

KINGFISHER

Hampshire Ornithological Society Magazine

The Magazine for Hampshire Birders

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Issue 164



Interview with
Stephen Moss



A First for
Hampshire -
Breeding Cattle Egrets



Reintroduction of
Raptors - The Case
"For"

Alresford Area Site
Guide

History of the journal
British Birds

The Impact of Longline
Fishing on Seabirds

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Editorial

It is great to be able to cover a Hampshire "first", even though by the time you read this many will already know the news of Cattle Egrets breeding; which broke on 5th July. For those who have not seen Brian Fellow's blog, his article on **Peter Milinets-Raby's** find is recreated on page 48.

Peregrines, Winchester Cathedral,
Rob Porter



A number of members have been observing the activities of the young Peregrines as they grow and being fed across various sites in Hampshire, which have resulted in some great photo opportunities. Hopefully, this year's Hampshire-born fledglings will all grow to full adulthood and further enhance their numbers across the county over the coming years.

As you will see from the Recent Sighting Report section, a number of Hampshire rarities have been spotted over the last few months, including Bonaparte's Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Alpine Swift and Icterine Warbler. The Glossy Ibis, reported in the Summer edition, continued to provide sightings through to mid-May.

This edition includes two interviews, both of which I hope you will find interesting. The first with Stephen Moss, the Producer of the first *Springwatch* series, a very passionate birder and prolific writer, and the second with Roger Riddington, the Editor of the journal *British Birds*. The latter makes my efforts with *Kingfisher* seem quite humble.

Keeping the site guides going, I have to confess a small bias for the one covered in this edition. The Alresford area is part of "my patch" so I was delighted when John Cloyne very kindly agreed to write the content for this guide. Particularly as he is a real authority on Alresford and the Itchen valley area.

The article on reintroduction of White-tailed Eagles in the last edition generated a great deal of discussion and reaction, which I think is great. In this edition, Julianne Evans shares her perspective and facts in respect of the case "for" the reintroduction of raptors. While in a slight variation to the focus on specific "Species", Martin Pitt poses the question: "Is the Willow Tit the first climate change casualty in Hampshire?".

There are some great walks coming up during the Autumn, and with two informative workshops on Waders and Recording to enhance your knowledge, I would encourage you all to take a look and join at least one.

Barry



Stephen Moss - Is an English natural historian, birder, author and television producer. He was the Producer of the first Springwatch series, for which he won a BAFTA in 2011, and produced a number of other wildlife programmes; some of which included Bill Oddie. He received the BTO's Dilys Breese medal in 2009 and has written over 30 books on birds and British wildlife, including *A Bird in the Bush: a social history of birdwatching*, *Mrs Moreau's Warbler: How Birds Got Their Names* and the book which accompanied the BBC *Dynasties* series, presented by David Attenborough. He is a lecturer on Travel and Wildlife writing at Bath University, and runs birding tours in his home county of Somerset.

There is much discussion on the impact of climate change on birds; what are your thoughts?

SM – More than 20 years ago I wrote a book on birds and weather and became aware of climate change and its impact on birds for the first time. I remember the German Scientist, Peter Berthold, said there will be a honeymoon period where birds benefit, particularly migrants, from climate change; earlier springs, warmer weather essentially more food, and then it will all crash. I think we're in the middle of the honeymoon period. If you live in Somerset, as I do, or indeed in Hampshire, you're seeing birds such as Great White and Cattle Egrets not just turning up here, but breeding. Partly because we've created the habitat, impelled partly, not entirely, by climate change. So, when you live in the south of England you can think that climate change is a good thing for birds.

What I became very aware of, when I researched my book, and since, is that things will crash. Firstly, because food supplies are going out-of-sync. We're already seeing that birds are having to nest earlier, which migrants are struggling with, as they don't come back more or less at the same time. Everything is two or three weeks ahead, although not every spring. We have the problem of extreme weather, we have the drought of last summer, we may get heavy snowfalls in winter and we may get a lot more storms; all those things are generally not good for birds. On top of all the other issues for birds. I think if birds were in a healthy state in Britain then then they could probably cope in the short to medium term, but there is the danger now, particularly for certain species, and I'm thinking of late migrants like Turtle Doves and Spotted Flycatcher, that they simply will not be able to raise enough young. I think that is the big issue, that birds which are specialists in particular may struggle, while birds which are generalists, like the Wood Pigeon or Carrion Crow, and some gulls will probably do fine. But do we want to live in a world where that is just those species? That would be my fear at the moment.

The other big problem with climate change is that it puts everything else into perspective. While we should, rightly, look at land use and other factors which impact birds, climate change is so huge that, frankly, we might be as conservationists wasting our time doing things, which then mean climate change will be a major effect anyway. I don't want to be negative, but we could find ourselves in a situation where we could create wonderful

habitats, but that be if they're not climate change resilient then the birds will only be able to take advantage of them for a short time. I get frustrated when some people spend a lot of time dealing with issues which, are important, but frankly spending time on them, when climate change is on our shoulders, is a distraction. I can understand why people pursue all sorts of issues, and people have the right to, but I think that some of the issues need us to take a long hard look at them and say actually we need to put our resources into combatting climate change, otherwise everything else will fall apart. If we can't do that, then I think we face losing whole swaths of our bird life fairly quickly; and within our lifetime.

What are your thoughts on how to encourage more younger people into birding?

SM – I am much more optimistic about the future of conservation and the interest in wildlife than I was 10 years ago. That's entirely as a result of my involvement in an organisation called A Focus on Nature (AFON), which I co-founded with Lucy McRobert and Rob Lambert, although Lucy did all of the work. She is a young committed birder and conservationist, still in her twenties, and she set this network up, which now has almost 1,000 members. They blog, take photographs, films, work for conservation organisations, ring birds, lead bird groups and do scientific work. AFON has a real cross section of people who are interested, either professionally or personally, in nature. They are extraordinary and an incredible dynamic, diverse group of young people, more or less 50:50 male/female, very different from our generation. A good number, compared with most organizations, of people from BAME backgrounds, but also diverse socially and in their backgrounds. What unites them is their passion for nature and for doing something for and about nature.

Now whether or not those people will join ornithology societies, or go to talks or field events as they get older I don't know, but maybe it is a generational thing: I used to go and see RSPB films as a kid, and then they stopped making them because audiences didn't want to go to the local hall or theatre to see films on birds because they could get them on TV. There are always generations of birders, every generation has a group who are very motivated and do amazing stuff. What I'm pleased about is that there is a younger generation now in most in their 20s, some in their teens and some have reached their 30s, who are much more motivated than anyone was about 10-15 years ago.

When I was growing up, people like Ian Wallace wrote to me when I wrote him a letter, Bruce Campbell did too, there was some real gentlemen out there, and Ian encouraged me. Just getting a letter from Ian Wallace when I was thirteen encouraged me hugely. He didn't need to do that, but he did, which is why I always try that, on the principle that you're helping foster what you love. And now I meet some of the people who were my heroes, when I was growing up and find that they are just incredibly open and friendly, and helpful and supportive. I've had a number of mentors in more recent years, people like Derek Moore, Ian Wallace, James Ferguson-Lees, these are the great roll call of conservationists and ornithologists, and they've had a huge influence on me. So we have a duty to do that, but it's also fun, to get to meet young people who teach you stuff. Because a lot of the young birders I have met recently are brilliant.

Some of your books have been about the history of birdwatching and ornithology, what's the fascination?

SM - I've always had a great passion for the history. I'm not a scientist, although I wanted to be a biologist as a kid because I thought that if you were a birder, a birdwatcher as we were then, I thought that was what you needed to do, that you needed to study biology at a university and then get a job as a reserve warden. But that wasn't for me at all, I would have been hopeless at it, so I studied English and a bit of history, and have always had a real fascination with the people who came before us, I wrote a book called *'A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching'* in 2004, and that really sparked my interest in why we watch birds, why particularly the British watch birds, and over this incredible long period of time, and how things change.

In my recent books I've really focused on this, and the books I find most satisfying to write, such as *'Mrs Moreau's Warbler: How Birds Got Their Names'*, which is basically a history book, is a book of the English language through birds and British people. In *'The Robin'* and *'The Wren'* I've mixed the behaviour of the birds, which I also find very interesting, with the cultural history of those birds. To me this is endlessly fascinating. Perhaps not to others, as I know some birders who find this whole side of birding not interesting at all, but for me it is really interesting. Partly because it is what makes us British, which in a good way is our passion for nature, connected with all sorts of aspects of our history. And I can say this with some authority, because half my family are Italian, on my father's side, and they have no concept of why anyone would want to watch birds. At all. It is literally not in their cultural way of life, or many other countries around the world. We are quite unusual, along with other countries where the British were, who are also obsessed by birds, such as India, Australia, Canada, USA.

What are some of the key moments in the history of birdwatching?

SM - The Industrial Revolution was probably the start of it, but the subsequent milestones, the big ones, were at the end of the 20th century, when bird conservation, partly fired through animal welfare, but also alongside the founding of the Wildlife Trust, The National Trust and the RSPB (formerly the Society for the Protection of Birds), all formed within 23 years of each other. So there was a big movement towards preserving, conserving and enjoying wildlife in a way that hadn't been before. People shot wildlife and collected it. We finally eradicated what Max Nicholson called the Victorian leprosy of collecting. Partly through Max, who was probably the greatest ornithologist of the 20th century, and who almost single-handedly stopped there being a gulf between professional ornithologists and birders. People like Tim Birkhead and Ian Newton are incredibly brilliant scientists, who are also keen birders and that's not true in most countries. People who are passionate about seeing wildlife are not the same people who study it necessarily, and I think here they broadly are. I think that's partly due to people like Max Nicholson, but also there was that period between the two world wars, when the BTO was founded, when many felt an enormous sense of guilt towards the generation just older than them. Max was 10 when the First World War started, people 7-8 years older than him had died in the trenches and they felt they needed to build a better world. The same happened in 1945, when all the soldiers came back, and there was a sense that right, we need to create a society, which is for everyone, has strong education, and people like James Fisher, who came from a very

privileged background, actually spent his time popularising bird watching amongst the masses. The New Naturalists were part of that (the Collins series) so I think they were the key times. And then, I suppose, the 1960's and 70's when people were able to travel a bit more easily and started both twitching and watching birds around Britain, and then going abroad, we became more globally outward facing.

What role has the evolution of equipment and technology played?

SM - I think optics have specially helped. When I grew up I had a spotting scope, as they were called in my teens, which I left at Stodmarsh by mistake and lost it. I got my next scope in the mid 80s and that really helped getting proper scopes, and by the mid 90s onwards we've had scopes that you can look through and really see things. I used to go to Staines Reservoir and as a kid and couldn't see a thing, anything that was further than 100 yards away you weren't going to know what it was. Digital cameras have clearly made a huge difference, and I gather in countries like India, and maybe elsewhere in the developing world, that bird and wildlife photography has become the thing that lots of people do now. Whereas, birding less so, because it fulfils the hunting instinct, but it's interesting, isn't it, that I see people out with cameras but not with binoculars birding now, and you never use to see that. The camera was the extra thing. But of course the great thing about the camera is for record shots, for just grabbing a memory.

I think the worrying thing, and Anthony McGeehan wrote a spoof column about this many years ago one April 1st, is the idea that you could barcode birds and know what they were, but of course we're very close to doing that. The Merlin ID app from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where you can input a photo and it will tell you what the bird is, is pretty much accurate now because it has a database that is so full. I would have thought that in 10 years' time we will be able to look through our binoculars, press a button and it will tell you what the bird is. It will take an image, compare it to the database, and that worries me, because of course the joy of birding is making mistakes and the one which got away, and not quite knowing. Would it make it too easy, or is it brilliant? Is it going to be amazing that you could literally scan round and it tells you what you're seeing. It could end up dumbing down the knowledge surrounding birding, but it could also demystify birding and get millions more people doing it, which would be great. I would be all for that. As with all technology it's got its downsides.

One of the things I remember a few years ago realising, is that there were three species in one year that were new to the British list that would have been missed had it not been for digital photograph. One was the Long-billed Murrelet, which was identified as a Little Auk, one was the Olive-tree Warbler on Shetland, which was identified as probably an Olivaceous Warbler, and so these birds would probably have either been rejected or accepted wrongly, but because they had digital evidence, and this also has happened with the Alder Flycatcher. Now this is the very esoteric edge of birdwatching, it doesn't really matter if a new bird is missed from the British list, but it is interesting when you think how many mistakes did we make in the past?

Famously the Cetti's Warbler, the first at Titchfield Haven in 1961, was identified as a Moustached Warbler for a fairly long period, which now we just think is hilariously funny. What were they listening to, but they didn't know at the time, they didn't have references, as they hadn't travelled. I am sure things will continue to improve, technology has obviously helped hugely. I did use recently both of the sound identifying apps, and they were utterly useless, horrendous. It is because I think they had released them on the principle that the more people use them the more accurate they get, which I think they will, so in five years' time they'll be brilliant. You'll just be able to point it at a bird singing and it'll tell you it's a Garden Warbler and not a Blackcap. So, I think technology will change birding, but as ever it'll be a double-edged sword.

Look forward, what will birdwatching be like in say 20-30 years' time

SM - I've thought about that quite a lot. I think partly we just don't know, because you couldn't have predicted most of what's happened. Someone has said when the book the '*Big Year*' came out, which was made into a film, no one will ever do that again because of 9/11 and because you can't just walk into an airport now and catch a plane on spec. Those three guys just whizzed around America, as we would on buses. There is a possibility that we will either not be able to travel very much globally, or there will be no point, because the birds will have gone, and I think that could happen. The golden age of travel, when you could go to Kenya for three weeks and see 750 species, that's probably gone. There are still world listers out there, but they are running out of birds, because birds are rapidly disappearing, and I think also the whole thing of causing the carbon footprint that we have may encourage people to focus more on birds in their home patch. I love staying on my local patch, and "patch birding" has become really popular in the last couple of years. I have two patches, and my garden, and I keep quite a few lists, but the main lists are my local patch ones, which are the ones I am most interested in. Because a patch gives you that lovely sense of continuity and change over time and similarities over time, and I find that very satisfying. This spring I was away for the next couple of weeks and I missed a lot of changes in my patches in mid-April and that frustrated me.

So, I think birding will change, but it's hard to tell. I think it will become more equal, hopefully more diverse. Birding was always diverse socially; it's never had a class issue. Max Nicholson told me that he and a friend went off to France with this guy's postman, and that was in the 1920s, and it has always been like that, people become friends of others and they don't care what background they are because in the end you're united by birds. And I think we're also united internationally. Where birding does offer us something, like *BirdFair*, which is a great example, and *the Champions of the Flyway* in Israel. These birding without borders ideas, birds cross borders and we should perhaps translate some of that into our life. As an example, I went to the *Champions of the Flyway*, and the team, which won, was one Israeli and three Palestinians, and I don't think there are many aspects in life when Palestinians and Israelis work together so closely. It's passions which unite people, and birding has always had that quality around the world. You turn up with your binoculars, and you will be welcomed.

Switching to Birdsong, why is it so magical?

