ringers present for the 23 sessions was over three with just Sue and John for three sessions and all five 2020 participants present on four occasions. During the year the number of sessions each team member was able to attend was John Newnham (23), Sue Walsh (23), Clare Buckle (14), Becky Parangi (11) and Emily Mustafa

(10). Covid19 restrictions meant there were neither visiting ringers nor other groups joining our sessions this year. Furthermore there were no opportunities for members of the team to attend courses to advance their knowledge and experience or upgrade their ringing permit. However, in early February John, with Val Bentley from the Cissbury ringing operation, attended an interesting ringer's training seminar at the BTO's headquarters in Thetford. The prolonged periods of Covid lockdown encouraged Sue to make repairs to many holes in the mist nets.

On each visit, including some short visits for stocking feeders or maintenance work, a list of species recorded was logged onto the British Trust for Ornithology's Birdtrack recording system. A total of 32 day lists were created and 74 species were seen during the year. Yellowhammer was a surprising new species to be recorded in the valley which moves the total on to 121. Woodpigeon, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Blackbird were the only species recorded on all occasions and at the other end of the spectrum 12 species were only recorded once. Whenever possible a note was made of other taxa, in particular butterflies and dragonflies.

Throughout the year, but particularly in the summer, considerable 'gardening' is needed to maintain the net rides in operable conditions and my thanks go to all the members of the ringing team for their regular efforts with this and the ringing 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. Sometimes the landowners visit us during a ringing session and we are always pleased to see them.

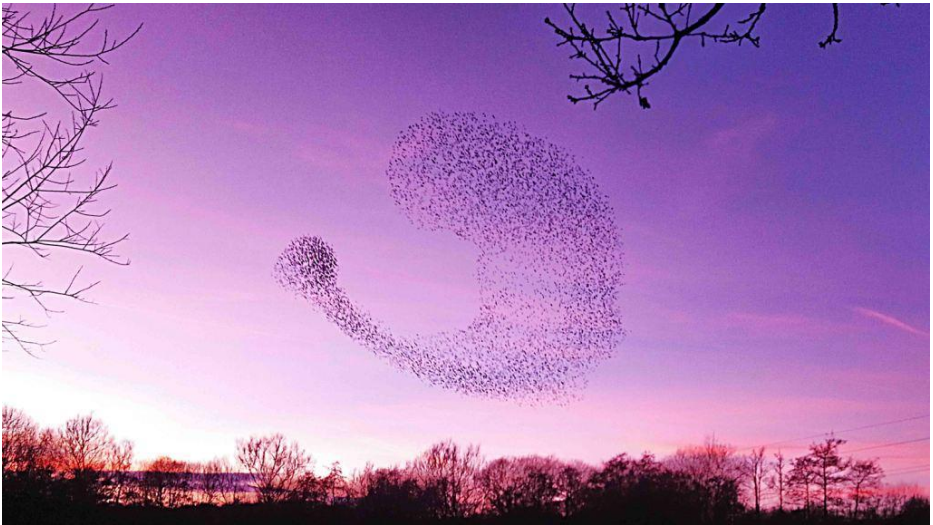
During 2020 the team continued inputting all the ringing data into the BTO's on-line recording software (DeMon) and I thank the team members who take turns keying in the data. My thanks also to Sue who has done much of the organisation of ringing sessions this year and has helped in the preparation of session reports to feed back to landowners, interested college staff, local

birders and ringers who have followed the work done in Ladywell. These reports are copied then to the local Shoreham District Ornithological Society members. Finally I thank Sue and Clare for correcting this review.

The Friends of Weir Wood Reservoir: 25 Years

Tom Howard-Jones

Weir Wood Reservoir lies just to the south of East Grinstead and west of Forest Row. It is on the border of East and West Sussex and the Greenwich Meridian passes through it. Many SDOS members will have visited the site over the years and in 2021 The Friends of Weir Wood Society celebrates their Silver Anniversary.



