

***Think globally.....***

Judging by the number of postings on Hoslist throughout the year it would seem that no bird enters Hampshire without its passage and location being diligently recorded by one of our members. The records inform us of the first sightings of our regular migrants in the spring arriving from Africa, together with any rarities. Even in the winter months birds like the brent goose are arriving from northern climes, proving how valuable the habitat in Hampshire is for the worldwide population of these geese.

The data of bird movements that is collected by amateur enthusiasts is crucial in enabling conservationists to gather the information necessary to track trends, identify sudden changes in numbers and plot the distribution of birds. Conservation is not a simple science, and to achieve the best solutions to sometimes difficult problems conservationists must have access to the latest hard facts and figures.

HOS has a fine tradition of extensive amateur involvement, as hundreds of people add their own records to the county and national data upon which our combined knowledge depends. May I encourage you all to submit your sightings to the County Recorder after you have been out and about in Hampshire.

***..... Act locally.....***

During 2007 there was a marked increase in the number of members who contacted HOS requesting the Society's support to oppose planning applications. It is perfectly understandable that birders who have lived near to, or visited, some local habitat will feel aggrieved by a large scale development that threatens the site.

HOS tries to take a sympathetic view on each request for advice on a planning dispute that could have an effect on local bird conservation. Unfortunately HOS does not have the professional resources to mount a sustained effort in support or opposition to a local planning development. However, because HOS maintains such a reliable database of bird records, these are often used by developers and objectors to support or oppose their particular proposals.

A policy statement is currently being drafted to clearly define the HOS response to planning applications. This states that HOS will maintain a neutral stance when active involvement is sought, but recommends that the Hampshire and IOW Wildlife Trust and/or Hampshire County Council are the first places for seeking professional advice.

Several HOS committee members attend meetings with HCC and HWT where the conservation and management of Hampshire habitat is regularly discussed - indeed the Society's knowledge of county birdlife is actively sought.

..... *Panic internally*

My local patch is a fairly ordinary area of arable farmland and sparse woodland, and my chance of encountering an unusual bird is fairly low. Consequently, I know my local territory quite well and I know what birds to expect and what birds are missing.

The spring of 2007 was the first time in fifteen years that I didn't hear a cuckoo from my garden. I haven't seen a spotted flycatcher for over a decade, and the corn bunting has recently disappeared from the nearby fields. During this time the main additions to my locality have been the buzzard and the siskin. They have added some welcome variety to our neighbourhood but they are not as charismatic as the two migrants.

The absence of the migrating species certainly suggests something serious is happening further south of the UK where the birds overwinter. The RSPB has been monitoring this situation and they are concerned that migration numbers are in serious decline. They are aware that some species are disappearing fast, possibly due to a degradation of their habitat in Africa, and climate change. Later this year a high-profile awareness campaign is expected to highlight these concerns.

Please send your views on conservation issues to [hosconservation@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:hosconservation@tiscali.co.uk)