SM - I think Radio 4s' *'Tweet of the Day'* was a very good example of where birdsong captured the public imagination. I didn't learn birdsong properly until I was in my late 30s, when I started working with Bill Oddie on the TV series, and of course Bill is brilliant at birdsong. I'd grown up not really learning birdsong, astonishingly, I cannot believe it now, and of course I missed loads of things. I still think all warblers are really exotic, because I never really saw them as a kid. I can go around my local patch now and have seen up to 10 species of warbler which are there in Spring. When I say "seen" I could go around and hear 50-60 different birds, 10 species, and not see a single one, but I can identify them all by their song. So, I've got much better at birdsong, I'm still not top of my game, because certain calls throw me, but I find pleasure in hearing the first Chiffchaff and Blackcap; I just love it. It really matters to me, I mean, birds are just so magical in so many ways, but birdsong is the most magical thing about them, probably even above flight, I would say, so for me birdsong is really important.

I think birdsong reaches our soul. We think it's been done for us, we talk about the Dawn Chorus, and the orchestra and we anthropomorphise it, and of course we know that's rubbish, we know that birdsong has a very clear biological purposes, the other birds are only listening to their own kind, they're not listening to the other birds, and yet, even knowing all that it doesn't matter. We still find it uplifting, I suppose it's linked to Spring, the days are getting longer now, but right from December I was hearing Song Thrush from my garden, and it just fills you with joy.

You've now written over 30 books, what makes you choose the topics?

SM - When I started writing books about birds it was mainly handbooks about garden birds, or how to birdwatch. They weren't nature writing, although I still think they were very useful, and some of them still sell well, Collins Gems *Garden Birds*, being an example. I suppose, when I wrote *'A Bird in the Bush, a social history of Birdwatching'*, that was my first proper book, well *'Birds and Weather'* perhaps before that. Then in recent years, I've written certain books because it's a job, so writing the book for the BBC series *Planet Earth* and *Dynasties*, was enjoyable, but they're not my book; they're the scripts and the programmes and other material, including interviews with people. The books I'm passionate about writing now are about something. Sadly I think a lot of nature writing isn't, only about the writer, and I think that can be a bit dull.

The books I'm working on at the moment, one called the *'Accidental Countryside'*, which is basically looking at places we have built for ourselves, which wildlife has either inadvertently moved into, or moved into, or was there in the first place. It is everything from churchyards, roadside verges, canal banks and railway lines and gravel pits and golf courses. I think that's got some quite important things to say about nature and nature conservation in Britain today, because so many things live in, what I call, post-industrial sites. The Avalon Marshes being a prime example, peat digging turned into nature reserve, and the question it raises, why the hell do they live here, why don't they live in the proper official countryside? And the answer is the rest of the

countryside is by and large, not entirely, but mostly, hopeless for wildlife. National parks being a prime example, also most of farmland and our uplands, and so the irony is, that wildlife has squeezed into these strange man-made places, some of which are now managed for wildlife. London Wetland Centre, Woodberry Wetland Centre, Old Moor RSPB, Saltholme RSPB etc are a few of these places that are former industrial sites, mostly wetlands. However, only a certain number of species and certain type of species can live and thrive in these sort of places, so that's why wetland birds are doing particularly well at the moment because we've created a huge number of really, really good well managed wetlands, but that's not good enough for woodland and farmland birds and all of the others, so that's something that concerns me.

The other book I'm thinking of writing at the moment, which I've been thinking about for 40 years, and been drafting bits of it for over 10 years now, is about the history of the *Hastings Rarities Affair*, which is about the great fraud which took place at the beginning of the 20th century, with birds passed off as being shot in Britain and sold to wealthy and gullible collectors. It is very unusual in that it is the only fraud in history which doesn't involve a fake. And I think I know who did it...

Can you share a little insight to how Springwatch came about?

SM - It's a wonderfully messy history. It's not neat. My old colleague Tim Scoones, who took over *Springwatch* from me and I think made it what it now is, used to say no one came up with *Springwatch* as an idea on a flipchart; no one single person came up with the idea. I was the first series Producer, but it evolved, and evolved from lots of things, including going right back to Peter Scott's broadcasts back in the 1950s and *Bird in the Nest* in the 1990s. Lots of us had ideas like it. Bill (Oddie) used to say we should do a series called *Rookside*, where we'd bug a village with cameras, and then the cameras got much better, and much smaller very quickly in the ten years from 1994, when *Bird in the Nest* was on, until 2003, when we did *Wild in Your Garden*, which was the prototype for *Springwatch*. The cameras got tiny and we could put them in nests without disturbing the birds. But people use to say to me, why don't you ever do a series about British wildlife and birds, like the ones we have in our garden. And they were right.

The BBC Natural History Unit only used to do foreign exotic stuff and, when it did do Britain, it did Golden Eagles and all the big exciting stuff. We realised very quickly, when we started *Springwatch*, that what people wanted was the stuff they knew. We used to say it's like putting on a play; you've got the best technical front of house team in the world, technicians, sound people, brilliant stage, most amazing theatre, you just don't know if the actors are going to turn up. But if they do turn up, you have no idea what they are going to do, and that's basically what *Springwatch* was like.

And of course there was working with Bill, who is, like a jazz musician, the most unpredictable person in the world, and when we made the programmes with him we'd film him, and some of it was brilliant, and some, like jazz improvisation, was not, but basically you edited and you created this sense of him, and it was true, basically Bill wandering around looking for birds. When we did *Springwatch* we had no idea what he was going to do or say. You might be nominally in charge, but you're not. And the next hour, goodness knows what would happen.

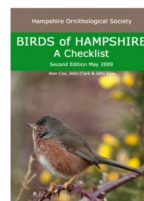
HOS Subscriptions

Some bird societies are in decline but we are lucky in HOS that we have a rising and very active membership – and it was great to see 300 of you at the Members Day. Those attending will have heard me reporting on a number of activities which will allow us to add to the money we can give as grants for conservation or research projects. It is great that we can make such grants, having built up reserves from publishing two books and other fund-raising activities. Also way back in 2007 we put our subscription cost at £12 which allowed us to make a small annual surplus, but with rising costs around us we now find that actually we are using HOS funds to subsidise your membership.

We've done well to avoid putting your subscriptions up for 13 years but I hope you will understand that we have to do so occasionally. Some county bird clubs charge as much as £20, but I am pleased to say that we are going to set our membership fee at just £16 from 2020 which I hope you will agree offers great value for money. Family Membership will also be £16, and our special offer of free membership for those under 21 in full-time education remains in place.

Thank you for being a member of HOS. With family memberships taken into consideration we now have more than 2000 members.

Keith Betton, Chairman, HOS



Julianne Evans shares her perspective and facts on the reintroduction of species, particularly related to raptors



Osprey, Fishlake Meadows, Andy Tew

The long-term existence of any species is dependent upon maintaining as wide a distribution as possible. Once populations are fragmented or restricted, they become increasingly vulnerable to local environmental pressures and, under the wrong conditions, risk extinction. In these situations, reintroductions can be appropriate and make a major contribution to the international conservation of a species.

Any reintroduction must adhere to strict IUCN guidelines. No project can legally go ahead if it does not satisfy these criteria which are:

- ◆ There should be good evidence that the species is absent from the proposed release site(s) before the initial conservation translocation;
- ◆ The release site(s) proposed for establishment should be within the historic range (post 1600, to take account of the first documentation of species distributions in Britain) of the species;
- ◆ There should be a good understanding of the reasons for the original decline and disappearance of the species considered for translocation and the causes of their reduction or elimination from the site(s) proposed for establishment of the species;
- ◆ Consideration of the outcome of any previous translocations of the species involved, either in GB or elsewhere;
- ◆ Consultation with other organisations and individuals who may be interested in or affected by the proposed translocation project;
- ◆ An assessment of the benefits to the species concerned arising from the proposed translocation (over both short and long timescales);
- ◆ Consideration of any possible harmful effects to donor populations;
- ◆ Assessment of any possible harm to other species or habitats at the proposed recipient sites;
- ◆ The fit with other conservation objectives of the statutory agency concerned;
- ◆ The likely chances of success of the proposed conservation translocation;
- ◆ Confirmed availability of earmarked funds to complete the planned translocation and subsequent monitoring;
- ◆ Use of the most appropriate donor stock, taking into account the ecology, behaviour and genetic constitution of the species.

White-tailed Eagles were persecuted to extinction in the UK, the last breeding attempt taking place on the Isle of Skye in 1916. Prior to their reintroduction, few sea eagles had been recorded in Britain and no natural re-colonisation has taken despite large and healthy populations in Norway, now estimated at 3,000 breeding pairs. This is partly because the species has also suffered in Europe, from persecution, habitat loss and, latterly, from pesticides but also because it shows strong natal philopatry, particularly in males, which means that they do not disperse far to breed from the place where they were born. Recent immigrants have all been immature and therefore they would have to both survive to maturity, find a mate *and* then breed successfully for natural recolonisation to take place.

Reintroductions in Scotland took place in three phases: 1975-1983, 1993-1998 & 2007-2012. The population increased from one to 130 pairs between 1983 and 2018. A recent SNH commissioned report (Sansom, Evans & Roos 2016) presented the results of population modelling which showed that if population growth continues at the predicted or currently observed rate, the white-tailed eagle population is expected to have increased to between 889 and 1,005 territorial pairs by 2040. Its range within the UK however would not have shown any significant change unless a long-distance dispersal event leads to the establishment of new pairs outside the range predicted, something which has not happened in over 100 years.

The Red Kite is one of the most threatened raptor species in Europe, with core populations in Germany, France and Spain having undergone significant population decreases. The Red Kite is our only native raptor species whose whole population is now restricted to the European continent (latest European population estimate only c35,000 breeding pairs). The species reached an 'extinction bottleneck' in the UK in the 1930s, primarily as a result of persecution, at which time the population was down to fewer than 20 pairs, all of whom were related to just one female, and located in a very small area of Wales. The recovery was the result of a massive protection effort from local landowners, RSPB & NCC but it did not start to take place until the 1960s and even thereafter it was very slow, reaching c. 50 pairs by the early 1980s with the population still restricted to central Wales.



Red Kite, Dave Levy

Discussions about possible reintroductions started to take place in the early 1980s during this gradual recovery. At the time, recolonisation of former nesting areas in England and Scotland was thought to be unlikely to occur naturally for three reasons: 1. The low breeding productivity of the Welsh population (approximately half that of populations in France and Germany). 2. Illegal poisoning. 3. A low rate of immigration from larger Continental populations which meant that the rate of population growth within the UK was dependent upon the breeding productivity and survival of the population within Wales. The first reintroductions took place between 1989 & 1993 using nestlings hatched in the wild in Spain & Sweden and reared in captivity before release. In 1996, the Welsh Kite Trust reported at least 127 breeding pairs in Wales, with a further 28 pairs occupying territories (Evans *et al.* 1997). Studies of the Welsh population eventually showed that it was habitat quality rather than lack of genetic diversity that was causing the low productivity which meant the recovery in Wales was more successful than initially anticipated.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Had the scientists involved in these reintroductions suspected that red kites could recover naturally through protection efforts alone, they *may* not have undertaken them, however the fact was they *didn't* know. As far as they were concerned the Welsh population was still perilously low and vulnerable and required prompt conservation action.

The osprey became extinct as a breeding bird in England in 1840 and in Scotland in 1916, though it continued to occur as a passage migrant. In 1954 it re-colonised naturally (by birds thought to be of Scandinavian origin) and a pair has nested successfully almost every year since 1959 at the RSPB's Loch Garten, Abernethy Forest, reserve in Scotland. The early re-colonisation was very slow, possibly because of organochlorine pesticides in the food chain as well as egg collecting, and the population had reached only 14 pairs by 1976. Fifteen years later, there were 71 pairs. In 2001, 158 breeding pairs were located including the first successful nesting of ospreys in England for 160 years by naturally re-colonising birds in the Lake District. It was also the year that the re-introduced ospreys nested successfully at Rutland Water for the first time. In 2017 there were an estimated at a minimum of 225 pairs in the UK including 19 in England & Wales, 6 of which were in Rutland. Ospreys exhibit a low ability to recover lost range, with a natural average spread of less than five kilometres per year over time. It has been calculated that it could take 150 years for ospreys to recolonise their former range and this is assuming that no other environmental factor changes. Reintroductions are a key component of the Bern Convention's plan for the recovery and conservation of ospreys in Europe and indeed have taken place throughout Europe.

We had, and still have, an international obligation to help secure these species' populations. As a result of the red kite reintroductions, we now have an estimated 6000 breeding pairs in UK, or roughly 15% of the world population. Ironically, we may soon be helping the Spanish authorities with supplying birds back to bolster their population, demonstrating the need for a healthy, widely dispersed population.

The economic benefits of reintroductions are significant. The RSPB reported in 2011 that up to £5 million of tourist spend on Mull is attracted every year by white-tailed eagles, 110 jobs and £1.4 million of local income are supported by this spend each year. An estimated 290,000 people visit osprey watching sites in the UK each year. Total spending by visitors to osprey-watching sites in the UK was estimated at £6million per year, nearly £3.5 million of which is estimated as additional spending by osprey watchers within the local economies of the UK's nine viewing sites helping to support local incomes and employment, probably making osprey the UK's top bird-tourism species. The Galloway Kite Trail, launched in October 2003 during the successful reintroduction of red kites to the Loch Ken area generated £2.63million new spend in the local economy, a minimum of 13 extra jobs supported per year, increasing annual trends in visitor spending and jobs supported.

Well-being through wildlife can take on a number of forms. Exposure to nature has been shown to aid physical and mental health, stimulate learning in young people, and provide cultural benefits, such as sense of place and spiritual wellbeing. The benefits of public awareness of the conservation issues as well as the impact of connections to nature in a world where people are increasingly disconnected from nature are immeasurable. The more people we can inspire and educate with these charismatic species, the more chance we have of good conservation outcomes elsewhere.

Personally, I still get a thrill out of seeing the majestic White-tailed Eagles on Mull, I find it hard to imagine anyone who doesn't. And I always feel a lift in my spirits when I see a Red Kite on my way to work, such a graceful and charismatic species in the air. For me, it is a symbol of hope and of the passion and hard work of those who have been instrumental in its comeback, where ever that might be from.

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Red Kite, Dave Levy

A History of the journal *British Birds* established in 1907 and, via association, aspects of the history of British ornithology during the 20th Century.

Before 1907

H.F ('Harry') Witherby was a partner, with his father and younger brother, in a London stationery manufacturing and printing firm, founded by his great-great- grandfather in 1740. The move by the firm into publishing came in the 1890s with the acquisition of the quarterly record of the Royal Navy, *The Royal Naval List*. In 1892, the firm acquired *Knowledge*, 'an illustrated magazine of Science, Literature and Art' which seems to have been a Victorian self-improvement publication fairly typical of its time. Almost immediately, and even before he joined the firm as a partner in 1894 at the age of 21, Harry Witherby began contributing ornithological articles, including some which would become chapters of his first book, *Forest Birds, their Haunts and Habits: short studies from nature*, based on his experiences in the New Forest where he grew up.

Harry Witherby was, from an early age, a keen naturalist. In October 1897, he introduced what was to become a regular section in *Knowledge*, entitled 'British Ornithological Notes'. It seems highly probable that an increasing flood of letters and notes from the readers of *Knowledge* was one of the stimuli that caused Witherby to consider founding a journal devoted solely to birds.