A murmuration of Starlings at Weirwood Reservoir

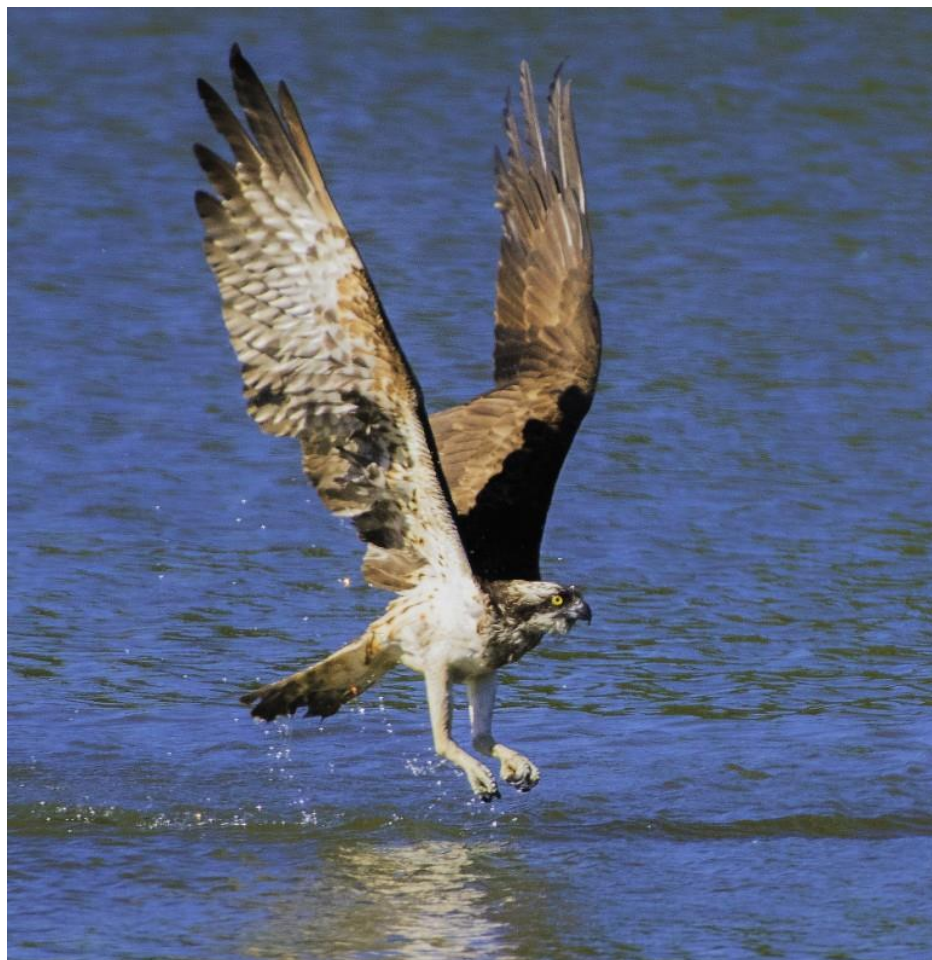
The waters and the land within the perimeter fence of the reservoir have been managed sympathetically for wild life for over 50 years. The reservoir first filled in 1954 and since then the environment has evolved and improved. As soon as the water gathered birds and bird watchers were attracted to what was at the

time the largest area of open water in Sussex. They were followed by the anglers and the sailors. In 1988 a local nature reserve was defined at the western end and leisure users were excluded. Earlier, in 1966, the wider area had been declared to be a Site of Special Scientific Interest to protect the range of wild life using it.

There is a viewing area and a hide in the car park on Legsheath Lane on the south bank. This is popular with birders, photographers and walkers. During winter months bird feeders are kept filled and they bring in a variety of woodland birds. There are car parks at the Dam (east) End and on the north bank. The Millennium Path runs from the water works behind the dam along most of the north bank, passing a picnic area where the meridian is marked by a row of lime trees.