Before *BB* first appeared, however, Witherby & Co. were moving into book-printing, again led by Harry Witherby's interest in birds. Bird books continued to dominate the firm's book-publishing venture, and some 30 titles, nearly all on birds, had appeared by 1913. One of the earliest, J.E Kelsall and P.W. Munn's *The Birds of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (1905), attracted a subscription list of 270 before publication and founded Witherby's long tradition of producing county avifaunas.

The First 50 Years

Early in 1907, Harry Witherby approached friends and fellow ornithologists for support for his project to found a monthly journal devoted to the study of British birds. It also reprinted the original concepts expressed by Witherby about the scope and purpose of the new journal, demonstrating the remarkable grasp that Witherby had of the way forward for ornithology. His ideas embraced, for the first time, the concept of amateur ornithological involvement in field studies and surveys.

Among the more significant events during those 50 years, the first of all was a note from Victor Wilson, published in only the second issue, in July 1907, which put

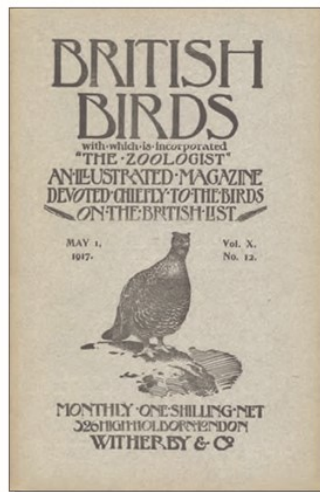


Fig. 1. May 1917, 1917 marked the first year of the incorporation of *The Zoologist* with *BB*.

forward an idea 'to trap birds and mark them, by metal ring or otherwise'; this was accompanied by an editorial comment supportive of such a scheme. Thus in those days, BB clearly fulfilled roles that in future years were to be taken up by others, most notably the BTO. With commendable alacrity the 'British Birds Marking Scheme', the first of its kind in the world, was launched in January 1909; it is now, of course, administered by the BTO. In a similar manner, the National Census of Heronries was launched in 1929 by Max Nicholson under the auspices of BB, which published its first report in 1929; this is now administered by the BTO and continues to set new markers as the longest-running bird census in the world. In January 1916 came the incorporation with BB of *The Zoologist*. That root of the publication had been founded by Edward Newman in 1843. From the 1850's *The Zoologist* regularly published notes on birds, much as BB did from the beginning. It appears that the success of BB was the death knell for *The Zoologist*: as W.R.P Bourne succinctly put it, '*British Birds* had got a progressive editor, Harry Witherby, and *The Zoologist* had not' (BB 88:1-4).

Harry Witherby was, as the Editorial in 1957 put it, 'much more than the Editor of *British Birds*'. His death was a truly great loss, and it is difficult to imagine one man ever again playing such a leading role in British ornithology. Again to quote the 1957 editorial, 'his contribution was (because of the war) never fully assessed... it was not only immense but pervasive and incalculable'. Arguably, Witherby's greatest achievement was *The Handbook of British Birds* (1938-41). Though not directly associated with BB, *The Handbook* was written by Witherby, Rev. F.C.R Jourdain, Norman F. Ticehurst and Bernard W. Tucker. Jourdain and Ticehurst had become assistant editors of BB in June 1909 and Tucker joined the board in June 1940.

Witherby died in December 1943 and, in the February 1944 issue of BB, Bernard Tucker was named as the new editor. In April 1944, A.W. Boyd joined Ticehurst on the editorial board – Jourdain had died in 1940 – and other ornithological figures of the day, including two of the Alexander brothers (H.G. and W.B.), the Misses Evelyn Baxter and Leonara Rintoul (the remarkable 'good ladies' of Scottish ornithology), David Lack and Max Nicholson, to name but a few, became involved in an advisory capacity.

Witherby's two sons and his nephew, while maintaining the commitment of the firm to ornithological publications, were not themselves birdwatchers and could not be expected to have the same personal sense of attachment to the journal. Nevertheless, Tucker persuaded them to make several changes during his relatively brief tenure as editor, including from 1946 to coincide the volumes with the calendar year, instead of June to May, and also to use many more monochrome photographs, especially for the excellent – and eventually long-running – series entitled 'Studies of some species rarely photographed', which began in that year. There were, indeed, few bird photographers of the post-war decades, whose work did not appear at some time in BB.

But Tucker's longest battles with the publishers were over the journal's size. Although the number of pages per volume had climbed from an all-time low of 248

pages in the 1943/44 volume, it was still only a total of 384 pages, or 32 per month, in 1947. Tucker remained restricted in how many 40-page issues he was allowed per year, this being linked to the publishers' reluctance to raise the annual subscription, though they finally increased it from one pound per annum to one guinea at the end of 1950 – just about the time Tucker died, at the age of 50.

Tucker had been editor for less than seven years, but his impact on British ornithology in that period was considerable. He always encouraged young birdwatchers, whom he met in the field. One such was James Ferguson-Lees, who in 1943 ran into him by chance at Northampton sewage-farm – a magnet for birdwatchers, as were most of the old-fashioned sewage-farms in those days. One memorial to Tucker was the institution by the BTO in 1953 of the Bernard Tucker Medal, awarded annually for the outstanding recent work by a member of the Trust through contributions to its scientific work or its surveys.

Among the problems which Tucker had faced during his editorship, stemming from the growing popularity of birdwatching from a comparatively rare eccentricity into a national pastime, was from a manageable and relatively steady flow of papers and notes, the material being sent to BB began to turn into a flood, which threatened to overwhelm the editor. This led to the appointment in 1949 as Tucker's part-time assistant of J.D. Wood. He had been the secretary of the Oxford Ornithological Society in the 1930s, at the same time as Tucker was president. When Tucker died, Arnold Boyd stepped into the breach and became *de facto* acting editor, with Wood continuing as assistant. Between them, they managed to keep the journal appearing monthly, though often somewhat late.

There was a real fear that publication might cease altogether and, with this in mind, it was proposed by a number of people that *BB* should become the official organ of the BTO. Although *BB* was publishing the results of many of the BTO surveys and reports, the idea did not find favour. Arnold Boyd expressed the contrary view that, while there was certainly a considerable overlap in the readership of *BB* and membership of the BTO, the two institutions, though closely aligned, did not have identical interests. In the event, the BTO's own journal, *Bird Study*, was launched in 1954. Another suggestion for the future of *BB*, put forward by Wood, was that it should have a Board of Trustees, comprising representatives of the British Ornithologists' Union, the BTO, the Edward Grey Institute at Oxford and the RSPB, as well as the publishers, Witherbys.

The new arrangements finally decided upon to fill the gap left by Tucker took just under two months to be brought into being, with the announcement of the

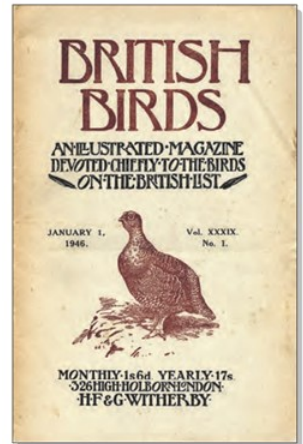


Fig.2. Although 27 years had passed since 1919, the cover of *BB* in 1946 was almost exactly the same. The price remained unchanged at 1s 6d per issue.

new editorial board appearing in March 1951 issue. Max Nicholson became chairman of the new board of editors, where he was joined by the previous assistant editors Boyd, Ticehurst and Wood, and by two new members Wilfrid B. Alexander and P.A.D. Hollom.

The new board was able to produce a 440-page volume that year and also to begin publishing some of the backlog of accumulated papers, notes and book reviews, which had built up during Tucker's last year. An editorial in the May 1951 issue also flagged up what had become a major concern of Tucker's shortly before his death, namely the problems associated with the increasing numbers of field-identifications of rarities and the need for more critical examination.

The idea of improved arrangements for dealing with rarities was in the minds of other ornithologists, too. In January 1951, David Lack had written to Boyd and suggested the formation of a committee 'for the consideration of records of rare birds before they are published. This committee should be closely linked with the BOU List Committee, and should keep in close touch with local Natural History Societies.' He concluded, 'I feel that if a committee was set up, its decision would give much more weight to the records published in *BB* than is at present the case.' The *BB* Rarities Committee was not, however, set up until 1959.

James Ferguson-Lees' name first appeared on the title page of *BB* in June 1952, and remained there until 1979. A number of significant developments took place during his period as executive editor. First and foremost was the formation of the *BB* Rarities Committee, or BBRC. This was followed by setting-up of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), which he devised with David Lea, then Deputy Director (Conservation) of the RSPB. Max Nicholson and Ferguson-Lees also saw the need, as a follow-up to the formation of the BBRC, for closer co-operation with editors of county bird reports. In the early 1960s they organised and were the introductory speakers at two one-day conferences; these led eventually to the formation, by Mike Rogers, of the Association of Country Records and Editors (ACRE).

Since 1957

In the January 1960 issue of *BB*, it was announced that Max Nicholson, while remaining on the editorial board, was handing over the post of senior editor to Phil Hollom, and that both Ticehurst and Boyd were being given the title of honorary editor, in effect signalling their retirements. To replace them, the editorial board invited Stanley Cramp, an outstanding amateur ornithologist to join them, and Eric Hosking. Many developments, not directly concerned with *BB*, grew out of the editorial meetings, and probably the most important of these followed a discussion about 'The Handbook', and what its aims should be after a quarter of a century. Nicholson proposed that, because British birdwatchers were by then frequently travelling in Europe and North Africa, the boundaries of the area covered by the new handbook should be extended

from Britain and Ireland alone to take in the whole of the Western Palearctic. That was how *BWP* was born and the four *BB* editors became the first directors of West Palearctic Birds Ltd.

Those editorial meetings in the 1960s also led to other things. Stanley Cramp and Ferguson-Lee were closely involved with the BTO, RSPB and BOU in various capacities, and Max Nicholson was not only director-general of the Nature Conservancy, but also a founder member of the World Wildlife Fund, conservation-convenor for the International Biological Programme, vice-president of the Wildlife Trust, and a former officer of all the other British ornithological bodies. The fourth editor in that decade, Phil Hollom, was one of the authors of the first of the European field guides, *The Field Guide to the Birds of Britain* (Petersen et al. 1954); and also author of *The Popular Handbook* (1952) and *The Popular Handbook of Rarer British Birds* (1960), both condensed updates of Witherby's *Handbook*.

One subject which came out of the editorial meetings was the feasibility of grid-mapping British bird distributions, which was being raised, with much opposition, in the committees of the BTO. The discussion at the *BB* editorial meetings help to convince Ferguson-Lees to support the proposal strongly at the BTO Council, as a result of which he was appointed chairman of the Atlas Working Group that oversaw the organisation of the first *Atlas of Breeding Bird in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock 1976). Another topic was that of reintroductions – now very much in vogue, but not in those days.

At the beginning of 1963, Stanley Cramp had taken over as senior editor from Hollom, though the latter remained a board member. Cramp was to hold this position right through until his death in 1987, making him the longest-serving senior editor after Witherby.

After this period of calm, the 1970s brought several changes and at least one major crisis. In 1970, when publication was often late, sometimes by a month or more, Pat Bonham joined the editorial board as assistant to Ferguson-Lees. Then in January 1972, Nicholson and Hollom decided to step down and, in their places, Ian Wallace and M.A. Ogilvie (MAO) joined the board. Wallace had recently become chairman of the BRRC, while MAO was then a research scientist at what is now the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge, thus becoming the first full-time professional ornithologist to be appointed to the editorial board.

At the end of January 1973, Ferguson-Lees resigned as executive editor to join the staff of the RSPB, but he agreed to remain on the editorial board, and did so until 1979. His erstwhile assistant Pat Bonham, was appointed to take over his role. At that point, David Christie joined as assistant editor, a position he was to hold until March 2002, including two stints of acting editor in 1975/76 and again in 2000/01.

In 1973 this new team had barely had time to settle, when Witherby & Co dropped a bombshell in their laps with the announcement that the firm could no longer

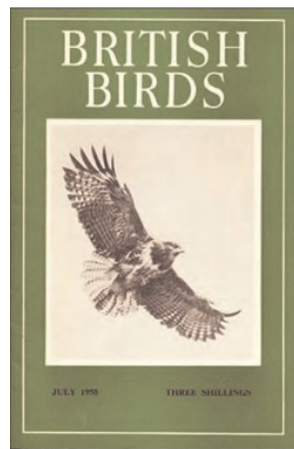


Fig 3. July 1958, the cover had been completely altered and a monochrome photograph of a different bird was used each month.

afford to support *BB*. Circulation was down and the journal was clearly losing money. This became one (of many) of Cramp's finest hours. Single-handedly he negotiated the sale of *BB* to a new publisher, Macmillan.

In July 1976, the editorial board, and Macmillan, appointed Tim Sharrock as managing editor. One of the first major changes to *BB* overseen by Sharrock was a complete redesign of the journal, with new typography throughout. It also now became possible for the whole journal to be printed on art paper, thus allowing photographic illustrations to appear in their appropriate places, instead of being confined to inserted pages in the middle. Ian Wallace resigned from the editorial board at the end of 1978 and his place was filled by Peter Grant, another keen and knowledgeable amateur, who in 1976 had also taken over from Wallace as chairman of BBRC.

The editorial board were face with a considerable new challenge in 1980, when Macmillan Journals decided that they wished to dispose of *BB*. A review of costs led Macmillan to conclude that the journal was not sufficiently profitable. With remarkable foresight, Sharrock, when negotiating his contract with Macmillan, had managed to include a clause giving him first option to purchase the whole journal and this was put into effect. A new company, British Birds Ltd, was formed for this purpose, with the four members of the editorial board equal shareholders and directors. The aims and objectives of the new company were to manage *BB* for the benefit of British ornithology, with the company being run on a non-profit basis and any surplus devoted to providing a better journal.

Three more editorial changes took place in the period up to 1996. Peter Grant resigned in July 1987 and was replaced by RJC, and with the death of Cramp in August 1987, the position of 'senior editor' was abolished. Robin Prytherch, who had had a long career as a producer of natural history programmes for the BBC, succeeded Cramp. Finally, the board size was increased to five in July 1992 with the appointment of Rob Hulme, the editor of the RSPB's *Birds* magazine and, from 1993 to 1997, chairman of BBRC.

Other important publishing developments

The 1950s and 1960s were noteworthy for the number of papers about bird migration, stemming particularly from Kenneth Williamson's theories of drift migration across the North Sea. In 1962, the entire August issue was devoted to the 'Hastings Rarities' Affair. A further development also began in the late 1960's. Papers by J.L.F. Parslow at that time, specially commissioned by *BB*, reviewed status changes in the breeding birds of Britain and Ireland and were subsequently published as a book, *Breeding Birds of Britain and Ireland* (Poyser 1973). This pattern was later repeated for two other series of ground-breaking papers that first appeared in *BB* and were republished as books: *Flight Identification of European Raptors* (Poyser 1974) and *Gulls: a guide to identification* (Poyser 1982). A number of other books were subsequently developed from the spawn of publications in *BB*.

While maintaining its traditional high standards, there has been a deliberate move towards a broader appeal, through a change to more modern and flexible layout, many new features and series, and the organisation of a number of competitions.

The 'Bird Photograph of the Year' award has had many imitators, but still attracts top photographers. The 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' award – which ran from 1979 to 2002.

A major change in ornithology since the late 1980's has been the advent of several completely new bird magazines. *Bird Watching* appeared in 1986, to be followed in 1987 by *Twitching*, renamed *Birding World* in 1988. Another, *Birdwatch*, first appeared in 1992 as a bi-monthly, before changing over to a monthly two-years later. To some extent, these made life more difficult for *BB*, not least at eating into its circulation and by direct competition through the use of ideas and features pioneered by *BB*.

In terms of its appearance, *BB* has evolved much more dramatically from the 1990's most notably in 1999, when the present, larger format was introduced, and printed in colour throughout. As has been seen, *BB* long ago extended its coverage beyond the shores of Britain and Ireland, and now recognises the boundaries of the West Palearctic as its natural limits, with extensions to cover the Palearctic species occurring elsewhere in the world.

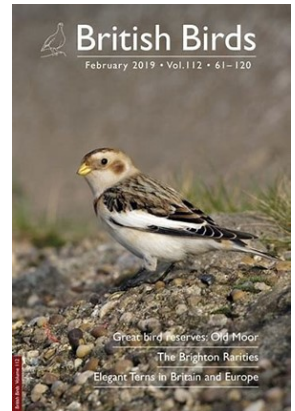
Recent developments

The late 1990's was a period when the new competition from other journals was having a detrimental effect and, in October 1997, three of the four remaining directors resigned and passed their share in British Birds Ltd to Sharrock. Shortly thereafter, ownership of the company was assumed by Christopher and Amanda Helm, and aware of the need to introduce new (and younger) blood appointed Ian Carter, Martin Collinson and Nigel Redman in June 1998, while MAO resigned at the end of 1997 following a 26-year stint.

Early in 2000 *BB* faced another significant challenge, for the new arrangements had not proved successful, either, and Christopher Helm informed the editorial board that he would be unable to continue the business beyond May or June of that year. An ad hoc committee was formed, and this, having examined the basics of business, concluded that it could be made viable. There followed a hectic six-weeks of fundraising, and the resulting help and support of many individuals and organisations, including the RSPB, enabled a new company, *BB 2000 Ltd*, to assume ownership of the business. David Christie stepped in for his second stint as acting editor, before Roger Riddington was hired and took over in February 2001, and has been the editor ever since. At the same time, ownership of *BB 2000 Ltd* was transferred to the British Birds Charitable Trust, thus ensuring any profits made going forward would be available to support British ornithology; fully in accord with the sentiments of Harry Witherby.

Acknowledgments

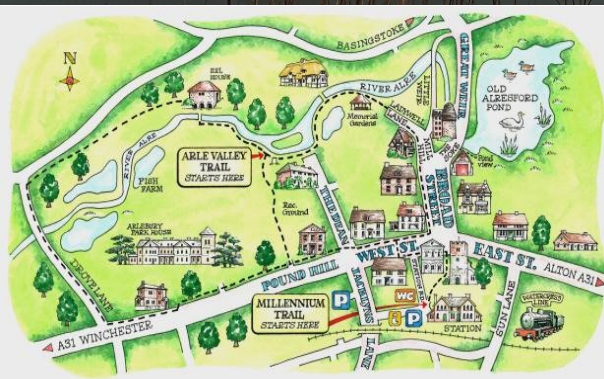
The contents of this edited article has been extracted from a fuller article which appeared in the January 2007 issue of *British Birds*, which was co-written by Malcolm Ogilvie, James Ferguson-Lees and Richard Chandler, produced by permission of British Birds Charitable Trust.



Alresford area

The attractive market town of Alresford, lying in the headwaters of the River Itchen, has various important bird habitats in the vicinity. It is well worth spending a day exploring these at different times of the year.

John Cloyne has been watching birds and other wildlife in the Itchen valley since 1959, and is recognised as a leading authority on the natural history of the river valley and surrounding areas from the 1700s onwards. This guide highlights the diversity of bird species, which can be seen across a number of the key sites in the area of Alresford.





Alresford Pond, Chris Rose





Alresford Pond, Chris Rose

Alresford Pond

Alresford Pond is one of the more important inland sites in Hampshire for birds. Created at the end of the twelfth century by the Bishop of Winchester, Godfrey de Lucy, the lake originally covered 60 acres. However, the lake is now only half this size due to partial conversion to watermeadows, silting and the encroachment of vegetation. For over two centuries the Pond and surrounding habitats have been recognised as a haven for wildlife and especially birds.

This large, now mainly shallow lake, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1985, attracts significant numbers of wetland birds including migrant waders. Breeders currently include Shelduck, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Water Rail and Cetti's Warbler. Large numbers of Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard, Teal, Tufted Duck, Cormorant, Coot, Lapwing and gulls (including Mediterranean Gulls) occur at the appropriate seasons. Less common wildfowl such as Mandarin Duck, Garganey, Wigeon, Pintail, Pochard and Goosander can also be expected occasionally. Overnight roosts of Starlings and Pied Wagtails occur mainly in autumn and winter and of gulls and hirundines mainly in late summer and autumn. A traditional winter roost of small numbers of Hen Harriers is now much reduced with only a single bird in the last year or so.

Migrant waders occur on the shallower parts of the lake, especially when the water level is particularly low. Green Sandpipers can occur in considerable numbers from July to October and sometimes in winter and on spring passage. Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Dunlin, Common Sandpiper and Redshank are the most likely other migrant waders but Avocet, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Little Stint, Jack Snipe, Wood Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank and Greenshank have all occurred in the last six years alone, with various other waders in the past. 182 species have been recorded since 1946, so almost anything can turn up but unusual birds such as Bittern, Great White Egret, Osprey, Marsh Harrier, Little Gull, Common, Arctic and Black Terns, Barn Owl, Kingfisher and Hobby are quite possible at the appropriate season for each.

Access

Entry is through a gate into the viewing platform provided for the public by the Pond's owner. This is situated along the B3046 road which runs past the Pond. If travelling by car, park either in Alresford's busy Broad Street (free but 2 hour parking restriction) or at the north end of the B3046 road after turning left onto the Abbotstone road (park on the muddy roadside just after the turning). From either direction it is a five minute walk to the viewing area but great care should be taken along the busy road, which has no proper footpath.

The Grange Lakes, Northington

Two secluded, narrow lakes (upper and lower), part of The Grange Estate, situated in the Candover valley about 4 miles along the B3046 road northward of Alresford. Good views of the upper lake can be obtained from the grounds of The Grange, a National Trust property set in parkland. The building is used for The Grange Opera in mid-summer. The portico of the building provides a good vantage point from which to view much of the upper lake and provides some shelter in inclement weather. The lower lake is not accessible but the grounds of Lord Ashburton's home are open to the public on two days each year in early June under the National Gardens Scheme and this provides an opportunity to visit the lower lake as well as visiting the lower part of the upper lake. Breeding birds include Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Shelduck in some years, Mandarin Duck (probably), Little Grebe, Mallard, Gadwall, Tufted Duck and Coot. Outside the breeding season, quite large numbers of Canada Geese, Gadwall and Mallard are usual, with smaller numbers of Mandarin Duck, Shoveler, Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe and Coot. Other aquatic birds can also be encountered on occasions, of which Green Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail are the most frequent. Rarities have included an Osprey on two occasions.



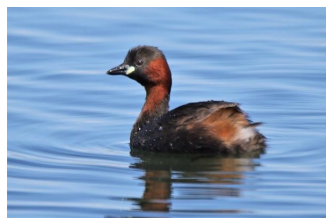
The Granges Lakes, John Cloyne

Access

Entry is from the B3046 road up the potholed track (accessible by car) to the parking area near the entrance to The Grange. From there it is a short walk to The Grange. The track has a timed gate mechanism which restricts access outside permitted periods, the hours being more restricted during The Grange Opera season in mid-summer. The National Trust website for The Grange lists opening times. There is no entry to the building but access to the grounds is free.

Arlebury Lakes

A series of three lakes just north of central Alresford which can be viewed, albeit with some difficulty through vegetation in summer in the case of two of the lakes, from the public footpath and Drove Lane. Small numbers of Mallard, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Coot and Little Grebe are typical, with occasional Shelduck, Teal and Shoveler. Water Rail, Kingfisher and Cetti's Warbler can often be encountered along some of the route. The main attraction is a Little Egret roost of 40 or more in trees at the westernmost lake (the 'old lake'). The birds arrive from various directions, mainly between an hour before sunset and just after dusk, and can be viewed from Drove Lane. Alternatively a visit before dawn can view the birds leaving the roost.



Cetti's Warbler, Shelduck and Little Grebe, Andy Tew

Access

Drove Lane is less than a mile to the west of central Alresford off The Avenue. The 'old lake' can be viewed from the bottom of the hill in Drove Lane, parking by the roadside. Then park at the top of the hill in a rough parking area that has been created and walk east along the public footpath towards Alresford from where the recently landscaped fishing lake can be viewed on your right. Walking further towards Alresford you come to another fishing lake on your right which will almost certainly hold Tufted Ducks and Coots and famously held a Smew in 2012. Alternatively approach this lake from central Alresford, turning left along the public footpath commencing at the bottom of The Dean and walk in a westward direction towards Drove Lane and the 'old lake'.

Fobdown Farm Reservoir

This artificial farm reservoir with a butyl lining lies half a mile north of Pinglestone Water-cress Beds on the road to Abbotstone. Although apparently unprepossessing, it holds post-breeding congregations of Grey Herons, often in double figures and with a maximum of 45. A male Common Scoter from late March to early June 2019 attracted much attention. Although often devoid of other waterfowl, Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Shelduck, Gadwall, Mallard, Teal, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Cormorant, Common Sandpiper and Green Sandpiper have occurred and occasional gulls, hirundines, wagtails and Meadow Pipit have been recorded. The adjacent field has a developing chalkland flora that attracts Marbled White butterflies in July.



Common Scoter, Dave Levy



Meadow Pipit,
Brian Cartwright



Fobdown Farm Reservoir, John Cloyne

Access

Leave the B3046 road just north of Alresford Pond, turning left into the Abbotstone road. Go past Pinglestone Water-cress Beds on your left, over the hill towards Abbotstone and the reservoir is situated at the bottom of the dip in the road. Park by the roadside and enter the meadow by the farm gate from where good views can be obtained of the reservoir.

The main Water-cress Beds

Four of the various beds around Alresford are particularly attractive to birds and worth a visit: Bishops Sutton, Drayton Farm, Pinglestone and Manor Farm (Old Alresford). All four are subject to disturbance at times due to the now intensive nature of cropping but nevertheless still attract a wide variety of species.

Green Sandpiper, Moorhen, Kingfisher, hirundines, Grey and Pied Wagtail, pipits, Goldfinch, Linnet and the occasional Black Redstart and Stonechat are the typical species that occur. Drayton Farm is the main bed for Green Sandpipers from about July to April although these occur at all four beds. Wintering Water Pipits have made a welcome return after a few years of decline, with numbers in double figures at Pinglestone in recent years; these seem to commute between there and Manor Farm and one or two can also be seen at Drayton Farm. Parties of Little Egrets also congregate at Pinglestone and/or Manor Farm on occasions. Little Ringed Plovers have occurred on several occasions, at three of the beds, with breeding suspected at least once. Other sightings at these beds in the last ten years have included Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Ruff, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Whinchat, Wheatear and Yellow Wagtail. Each of the beds has a deep silt pond to protect the river environment, that at Manor Farm being particularly worth a look for wildfowl, including Tufted Ducks.

The beds are particularly important in hard weather as the water, which leaves the aquifer at a constant temperature, doesn't freeze and can attract Lapwings, Snipe, Dunlin, Skylarks, Redwings, Fieldfares and other species normally absent. Although the main birds likely to be encountered are mentioned above, with 125 species recorded at (or in boundary vegetation) all the Itchen Valley beds combined over the years, almost anything can turn up. A detailed account of the history and bird life of these Itchen beds can be found in the 2013 Hampshire Bird Report.



Drayton Farm, John Cloyne

Access

Bishops Sutton

Take the B3047 road from central Alresford eastward towards Bishops Sutton where you turn left at The Ship PH in Bishops Sutton into Bighton Lane. Park by the roadside at the bottom of the hill and use the permissive footpath westward across the field for good views of the beds.

Drayton Farm

Take the B3046 road from central Alresford past Alresford Pond. Immediately after the Pond, turn right along Bighton Lane. Go past the first Water-cress Beds (Maxwell's Farm) and the Alresford Salads complex. Drayton Farm is on your right. View from the grass verge by the roadside. You can also walk east along the road for about 50 yards and enter the public footpath (easily missed as concealed by a hedge) through a meadow which enables you to walk the length of the beds.

Pinglestone

Take the B3046 road from central Alresford past Alresford Pond, then the first left turn towards Abbotstone for a quarter of a mile, the beds being on your left. View from the roadside.



Manor Farm, Old Alresford

Take the gravel public footpath on the opposite side of the road from Pinglestone Water-cress Beds past cottages and over two stiles. The silt pond and beds can be viewed on your right from gaps in the hedge. By walking further, views can be obtained from the main entrance gate in Old Alresford. Alternatively take the B3046 road from central Alresford into Old Alresford and turn left and left again at The Green from where the north end of the beds can be viewed from the main entrance.