There is an active heronry, the largest in Sussex, as well as a growing Cormorant nest site in the trees at the west end. Little and Great Egrets visit as well as passing Ospreys in spring and autumn. Great Crested Grebes, Mandarin, Geese, Gulls and Ducks are present in numbers. Four tern rafts have enabled a colony of breeding Common Terns to establish. Kingfishers breed in the feeder streams. Barn and Tawny Owls breed on the site. Raptors including Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Red Kite, Peregrine and Goshawk are seen. Migrant waders use the exposed mud beaches particularly in the autumn. Over 250 species of birds have been recorded. The occasional rarity shows up and sparks a twitch.

In 1996 The Friends of Weir Wood Society was founded to protect and improve the site. The Friends have created new reed-beds and are turning the fields from arable to flower-rich water meadows. They build bridges, dig ponds and keep water courses open. They control scrub as well as invasive plants and animals. They plant and lay hedges. They monitor and maintain over 100 nest boxes, carry out ringing and run bee hives. The Society plans and executes a rolling five year work schedule along with East Sussex County Council under the oversight of Southern Water and Natural England. Work parties carry out tasks every week throughout the year. A public open day is held in the summer



Osprey at Weir Wood

and walks for members in the spring and autumn are timed for bluebells and fungi. Birds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, butterflies, moths, dragonflies and damselflies are recorded with the assistance of county recorders.

To mark the silver anniversary of the founding of the society, a book "The Nature of Weir Wood" has been produced. It looks at the nature through the lens of habitat including: open water; woods and hedges; shores and meadows.

It also touches on the history of the reservoir and the society, a typical year of work, memories of friends and news of 2020. It is full of colour photographs taken at the site over the years. Please see the website at www.weirwood.me.uk for news of sightings and events; information about the site; advice on where to watch birds and details of the anniversary book.

Corn Bunting on the Downs



Photograph acknowledgments

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

Front cover: Common Snipe - Ron Bewley

Page 2: Purple Sandpiper - Dorian Mason

Page 17: Grey Phalarope - Dorian Mason

Page 18: Black Redstart - Dorian Mason

Page 19: Ring Ouzel - Dorian Mason

Page 23: Long-eared Owl – Bernie Forbes

Page 53: Corn Bunting – Bernie Forbes

Back cover: Common Kingfisher – Dorian Mason

Society officers and the User Group

Role in SDOS	Name	eMail
Honorary President	Brianne Reeve	president@sdos.org
COUNCIL (2021/22)	~~~~~	council@sdos.org
Chair	Tony Benton	chair@sdos.org
Treasurer	Tim Holter	treasurer@sdos.org
Secretary	Sue Miles	secretary@sdos.org
Membership Secretary	Sue Miles	memsec@sdos.org
Minutes Secretary	Jenny Holter	minutes@sdos.org
Field Meetings Coordinator	Richard Nowak	field.events@sdos.org
Newsletter Editor	Roger Smith	newsletter@sdos.org
IT Coordinator	Peter Wyld	itsupport@sdos.org
Council Member	Clive Hope	clive.hope@sdos.org
Council Member	Rebecca Parangi	rebecca.parangi@sdos.org
OTHER CONTACTS	~~~~~	~~~~~
Garden Bird Recorder	Val Bentley	gardenbirdsurvey@sdos.org
ADMIN TEAMS	~~~~~	~~~~~
GENERAL ENQUIRIES (‘Contact Us’ on website)		contact@sdos.org
MEMBER ADMIN (www.membermojo.co.uk)		admin@sdos.org
USER GROUP (www.groups.io)		admin@sdos.org
WEBSITE (www.sdos.org)		webmaster@sdos.org

SOCIAL MEDIA (Public)	~~~~~	~~~~~
Facebook Group - ‘Shoreham Birders’	Tony Benton Jenny Holter	

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.



SOS