Low Tide Count of birds using Southampton Water – winter 2018/9

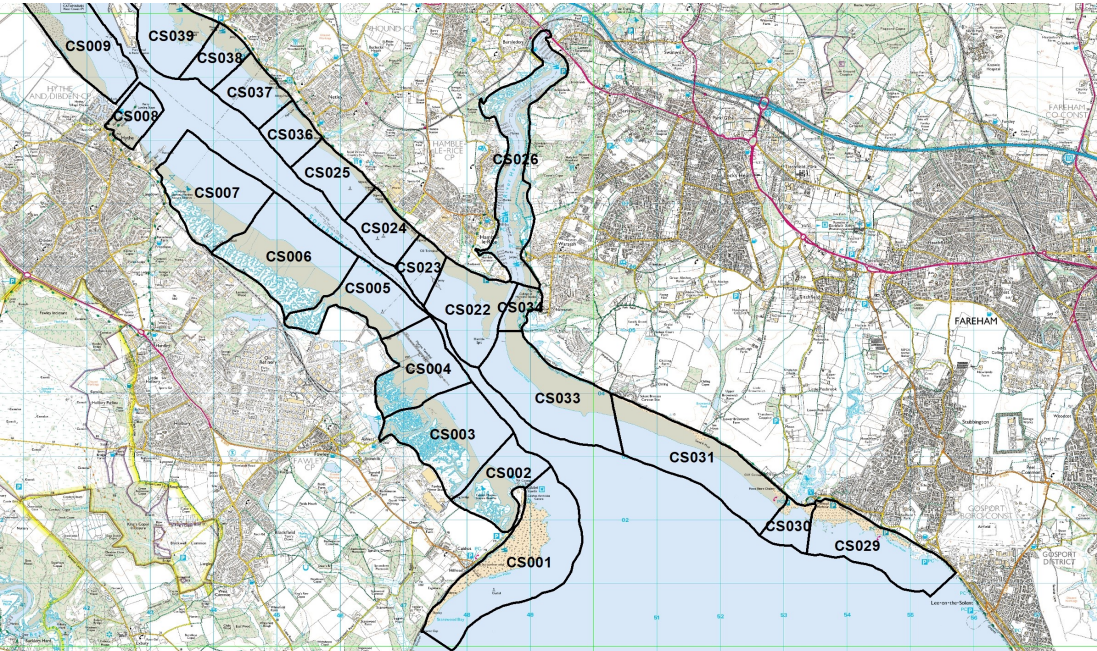
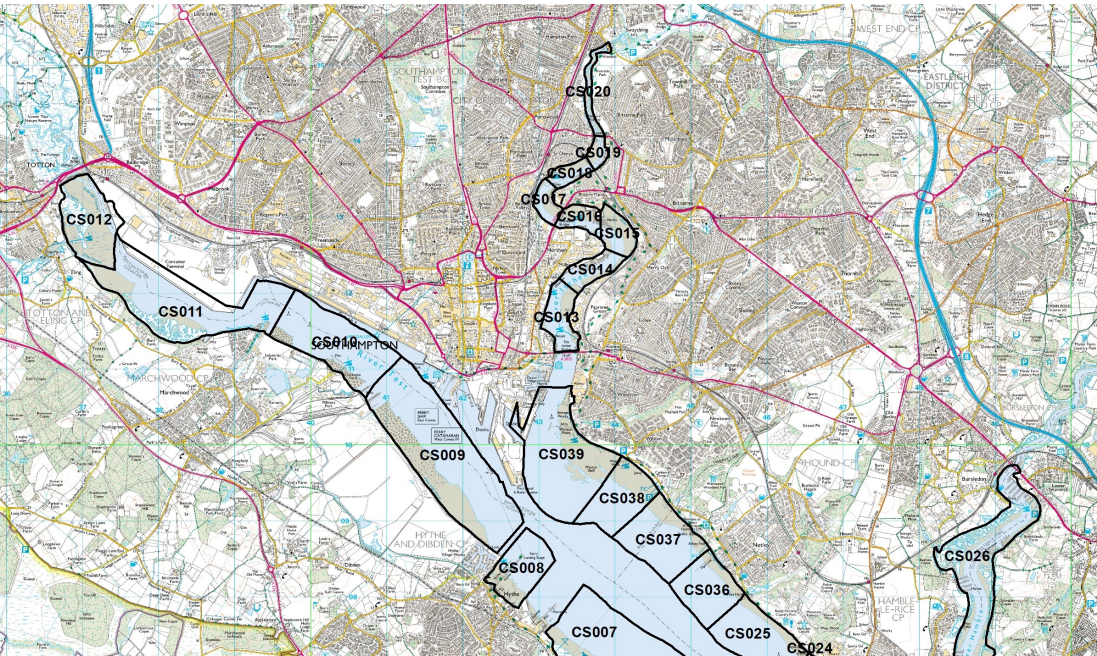
In spite of its latitude, the UK has relatively mild winters, compared to Scandinavia and the nearby countries in mainland Europe. As a result, the water bodies of the UK provide a vital resource for birds wintering in north-west Europe. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) organises a regular series of winter bird counts - known as WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) - of lakes, estuaries, river valleys and the coast throughout the UK, to monitor birds using these habitats. These counts focus on birds which are dependent on water, such as ducks, geese, swans, waders, herons, Coot and Moorhen. The Hampshire coast is a particularly important area for over wintering water birds and the whole coast is counted once a month in the winter. These counts are usually carried out at high tide, when birds tend to be concentrated in roost sites or easily seen on open water. This methodology gives a good estimate of the number of birds, year on year and allows trends to be assessed.

While counts carried out at high tide measure the number of birds using a coastal water body, they do not show which parts of an estuary or harbour are used as a feeding resource when the tide is out. In order to gather data to help conserve these sites, each of the major water bodies of the county are counted at low tide, once every six or seven winters. Winter 2018/19 was selected to count Southampton Water. These counts (Low Tide Counts, or LTC) are carried out once a month from November to February, across the low tide period. They are usually carried out by volunteers scanning the mudflats, saltmarsh and sea, from coastal footpaths. Most of the water bodies can be counted this way, but in some places, birds are too distant or there are no suitable footpaths, often for security reasons. In these cases, counts from a boat is required.

The LTC for Southampton Water, extended from Calshot beach, around the Hampshire coast line as far as Lee-on-the Solent. It also included much of the tidal stretches of the Test, Itchen, and Hamble, giving a distance of over 50 km. The shore line is divided up into 35 sectors (see maps) and one or more sectors were allocated to volunteers to count. The same sector definitions were used in counts in previous winters, so changes in usage can be determined over time.

Fortunately the majority of sectors around Southampton Water can be counted from the shore, however, the area around the Fawley Refinery is not accessible, so required use of a boat. Arranging a boat for counts in winter is not easy, as many boat owners take their boats out of the water. We were very fortunate that the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust was able to arrange funding from Solent Aware, to hire a boat and skipper to help carry out the counts of the four sectors around Fawley. The boat we used – the Lazy Daze – is ideally suited as it has a shallow draft, so was able to get close into the shore. A secondary, but vital benefit of the boat is that it has a heated cabin and a means to make a cup of tea!

A schedule was drawn up of one weekend per month, to carry out the counts. These weekends were chosen to provide a reasonably low low tide and sufficient daylight



hours for the volunteers to count their sectors. The counters were very experienced and most of them have counted the same sectors - at high tide - over many years. By the end of February, all sectors had been counted in all four months – a great achievement by the 18 volunteers. Including birds of prey and passerines, over 60 species were counted, giving a total of more than 55,000 individual birds. Southampton Water is clearly an important feeding/resting resource for birds at low tide.

Species which occurred most widely around Southampton Water, were waders (mainly Curlew, Oystercatcher and Redshank) and gulls (Black-headed and Herring). Ducks tended to congregate around fresh water outlets and included Teal, Wigeon and Shelduck. As often happens when experienced birders concentrate on counting a specific area, less common species are found. This LTC was no exception and counters were able to enjoy seeing Black-necked Grebe, Black Swan, all three diver species, Eider, Guillemot, Greenshank, Kingfisher, Long-tailed Duck, Velvet Scoter, Whimbrel and Yellow-legged Gull, in addition to the more regular species.

The results have all been loaded onto the BTO's website. The BTO will then be able to analyse how species use the various areas of habitat around Southampton Water and compare how this has changed since the last counts. I would like to record my thanks to all the volunteer counters who carried out the survey, sometimes in less than ideal weather. I would also like to thank Solent Aware and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust for arranging funding for the boat.

John Shillitoe
May 1st, 2019



Courtesy of Jeff Semple, Skipper of the *Lazy Daze*



WALKS & EVENTS - SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER

Enjoy the walk, the scenery, the company, the many pairs of eyes,
the shared knowledge, the flora and fauna, and importantly the birds.

Please Note:

You do not need to be a birding expert
***Everyone* is invited to these walks,**
whatever your age or knowledge.

Strong footwear is advisable for all walks, as is clothing appropriate for the weather conditions. A packed lunch is recommended for walks that span mid-day. Participants are requested to inform the leader if leaving the walk early, or if they have a medical condition that might compromise their ability to complete the walk.

The distance covered is shown for each walk, together with a 'walk category', as follows:

- A) Easy - a fairly short walk over relatively flat ground with no/few stiles.
- B) A little more demanding - longer distance and/or gentle hills but with no/few stiles.
- C) Medium difficulty - moderate distance and/or moderate hills and/or a moderate number of stiles.
- D) Strenuous - long distance and/or steep hills and/or many stiles.

Do please take care and enjoy the walks programme, but remember, responsibility for personal safety lies with the individual, not the Society.

A few walks are jointly undertaken with other societies and organisations. For joint walks with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, a collection will be made for donations towards the Trust, while very occasionally walks take place on privately owned property/ estates where a small charge is payable. Workshops typically incur a charge.

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO LEAD A WALK, PLEASE CONTACT
Alex Barker email: walks@hos.org.uk

EVENTS

HOS WADER WORKSHOP – Sunday 13 October

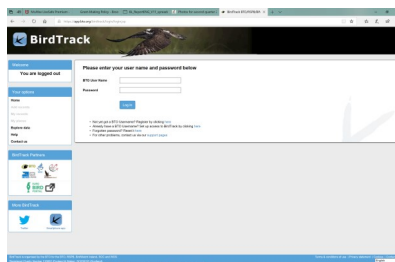
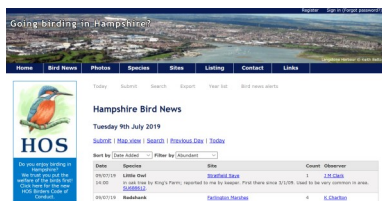
Marcus Ward is planning another workshop for those who want to brush up on their wader identification skills. This will be a mix of an indoor talk and an outdoor walk. Our past indoor venues are not available to us so a new venue is hopefully being sourced. Please check the HOS website for more details when available.



HOS RECORDING WORKSHOP – Saturday 2 November

This free all-day event will be held at the Millennium Memorial Hall, The Hall Way, Littleton, Hants SO22 6QL. Doors open at 0930. Talks will cover many aspects of recording birds in Hampshire ... for example:

- How best to record what you see
- Systems such as Birdtrack and Goingbirding (live demos)
- How your records are used to conserve sites
- Seawatching ... how to do it
- Visible migration ... what's it all about
- Patchwatching



WALKS

September

Saturday 7th

South East Winchester. SU 483280 9.00-12.30pm

Leader Tom Jordan Tel 07914 318031

Join Tom for a walk around his local patch in search of autumn migrants which could include Whinchat, Wheatear, Redstart and possibly waders. If the weather is good, we may also see late summer butterflies including Adonis Blue.

Meet in car park at St Catherines Hill off Garnier Road. There will be some moderate ups and downs and areas of uneven ground and one stile.

Walk Category B/C - 5 miles

Sunday 8th

**Migrant Birds of Farlington Marshes.SU 699055.
9.30am-2.00pm**

Leader Kevin Stouse Tel 0239 2482770

Meet at Broadmarsh car park for this walk for this walk around the marshes in search of migrant birds.

NB The road layout means that you have to do a U turn to enter the car park as there is no right hand turn into the car park entrance. Continue up Harts Farm Way and where it widens you can turn and come back to car park entrance. Bring coffee/lunch.

Walk Category A - 3 miles

Wednesday 11th

**Fishlake Meadows SU 353225 Post code SO51 0HB
10.30am – 2.30pm**

Leader Nick Wiley Tel 01489 893886 07747 151160

Chance to see Osprey. Meet in overflow car park at Romsey World of Water. The proprietors here request that you visit coffee shop in return for parking. Otherwise there is road parking around the area which will involve a short walk to meeting place.

Walk Category A - 2 miles

October

Saturday 5th

Portland Bill. SY694705 10.30am – 3.30pm

Leader Ted Barnes Tel 02380 266774 / 07811 049281

Meet in the Cheyne Weares car park just off the Southwell road for this circular walk around the Portland Bill area looking for late returning summer migrants, sea birds and Peregrine Falcon. Bring coffee/lunch. Alternatively a reasonably priced meal/snack is available at the Lobster Pot cafe at the Bill. Phone leader the evening before to confirm especially if bad weather forecast.

Walk Category B - 5 miles

Sunday 6th

Migrant birds at Titchfield Haven. SU 549043 9.30am – 2.00pm

Leader Kevin Stouse Tel 02392 482770

Meet at lay-by on West of Titchfield – Stubbington road (B3334). Take the A22 through Fareham and turn left onto the B3334 at the roundabout just before Titchfield village. After the glasshouses continue past Crofton Farm on the right, then turn right into a disused section of the road. Bring coffee/lunch

Walk Category A - 4 miles

Saturday 12th

Needs Ore 9.30am – 1.00pm

Leader Keith Betton Tel 01252 724068 / 07809 671468

Numbers limited to 15 applicants. Apply to the leader at keithbetton@hotmail.com £4.00 permit fee payable. Meeting instructions will be confirmed to those who book.

Walk Category A - 2 miles

Thursday 17th

Brownwich SU 531023 10.00am – 1.30pm

Leader Richard Carpenter Tel 01329 661856
07849 184316

Meet on shore road near the west entrance to Titchfield Haven. We will look for autumn migrants both offshore and on the arable land between Hill Head and Brownwich Pond. If there has been recent rain, the paths will be muddy. Bring coffee/lunch.

Walk Category B - 3-4 miles

Saturday 26th

Pagham Harbour SU 857965 10.30am - 3.30pm

Leader Julian Moseley Tel 02380 779850
Meet at the reserve centre OS 197 . We should hope to see later migrants and possibly a few butterflies. Bring lunch.

Walk Category A - 4 miles

Sunday 27th

Herbury Gore Dorset SU 617806 Post code DT3 4ED 9.30am – 12.30pm

Leader Janice Beck with Keith Betton Tel 07723 026332

Meet at Moonfleet Manor Hotel car park (parking free) Fringe woodland and farmland and then tidal inland waterway. The walk is planned to take in receding tide. Walking boots or wellingtons.

Walk Category B. 4 miles

November

Saturday 3rd

RSPB Arne SY 971876 10.00am – 3.30pm

Leader John Clark Tel 02380 618604
Meet at the information centre for this walk around the reserve to see many species including Marsh Harrier, Dartford Warbler, Avocet and Spoonbill. Entrance is free to RSPB members and the reserve has an onsite cafe. Bring lunch/coffee if preferred. This is a joint walk with Winchester RSPB group.

Walk Category A

Sunday 10th

**Hengistbury Head Dorset SY 163911 Post code
BH6 4EN 9.30am – 12.30pm**

Leader Nick Whitehouse with David Taylor Tel 07894
050069

Meet at car park at the end of Broadway. A walk around the headland jutting out into Christchurch Bay. A top migration spot in East Dorset. A mixture of heath, woodland, dunes and reedbeds. Autumn migration, wintering wildfowl and waders. There maybe periods of 30 minutes or so sea watching and scanning the sky. Bring an ultra light collapsible chair if you want. Car park is £3, payable by credit/debit card or mobile phone. Level ground mostly.

Walk Category A - 3 miles

Sunday 17th

**Warblington Shore to Hayling Oyster Beds
SU 728054 9.30am – 1.30pm**

Leader Kevin Stouse Tel 02392 482770

Meet at Warblington church car park for this walk along the shore to Hayling Oyster beds in search of winter birds, waders and wildfowl. Bring coffee/lunch

Walk Category A - 4 miles

Saturday 23rd

**Shatterford Bottom New Forest SU 348061 Post
code SO42 7YQ. 9.30am – 12.30pm**

Leader Ian Hampson Tel 07803 471137

Meet at Shatterford Bottom car park just west of Beaulieu Road Station This heathland walk is across an area favoured by Great Grey Shrike (no guarantees!), plus all the usual heathland species such as Dartford Warbler. Level ground and mostly and usually dry, but recommend wearing waterproof footwear.

Walk Category B - 3 miles

Walk - The Holt, Upham: 12th May 2019

The Holt Estate is an area of private land lying to the east of Winchester and NE of the village of Upham. It is part of the chalky landscape of the Hampshire section of the South Downs and there is a more or less 50:50 mix of woodland and farmland; the farmland in turn is a 50:50 mix of arable and pasture. Typical of the dry chalk, there are no natural ponds, rivers or streams but there are some other habitats such as game cover strips, pasture woodland (part of Dur Wood) and three meadows with unimproved chalk grassland. The two woodland blocks are Dur Wood in the west, an extensive plantation with much conifer and beech and Lime Wood in the east, which is more natural with beech, ash and yew dominant. A lovely pond has been created recently in a part of Lime Wood that was cleared.

My involvement in this site began with a gathering about 8 years ago when the owners invited members of the Hampshire branch of Butterfly Conservation to the site. Since then I have regularly led natural history walks, including fungus forays, for various groups at The Holt and last year took part on an all-day (and all night) 'Bioblitz' recording event there. I have also attended outdoor theatrical productions in the landscaped gardens around the main house. In summary, I now know much of the site very well!



On 12th May 2019 I finally led a 3-hour HOS walk around The Holt, or at least a small part of it and including Dur Wood. The owners kindly found the time to accompany us and answer questions. 14 people attended the walk so it looks as if this was a popular venue, and the weather was fine and partly sunny. 29 species of birds were seen by 28 eyes (about one bird species spotted per eye) but the highlight was without doubt a Barn Owl that decided to put on a diurnal appearance at about midday. We also found a nesting Nuthatch, saw plenty of Swallows and House Martins, singing Blackcaps 'everywhere', a Raven passed over and one eagle-eyed observer found a perfectly camouflaged female Wheatear in one of the arable fields. Other wildlife included no less than six Brown Hare, 7 butterfly species including Small Copper and several Orange-tip, and insects such as Harlequin and Kidney-spot Ladybirds, Malachite Beetle and Box Bug. There was an attractive variety of late spring flowers too.



At the end I was asked by more than one attendee about organising another walk at The Holt. I hope to do this again next year so watch this space.

Phil Budd



Photos of The Holt by Phil Budd, with kind permission of the Landowners

Recent sighting reports - April to June 2019



Around 208 species were seen during the period. This summary focuses on larger counts, scarcer species and unexpected localities reported throughout the period (capitals indicating national rarities or species with less than annual occurrence in Hampshire). Most records are from Birdguides and Goingbirding websites: a much more complete picture will eventually appear in the Hampshire Bird Report.

Regular site summaries appear monthly in *Birdwatching* magazine and on the HOS website. Sightings refer to single birds unless otherwise stated. Inclusion in this list does not indicate that sightings of rarities have been considered by the appropriate records committee

Whooper Swan: Avon Causeway 2/6 - 8/6

Pink-footed Goose: Titchfield Haven 12/5 - 16/5; Lower Test 17/5

White-fronted Goose: Greatbridge (Romsey) 6/4; Fishlake Meadows 10/4

Garganey: Posbrook Floods 1/4 - 7/4; Fishlake Meadows 2 1/4 - 24/4; Edenbrook Country Park 1/4 - 7/4; Pennington Marsh 2 8/4, 1-3 20/4 - 24/4, 17/5; Hill Head 7 15/4; Fleet Pond 7/5 - 10/5; Farlington Marshes 2 12/5 - 13/5; Titchfield Haven 28/6 - 30/6

Velvet Scoter: Milford-on-Sea 4 5/4, 2 6/4

Long-tailed Duck: Hill Head 7/5 - 12/5

Quail: Over Wallop 3 8/6

Red-throated Diver: Milford-on-Sea 2E 5/4, 1E 16/4, 2 25/4, 26/4; Hordle Cliff 2E 5/4; Hill Head 25/4; Stokes Bay 25/4

Black-throated Diver: Milford-on-Sea 1E 5/4, 26/4; Stokes Bay 2E 25/4

Great Northern Diver: Hill Head 1E 7/4; Southsea Castle 25/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 16/5

Fulmar: Milford-on-Sea 4/4, 5/4, 21/4, 24/4, 10 25/4, 7/6, 6 8/6; Eastney 2 13/4; Stokes Bay 24/4, 25/4, 26/4, 8/5; Hill Head 24/4; Hook-with-Warsash 30/4; Lepe 3/5; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 16/5

Manx Shearwater: Milford-on-Sea 7W 5/4, 16 7/5; Hordle Cliff 1E 5/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 1E 26/4, 5E 27/4, 3E 13/6

Black-necked Grebe: Netley 5/4

GLOSSY IBIS: Fishlake Meadows 1/4 - 29/4, 14/5; Posbrook Floods 1/5 - 2/5

White Stork: Fishlake Meadows 7/4; Winchester 14/4; Romsey 19/4

Spoonbill: Pennington Marsh max. 8 1/4 - 29/6; Titchfield Haven 2 22/4, 21/6, 27/6, 28/6; Farlington Marshes 2 23/4 - 25/4, 28/4, 2 1/5, 16/5, 20/5, 22/6; Bishopstoke 4SW 4/5; Hill Head 19/5

SQUACCO HERON: Posbrook Floods 24/5 - 26/5, 8/6 - 9/6; Testwood Lakes 2/6

Cattle Egret: Aldershot 1/4; Titchfield Canal Path 28/4; Trigpoint Hill, Timsbury 30 8/6

Great White Egret: Beaulieu Estuary 2/4; Testwood Lakes 5/4, 6/4, 11/4; Titchfield Canal Path 11/4, 21/4 - 25/4; Skidmore 12/4; Lower Test 18/4; Keyhaven 2 20/4; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 17/5; Weston Shore 1/6; Posbrook Floods 11/6; Lepe 23/6



Shag: Southsea Castle 2/4; Milford-on-Sea 2 4/4, 10 6/4, 2 16/4, 7/6; Eastney 14/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 4 16/4

Osprey: Harbridge 2/4; Avington 2/4; Hatchet Moor 3/4; Botley 4/4; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 4/4; Woomer Forest 5/4; Titchfield Haven 7/4; Gosport 7/4; Trigpoint Hill, Timsbury 9/4; Fishlake Meadows 11/4; Black Point, Hayling Island 18/4; Gosport 23/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 27/4; Weston Shore 4/5, 14/5; Fleet Pond 7/5; Lepe 24/5; Whiteley 24/5; Fareham Creek 25/5; Inchmery 30/5; Normandy Marsh 30/5, Bransbury Common 9/6; Hamble 22/6

Marsh Harrier: [Non-breeding records] Newlands Farm 10/4; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 15/4, 10/6, 21/6; Hill Head 20/4; Shatterford 30/4; Alresford Pond 30/4; Stokes Bay 17/5; Somerley Park 17/6; Fishlake Meadows 29/6

Hen Harrier: North Warnborough 4/6

Montagu's Harrier: Warblington 15/4; Stokes Bay 17/5

Crane: Southampton 18/4

Avocet: [Non-breeding records] Lepe 30/4, 2 17/5; The Vyne 13/5; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 2 16/5; Hook-with-Warsash 7 17/5



Avocet, Brian Cartwright

Little Ringed Plover: [Non-breeding records] Farlington Marshes 1/4; Lepe 1/4; Lower Test 9/4; Milford-on-Sea 21/4; Hook-with-Warsash 29/4; The Vyne 9/6; Hook-with-Warsash 19/6, 30/6; Fishlake Meadows 24/6

Dotterel: Cheesefoot Head 2 6/4 - 8/4

Ruff: Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 4/4; Pennington Marsh max. 6 6/4 - 22/4, max. 6 14/5 - 17/5

Curlew Sandpiper: Farlington Marshes 22/4 - 23/4, 1/5; Normandy Marsh 2 24/4; Pennington Marsh 1-2 2/5 - 6/5, 31/5



Little Ringed Plover, Andy Tew

Temminck's Stint: Pennington Marsh 17/5 - 25/5

Purple Sandpiper: Southsea Castle max. 8 2/4 - 23/4; Milford-on-Sea 24/4

Little Stint: Keyhaven 2 13/5; Titchfield Haven 23/5



Temminck's Stint, Mike Duffy

Jack Snipe: Farlington Marshes 17/4 - 23/4

Red-necked Phalarope: Pennington Marsh 31/5 - 1/6

Wood Sandpiper: Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 3 30/4; Posbrook Floods 3/5, 25/5; Aldershot 6/5; Pennington Marsh 18/5

Spotted Redshank: Farlington Marshes 1/4, 3/4, 13/4; Pennington Marsh 1-3 6/4 - 29/4, 3/5, 5/5; Hook-with-Warsash 29/4; Oxy Marsh 23/6



Spotted Redshank, Kay Shillitoe

Kittiwake: Milford-on-Sea 9E 4/4, 1E 5/4, 2E 24/4; Hill Head 9 4/4, 3E 15/4, 1W 20/5; Stokes Bay 2E 15/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 2E 16/5

BONAPARTE'S GULL: Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 25/4 - 12/5

Little Gull: Hill Head 1E 4/4, 7E 5/4, 2 22/4, 1E 24/4; Milford-on-Sea 5 5/4, 3E 6/4, 5 25/4; Fleet Pond 6/4, 8/4, 9/4; Hayling Oysterbeds 10 7/4; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes max. 12 7/4 - 12/4, 1-2 13/4 - 9/5; Testwood Lakes 2 10/4; Keyhaven/ Pennington 3 13/4, 1-2 20/5 - 26/5; Farlington Marshes 13/4; Stokes Bay 10E 18/4, 3E 25/4; Titchfield Haven 15/5

Yellow-legged Gull: Hill Head 19/4; Hook-with-Warsash 15/5 - 30/6; Lower Test 25/6

GULL-BILLED TERN: Pennington Marsh 31/5

Roseate Tern: Sandy Point, Hayling Island 14/5; Titchfield Haven 28/6

Arctic Tern: Hordle Cliff 2E 5/4; Fleet Pond 10 19/4, 10 8/5; Netley 2 22/4; Milford-on-Sea 12 25/4, 2E 4/5; Hill Head 25/4, 23/5; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 2 27/4, 10/5, 18/5; Weston Shore 2 2/5, 8 6/5, 8/5; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 11/5

Black Tern: Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 3 19/4, 7/5, 7 8/5, 9/5, 2 17/5; Stokes Bay 4 22/4, 2 24/4, 25/4, 9E 8/5, 24 17/5; Hill Head 2 24/4, 12E 8/5; Fleet Pond 25/4, 3 8/5, 9/5, 2 17/5; Southsea Castle 25/4; Milford-on-Sea 1E 7/5, 12/5; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 5 17/5, 18/5

Great Skua: Hill Head 1E 5/4, 1E 15/4, 2E 25/4; Milford-on-Sea 6E 5/4, 2 21/4, 3 25/4, 1E 12/5; Stokes Bay 1E 15/4, 2E 25/4; Southsea Castle 25/4

Pomarine Skua: Milford-on-Sea 2E 24/4, 1E 8/5, 2E 17/5; Stokes Bay 1E 24/4, 1E 7/5, 1E 8/5, 8E 16/5; Hill Head 1E 7/5, 1E 15/5, 14E 16/5; Lepe 5E 16/5; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 17E 16/5

Arctic Skua: Milford-on-Sea 4/4, 13 5/4, 2E 24/4, 16E 25/4, 1E 7/5, 1E 12/5; Hill Head 16E 5/4, 4E 15/4, 2E 22/4, 1E 24/4, 18E 25/4, 1E 7/5, 2E 9/5, 3E 10/5, 5 16/5, 2E 18/5, 2E 23/5; Stokes Bay 2E 15/4, 10E 25/4, 1E 1/5, 16/5 Sandy Point, Hayling Island 16/4, 2E 16/5; Southsea Castle 8E 25/4; Posbrook Floods 1N 30/5

Common Guillemot: Milford-on-Sea 29/4, 4/5

ALPINE SWIFT: Sandy Point, Hayling Island 18/4

Merlin: Keyhaven 5/4; Farley Mount 9/4

Hobby: [Records until 20/4] Pennington Marsh 13/4; Straight Mile, Romsey 17/4; Trigpoint Hill, Timsbury 18/4; Fishlake Meadows 20/4; Emer Bog 20/4; Deanlane End 20/4

Golden Oriole: Titchfield Haven 12/5

Wood Warbler: [Non-breeding records] Hurst Castle 19/4; Titchfield Canal Path 6/5; Yateley Common 6/5

ICTERINE WARBLER: Colemore 18/6 - 19/6

Ring Ouzel: Portsdown Hill 6/4, 7/4; Lower Test 7/4; Leadenhall 8/4; Basingstoke 14/4; Beacon Hill, Highclere 3 14/4; Martin Down 23/4; Ashlett Creek 24/4

Fieldfare [Late record] Hinton Ampner 24/5

Pied Flycatcher: Acres Down 11/4; Fritham 15/4; Sparkes Marina, Hayling Island 20/4, 21/4

Black Redstart: Fishlake Meadows 22/4

Redstart: [Non-breeding records] Titchfield Canal Path 7/4, 19/4, 20/4; Ranvilles Lane 8/4; Eastney 8/4; Lower Test 3 8/4, 13/4, 18/4; St Catherine's Hill, Winchester 14/4; Chawton 17/4; Hazeley Down 19/4; Portchester 20/4; Farlington Marshes 30/4

Whinchat: [Records until 20/4] Sandy Point, Hayling Island 17/4, 18/4; Portsdown Hill 17/4; Rockford Common 17/4; Southmoors 17/4; Hurst Castle 19/4; Titchfield Canal Path 19/4, 20/4; Lower Test 20/4

Water Pipit: Titchfield Canal Path 2 7/4, 7 13/4; Alresford Cress Beds 7/4; Lower Test 4 7/4 - 8/4; Pennington Marsh 12/4; Lepe 5 18/4

PLEASE SEND RECORDS TO THE COUNTY RECORDER SO THAT THEY CAN BE INCLUDED IN THE HOS DATABASE AND HAMPSHIRE BIRD REPORT.
SEND TO:

Keith Betton, 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, GU9 0DR (Tel. 01252 724068)
Email: keithbetton@hotmail.com

Records can be submitted as an email attachment using the Recording Form available from the home page of the HOS website: <http://www.hos.org.uk/>.

Thank you, *Tom Jordan*



Hobby, Andy Tew

A FIRST FOR HAMPSHIRE: BREEDING CATTLE EGRETS!

On 5th July news was released via the *Friends of Emsworth Wildlife* blog, maintained and edited by Brian Fellows, that Peter Milinets-Raby had found the first breeding Cattle Egrets in Hampshire. Brian's blog is recreated below. All photos taken by Peter.



Cattle Egrets breeding at Langstone Mill Pond

As you all must know if you have been reading this blog, **Peter Milinets-Raby** has been monitoring the breeding of Grey Herons and Little Egrets at Langstone Mill Pond throughout the summer season. However, Peter has also been monitoring far more interesting birds breeding in the same colony, namely Cattle Egrets. Peter withheld publicising this information due to the danger of alerting egg collectors to the site. Peter has kindly kept me fully informed of the progress of the Cattle Egrets, but asked me not to publish anything about them until the chicks are confirmed. But now we can publish the wonderful news!! Here is Peter's report as follows . . .

"At long last this morning I saw a tiny chick in Nest 4, the first confirmed breeding of Cattle Egret in Hampshire. I had suspected that this was the case for the last few days, but the restricted views of the nests makes observation very tricky indeed. Now that the threat of egg collectors is over, the following short summary of this historical event can now be told.

As everyone is aware during the winter the fields around Castle Farm, Warblington held up to five Cattle Egrets. In previous years the wintering birds had departed by late February, but this year the birds lingered into March, then April. From late March onwards, they were often in the fields with 20+ Little Egrets. The Little Egrets were pairing up, displaying and developing spring plumes and I thought it was only a matter of time before this behaviour would rub off on the Cattle Egrets. However, to my disappointment the Cattle Egrets just suddenly vanished (My last sighting was on 23rd April) and were not seen subsequently. The chance of breeding had gone, or so I thought! On the 24th April I noted that there were already 18+ pairs of Little Egrets established at Langstone Mill Pond.

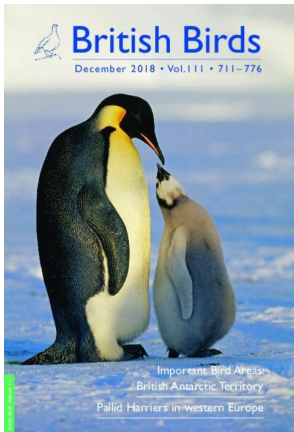
Then, right out of the blue on 2nd June, 5 Cattle Egrets suddenly appeared in the Little Egret colony at Langstone Mill Pond. Where had they been for the intervening 38 days? By the 8th June the birds had started to settle down and at

least four nest sites were beginning to be established (The birds almost certainly using old Little Egret nests). Also, on this date I had my highest count of 8 birds. Over subsequent visits usually only 4 to 5 birds would ever be seen. The non sitting adults never seemed to hang around, which made confirming nest sites virtually impossible. Two of the four "certain" nests sites are not visible, hidden by foliage. Nest 2 is barely visible (a quarter of a sitting bird can be seen if you are lucky) and Nest 4 is visible, but with a very restricted view. During the month of June, I suspected there to be a further three nest sites, but as the location of these are unobservable, their confirmation can only be established when the Cattle Egrets start to regularly feed their young and the young start to grow and wander about like the Little Egret chicks do. So there are possibly seven nests. I use the term "nests" as opposed to "breeding pairs" as I suspect that one male may be responsible for two or more of the nests?

At the moment if you visit Langstone Mill Pond you will not actually see much. You may be lucky and catch a glimpse of a non sitting adult. This morning, there were only three non sitting adults present, though two of them soon flew off towards Thorney Island. The third is a bird that is nearing the end of its "Nuptial" plumage. It has started to loose interest in Nest site 6 and wanders off into the back of the Willow Trees and thus out of sight. If you get a glimpse of this bird, it is still sporting a two toned bill of orange tip and crimson base and purplish cere. Plus it has crimson legs. These bare part colours are fading now, but still worth a look. The fact that this bird has been in this "Nuptial" plumage for 16 days now, suggests that it has probably failed to find a mate. All the earlier successful adults lost their "Nuptial" plumage after a week!

Hopefully, by next week there should be plenty of activity as the adult birds bring in food and consequently the numbers of nests can be confirmed. The last interesting question is, where do these birds go? They are not feeding locally. They always fly off to the east and stay in the air until I loose them way over north Thorney Island. Is there another nesting colony in that direction? The report of a pair feeding a fledged youngster on 23rd June on Thorney Island might suggest this. This date hints that this colony became established in the first week of May, which sort of fits in with the sudden disappearance of the birds at Warblington! A point worth pondering."





The journal *British Birds* (BB) has been the pre-eminent magazine for serious birdwatchers and ornithologists since it was established by H.F (Harry) Witherby in 1907. Roger Riddington joined BB and became its Editor in February 2001, at a time when it had just avoided going out of print in 2000, due to being seriously in debt. The *British Birds* Charitable Trust is a charity that owns the company BB2000 Ltd, which owns and produces BB, and which has steered the journal back to financial stability. Roger has been part of the editorial team responsible for the journal's content and subsequent evolution.

Roger's addiction to birding started in his home county of Lincolnshire in the late 1970s, but he has lived in Shetland since 1994. After a season as an assistant warden at the bird observatory on Fair Isle in 1992, he returned to the island in 1994 as warden. In 1998 he moved to mainland Shetland and spent three years as manager of the Shetland Biological Records Centre, before starting work for BB. He has continued to work for BB from his home at the south end of mainland Shetland.

I had the opportunity to interview Roger and ask him to share some insights to what goes on at BB, as well as some of the great work it does in providing grants to support organisations and individuals involved in ornithology and conservation.

BP – What have been some of the articles which particularly stick out for you since you becoming Editor in 2001?

RR –There have been some truly amazing records of new birds for Britain since 2001. Perhaps the one that sticks in my mind the most is Tufted Puffin ('Tufted Puffin in Kent: new to Britain' – see https://www.britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/V104_N05_P261-265_A.pdf) but there have been many fantastic birds since I took over as editor in 2001.

If I was to highlight one broad topic that, over the last couple of years has really grabbed readers' attention, it would be hunting and raptor persecution, which has been a subject of huge interest, not just among readers of BB, but the wider birdwatching public. Earlier in 2019 we published a paper on hunting in Europe. The numbers of birds that are being shot, legally, in Europe is eye-watering, and includes for example 1.5 million Turtle Doves every year. This is a species that's heading for extinction as a breeding bird in Britain! And these are just the numbers that hunters submit. What they don't submit and what's (probably) being shot illegally is even more frightening. There was another landmark paper last year, from a team of ornithologists at the RSPB, on raptor persecution in the Peak District, and they presented really striking findings in terms of the patterns of persecution around grouse moors. <https://britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/BB-Raptor-persecution.pdf> To have those results in a scientifically credible format and published in BB was hugely satisfying.

BP – Digital vs Paper; what’s your view for BB over the next 5 years?

RR - Surprisingly, perhaps, I think paper will still be there in 10 years’ time, and probably 20 years too. For me personally I would take digital over paper, but the majority of our readers, even many of our younger readers, still want the journal in paper format. I think the pendulum has, in a sense, stopped swinging. If you’d asked me this 10 years ago, I would have said that by 2025 BB would be purely digital; but now I would say that that’s not going to happen. We do have plans for the digital version of *BB*. We are in the midst of revamping this, and when it’s launched it will come with a searchable archive of the entire editorial content: every issue, right back to 1907. Everyone who takes out digital as part of their subscription will have access to that entire BB Online digital back catalogue; and at that point it will be interesting to see where the proportion between paper and digital lies. But I still think that people will pay a little extra to have both digital and paper copies.

BP - Given the increasing awareness and focus on conservation, how to get the balance right within the journal?

RR – It is perhaps the hardest thing of all to get the balance right, in each of the 12 issues and over the year as a whole. What appears in *BB* is a mix of material submitted to us and items that we solicit (it’s roughly 50:50). So to some extent we try to engineer that content balance by chasing in areas where we feel we’re light, but there is only so much you can do. At our editorial meetings we often feel we’re light on identification material. If you go back to the 70s and 80s, *BB* was full of classic identification papers, but the truth is that most of the basics have been done. What remains is really cutting-edge stuff, which often involves DNA, analysis of vocalisation, birds in the hand... and often relates to cryptic differences between subspecies or particular plumages, which is often quite technical and will not appeal to all readers. We had a paper in the May issue, on the identification of Short-tailed Shearwater, which was put together by experts in that field; and that’s not going to be an article which the majority of readers will go straight to and read from start to finish. Short-tailed Shearwater in Britain is still a pipedream really. It’s only those observers on dedicated pelagic trips in the south-west approaches who stand any realistic chance of seeing this species in Britain, although we published the paper because it’s new and cutting-edge, and it advances our

knowledge of the subject. Conservation issues about persecution and threatened species are of widespread interest, and we perhaps include more of on those than we would have done 20-30 years ago. Getting that balance right is not straightforward and we don’t manage it in every issue, but we do our best.



BP – What about including articles which make political comments, how do you deal with those?

RR – Even with topics such as raptor persecution, where you might imagine that all our readers think in a broadly similar way, there is a proportion of readers who are not of the same view. It's a small proportion, but I do get feedback that we are too vocal in our opposition to hunting and grouse moors. Ultimately, I just feel that the majority of our readers are genuinely fed-up with the fact that our raptors are being killed to maintain driven grouse shooting – and they want to see that change. And an end to that illegal persecution. So I tend to encourage content that opens our eyes to what is happening on our grouse moors; and if we lose one or two pro-hunting subscribers then perhaps that's a price we have to accept. My view is that the greater good which wins out in that respect. One of the things BB has always done, however, is to try to present both sides of the debate. If the hunting lobby come up with good arguments, then we'll publish them.

BP – BB is owned by a Charitable Trust, which supports various projects. Can you share some examples?

RR – Most of the funding comes from money raised through BB's profits supplemented with donations from supporters. It's not a huge sum of money, but in the last 2-3 years it's been 10-15k per year. Bear in mind that when I started in 2001 BB was in the red by a six-figure sum, so it's taken us a while to pull things back to a point where we're generating some kind of surplus, but nowadays that goes to the Charitable Trust.

In recent years some of the projects we have supported which stand out are a company called "Hookpod" (<https://www.hookpod.com>) that make a device to prevent albatrosses and other seabirds from getting caught on longline fishing hooks. It's a really simple but ingenious device that I think can have a major effect on seabird conservation. Like HOS, we've also funded the BTO's Cuckoo tracking project, which has been a fabulous project that's gripped the nation's interest, and not just keen birdwatchers. When it comes to young people, one of the things we've done every year is to have some **Young Birder Grants** available for to help young people visit a bird observatory or buy some ringing equipment. Just to encourage young people is close to my heart, because when I worked on Fair Isle I'd see these kids coming through and it's very rewarding to see some of them go on to very successful and senior careers in research and conservation. Something which we've just funded this year is the Scottish Ornithologist Club who do a really great course for young birders, based on the Isle of May. Hopefully, from a selfish point of view, they'll come back and write an article for BB when they're well established in the birding world, but more generally encouraging the younger generation is just priceless.

BP – What else has BB done to encourage younger birders?

RR - One of the things we've started recently is a feature at the back of the journal called "My Patch". It's two pages, 1,000 words, plus 2 or 3 pictures to describe your patch and your birding highlights there. The first year we ran it just for young people as a way of encouraging youngsters to start writing for BB. I remember that when I started to subscribe to BB at 17 years of age, I tried once or twice to get something published in BB and never managed it. My aim is to break down those barriers (be they real or perceived). The feature is now open to all ages, but I still aim to get at least half the contributions from young people. We've had some really great contributions and readers have enjoyed it.

One of the ways that we've been able to engage with younger people is having a good mix of age and gender on our board. That has certainly helped me in terms of identifying the potential authors for the My patch series. Dawn Balmer has been brilliant in identifying young people and likewise two members of our Board - Lizzie Bruce, who is a warden at the RSPB's NW Norfolk reserves and Nina O'Hanlon, a seabird ecologist in the north of Scotland, who runs our social media side. BB now has a Twitter presence, which we didn't have 2-3 years ago, that's really largely down to Nina's efforts and that's a great way of communicating what we're doing in BB to a wider and younger audience.

BP - How do you see the future for BB?

RR - I think I'm unlikely to go much beyond 20 years, but I think BB is now in a good place. The journal has had peaks and troughs throughout its existence, as referred to earlier, but the fact that we now have a decent management structure is important. I think BB will continue to focus on the cornerstones of its publishing year, and those are the reports of the Rarities Committee (BBRC), the Scarce Migrants reports, the Rare Breeding Birds reports. Despite what I said earlier, about paper and digital, I think BB will still be here in 100 years. Will it be printed on paper in 100 years? I really don't know, I would be surprised, but I think BB could survive quite happily as an internet-based publication bringing good content to a wide readership. As an editor, you want your content to be read by as many people as possible, so for future generations, I think we may have to look at new models of publishing. Perhaps there would be a way to make a digital version free to subscribers, but there are still costs involved so funding would still need to be raised through advertising, grants or some other means. But fundamentally I am optimistic about BB seeing out its second century. I think it's strong at the moment and there's every reason to believe that there is a place for it in British ornithology and it'll continue to flourish.

Martin Pitt poses the question, “Is the Willow Tit the first climate change casualty in Hampshire?”

I am aware that we have already lost migrant species to the presumed influence of climate change. Red-backed Shrike is a good example of this albeit it was lost a generation ago. In addition, we have gained a few species. However, it appears that we are on the cusp of losing a resident species due to the warming of the county, and in a way we really don't understand.



Willow Tit, Barry Stalker

Willow Tit is an enigmatic species in the UK, and particularly so in Hampshire. We know the population has been in decline for a long time, but the range and population has never been accurately assessed but solely based on partial reviews and confirmation in their heart lands. I am not attempting to summarise the breeding surveys results - I will leave this to other previously published papers. What is indisputable is that has disappeared from large areas of its former range. I have spent many hundreds of hours walking the chalk downland around Basingstoke over 20 years and have taken part in surveys, a systemised my own recording.

The specific part of its latin binomial name i.e *montanus* gives a clue of the needs of the species. In most of its continental range it is found more northerly or at a higher elevation than its cousin the Marsh Tit. The British subspecies *kleinsmithii* was only recognised just over 100 years ago, and there is often confusion in distinguishing between the two species. In northern Hampshire on the chalk around Basingstoke it has been a bird of copses and mature woodland, found particularly where mature oak stands above hazel coppice.

When I first moved to the area 20 years ago, Willow Tits were already scarce birds. However, they were found relatively regularly right up to the edge of the town. Marsh Tits were also seen regularly in what appeared to be similar habitat. It is only following the observations over the intervening years can the hypothesis of what is going on be brought together as here.

First a recap on the problems of the species from a study subject perspective. It is a difficult bird to find, problematic to identify once found and now in such low densities almost impossible to find away from singing males on their territories. In addition, I used to find wandering birds in winter but whether these were displaced juveniles or wandering adults I could never be sure. Yet, in the last five years, I have only found a single bird away from known breeding woods. This means that nearly every record is from known breeding woods and the vast majority of known singing birds or where pairs have been found and follow up means finding family parties.

In spring, they breed early and are one of the earliest singing birds, often forming territories in February. They also appear to go quiet as soon as they are on eggs. The low density of singing males means that there are now few woods with multiple pairs. Therefore, low competition and with no need to protect their territory,

there is little encouragement for the males to sing for long. This means that they are difficult to find and often there one week and not the next – or so it appears.

From a review circa 15 years ago, it was found that territories could be found down to the 100m AOD contour. Below this Marsh Tits were relatively plentiful but above only seemed to be attractive to Willow Tits. By 2017 this breakpoint was found to be closer to c150m AOD. Since this time, I have regularly found Marsh Tits up to the 200m contour. To put it in perspective, the top of the downs is generally around 220m AOD. Therefore, although the push higher is only by 50m, this represents a land area reduction for potential territories of c 70%. In addition, as you go higher on the chalk the number and sizes of copses decrease. As mentioned by Chalmers¹, copse size is important to the species and therefore even if woodland exists most is unsuitable. In reality, in North Hampshire c90% of the suitable woodland has already been lost.

As is the case for an upland species, the move upward is driven by isotherms, the greater the warming the higher one needs to go. What drives this for Willow Tit and especially in direct competition with Marsh Tit is not understood, be it habitat, food or something else. However, observations indicate that in the transition zone, Willow Tits and Marsh Tits do coexist, but maybe only briefly. Certainly, below this zone only Marsh Tits breed.

Other impacts seen elsewhere may be a contributory factor but are also not clear. The increase in Great Spotted Woodpeckers may be a partial reason, as could direct competition with more generalist tits such as Great & Blue.

Regardless of the cause, the result is clear. Willow Tits are now found in a narrow elevational band, above 150m AOD limited by the peak elevation of the Downs. They are also increasing scarce in the zone of 150-175m AOD. What we are currently left with are a few islands of suitable habitat, and the reality that the suitable isotherm will continue to move upwards to higher elevations.

Willow Tits are also sedentary and with such populations other factors start to play out in such “island” populations. Lack of genetic variation impacts breeding success and robustness of the birds themselves. Sex ratios in progeny skews towards males. These are well described in scientific texts.²

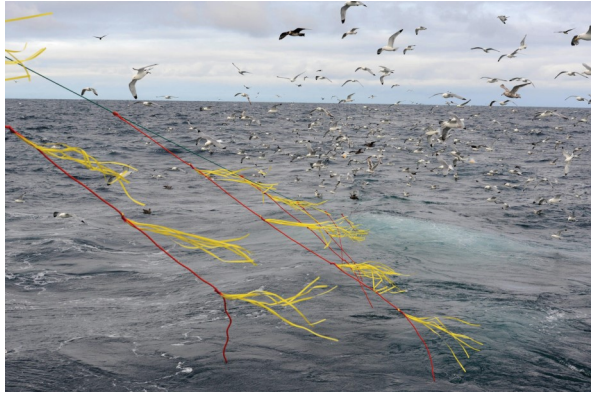
In 2017 and 2018, an apparent health in singing birds was seen, especially in two key woods. In addition, a partial leucistic male bird was found and has been resident since. In 2019, numbers of singing birds had fallen again. It is tempting to say that this confirms the islanding of the remaining population and suggests we are in the final throws of losing Willow Tit as a Hampshire bird.

References:

¹ **The Last Stronghold of the Willow Tit in Hampshire** – Chalmers: HBR 2016

² **Facing Extinction** – The world’s rarest birds and the race to save them: - Donald *et al.* Helm 2013

Thousands of seabirds are killed each year as a result of longline fishing. A unique British invention is now helping to prevent the extinction of Albatross and other species.



Seabirds are globally caught in longline fisheries (known as bycatching), as the birds dive to catch the bait as the lines and baited hooks are deployed, becoming hooked, dragged underwater and drowned. Fisheries bycatch is the single greatest threat facing many seabird populations and it is estimated that at least 160,000 (and potentially in excess of 320,000) seabirds are killed annually. Most frequently caught are albatrosses, estimated at 100,000, as well as petrels and shearwaters, and it is believed that deaths from bycatching is contributing to an increased risk of extinction to 15 of the 22 albatross species.

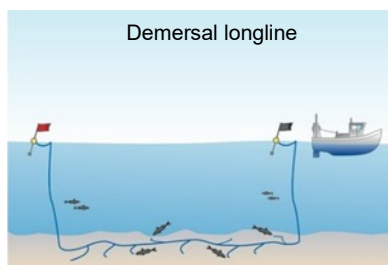
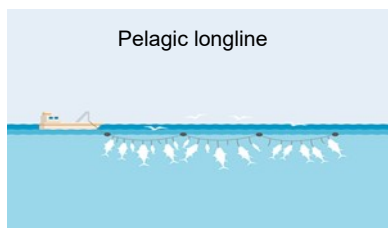
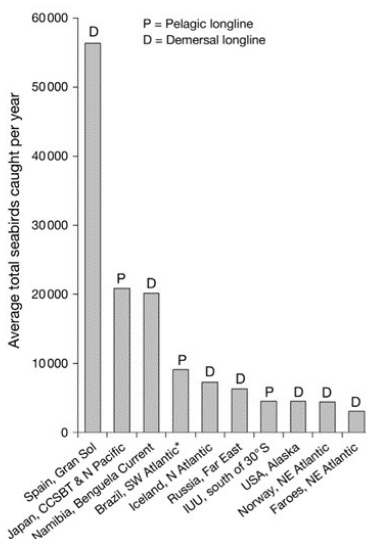
NUMBER OF SEABIRD SPECIES DOCUMENTED INTERACTING WITH DIFFERENT FISHING GEAR

Data from Pott & Wiedenfeld (2017) Biological Conservation 210: 192–204.



Seabirds are most vulnerable to mortality on longline hooks during the short period between hooks leaving the vessel and sinking beyond the diving range of foraging seabirds – up to 12m for Albatross, depending on species. Mitigation measures are designed to prevent contact between seabirds and hooks during this critical period. The period during which bait are available to birds is determined by the sink rate of the line, the diving ability of the bird species present and the use, or not, of seabird deterrents. Seabirds can also be hooked and potentially injured during line hauling.

Over recent years, mortality of albatross and petrels in trawl fisheries has been identified as a major threat. The causes of mortality in trawl fisheries are varied and depend on the nature of the fishery (pelagic or demersal) and the species targeted. However, it may be categorised into two broad types: cable-related mortality, including collisions with netsonde cables, warp cables and paravanes; and net-related mortality, which includes all deaths caused by net entanglement.



Researchers have been working on this problem for decades, notably the **Albatross Task Force** of *BirdLife International*, and some solutions do already exist. These include the use of lead weights to make hooks sink faster. Tori, or streamer, lines are used to deter birds diving in the danger areas and in many parts of the world, setting lines is only permitted at night when birds are less active. However, whilst these measures can show success in well observed and regulated fisheries, they are not popular with fishermen and consequently are not always used.

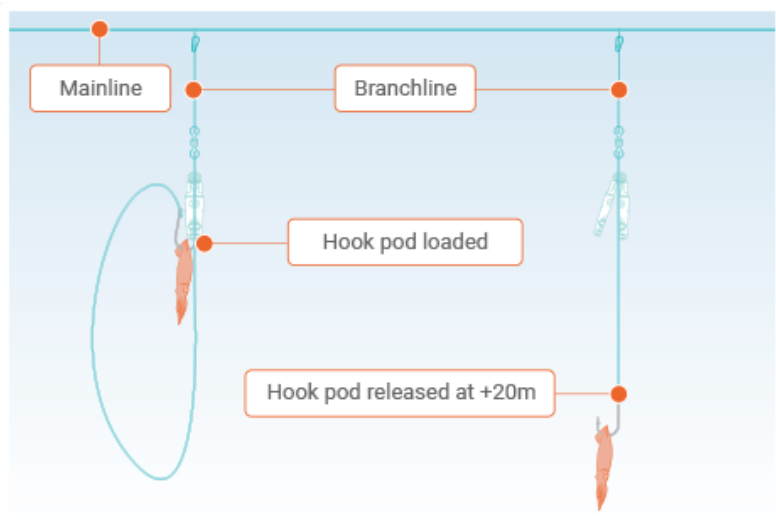
A British Invention



The Hookpod is an ingenious invention which virtually eliminates the seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries. It has been shown to reduce bycatch by over 95% in trials, without affecting catch rates of fish or affecting fishing operations.

Developed through collaboration between *BirdLife International*, private investors and Devon-based engineering brothers Pete and Ben Kibel, the Hookpod encapsulates the barb of the hook within a durable, reusable polycarbonate case, rendering it harmless to seabirds, safely taking hook and bait to a depth of around 20m, where the device springs open by means of a patented pressure release system, releasing the hook to begin fishing, safely beyond the depth that birds dive to forage. Consequently, surface feeding seabirds attracted by the bait can't get hooked!

Upon hauling, the re-usable pod is simply closed and stored along with the normal fishing gear, ready to be used again and again.



The Hookpod has been in development for over ten years. "It started off as a tiny device which simply enclosed the very tip of the hook, but that was too fiddly for fishermen to deal with" states Becky Ingham, company CEO and a marine scientist. "What we have now is the result of years of development, research and feedback from the fishing industry".

After a successful crowdfunding campaign in 2014, which raised over £113,000, the Hookpod was extensively trialled in Australian fisheries, and was proven beyond doubt that the device was operationally effective in eliminating seabird bycatch, while at the same time having no negative effects on the catch rate of their target fish species. Government-led commercial trials commenced in New Zealand in 2016, and at the beginning of 2017 further trials, co-sponsored by *BirdLife International* and the *RSPB*, were undertaken in Brazil. Later in 2017 long-term commercial use began in New Zealand with the full support from the Dept of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries. Hookpod and its designer Ben Kibel have received a number of awards, including the *BTO's* Marsh Award for Innovative Ornithology in 2017 and the Ocean Award for Innovation in 2018. Sir David Attenborough gave his support in 2018, when he endorsed a crowdfunding project to raise money for a further trial in Brazil.

"Every day hundreds of albatross die in longline fisheries. But there is a unique and exciting new solution to halt this. It's called Hookpod. Hookpods stop birds getting caught as they dive for baits... If every pelagic longline fishing fleet used Hookpods, I believe we can stop the accidental death of these magnificent ocean wanderers." **Sir David Attenborough**

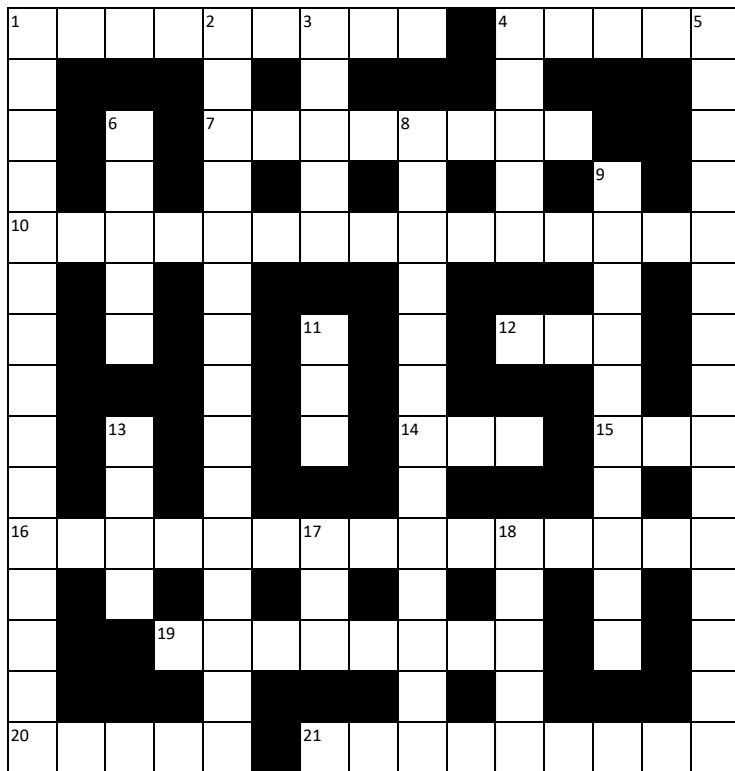


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- BirdWatchers Yearbook
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/fall-2014/articles/protecting-albatross-from-fishing-lines>

HOS Cryptic Crossword No.5 by Andy Johnson

Another crossword specifically designed for Hampshire birders. This crossword is a Pangram – where all 26 letters of the alphabet are found in the grid. It's worth keeping an eye out for Pangrams, especially if you find an early J, Q or Z, as it can be very helpful in finishing the crossword. As usual, most of the answers are birds, some are related to natural history, and a few fill the gaps.



Across

- 1 Bird can't catch, at least without early start (9)
- 4 Female, for example, of back garden animals (5)
- 7 A 'Ley-line' I would swap for a byway at Keyhaven (4,4)
- 10 US singer's final appearance was short, I admit; subsequent extreme silence about right (9,6)
- 12 Fabulous return for 1ac starting third (3)
- 14 Tackle regularly, parrot-fashion (3)
- 15 A range of letters oddly missing from Pangram (3)
- 16 Around Kos, HOS birdwatcher discovered spring migrants (8,7)
- 19 Mountaineer, losing first notebook, headed back round (8)
- 20 Scrub usually contains Bramble (5)
- 21 African birds mate migrates around day-break (4,5)

Down

- 1 Sea-watcher sorry to get this one wrong... (5,10)
- 2 ... ok, use 'Arctic Loon' to reclassify these birds (8,7)
- 3 Ethiopian town's street map confused Zoe (5)
- 4 6, perhaps, left out of singing family (5)
- 5 Sun's energy's holding out with technology provider; UK back as hijackers (5,5,5)
- 6 Draw-back of game having little significance (5)
- 8 Using latest book for id, Steller's Eiders mistaken for Mediterranean bird (6,7)
- 9 Bird enthusiast gets reduced bananas (10)
- 11 & 13 Sounds like fitness club hoodie, perhaps, is subject of racial discrimination (3,4)
- 17 Six-footer finishing third for 1ac (3)
- 18 Last Slender-billed Curlew discovered; surprisingly, was first in the roost! (5)

Solution to HOS Crossword no. 4

	L		B	R	E	N	T		L	E	D	U	M	
	A		A				A	N	I				A	
S	P	A	R	R	O	W	S		T		S	O	N	G
	L		N				E		T				X	
M	A	R	S	H	W	A	R	B	L	E	R		S	
	N		W		O				E				H	
A	D	R	A	N	O		O		G	A	N	N	E	T
	B		L		D		W		R		I		A	
C	U	R	L	E	W		L		E	G	G	A	R	S
	N		O		A				B		H		W	
	T		W		R	I	N	G	E	D	T	E	A	L
	I				B		I				H		T	
I	N		I		L		G	A	R	G	A	N	E	Y
	G		N		E	T	H				W		R	
	S	A	K	E	R		T	E	R	E	K		S	



Desert Island Books

In this edition Mike Chalmers, a member of HOS Management Committee and also the Editor of the Hampshire Bird Report, shares his list of books he would take with him if marooned on a desert island.

Islands Beyond the Horizon. Roger Lovegrove. (Oxford University Press, 2012)

Remote unspoilt places have always fascinated me, especially islands, and this book describes life on twenty of the world's most remote places. It is written by the former RSPB Director for Wales with his keen eye for birds and other wildlife, as well as the human stories. As a new castaway, it will also help me feel less alone by reading of others who have struggled to survive in such demanding places.

Mai Po: The Seasons: A Photographic Essay. David Diskin. (Accipiter Press, 2014)

I lived in Hong Kong for over 30 years and for much of that time was closely involved in the development and management of Mai Po Marshes. This wonderfully evocative collection of photographs of the marshes and their birds will bring back many memories of happy days there and remind me of what has been achieved.

HBW and Birdlife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World. Josep del Hoyo & Nigel Collar. (Lynx Ediciones, 2014-Vol.1 & 2016-Vol.2)

I will need a comprehensive bird book to identify the birds I find on my desert island, possibly including endemics only found there. This very scholarly two-volume work will be ideal as it contains every species in the world (according to Nigel Collar) with illustrations and distribution maps derived from its multi-volume HBW parent. The introductory chapters on speciation and taxonomy will also teach me much and help keep my grey cells alive.

Far from Land. Michael Brooke. (Princeton University Press, 2018)

All my life I have been fascinated by seabirds and this new book by a leading seabird scientist, written with passion and humour, is a superbly readable summary of how advances in tracking technology have revolutionised our knowledge and helped address fundamental questions on how seabirds have adapted and survive in their challenging marine environments.

Antarctic Oasis. Tim & Pauline Carr. (W.W.Norton & Co., 1998)

The sub-title for this book by its intrepid sailor authors is "Under the Spell of South Georgia" and that aptly describes why I have included it. This forbiddingly beautiful and remote island in the Southern Ocean with its teeming wildlife and fascinating human history certainly cast its spell on me when I bought this book and met the authors in Grytviken in the year of its publication.

The Snow Geese. William Fiennes. (Picador, 2002)

Inspired by the classic by Paul Gallico, this charming and thoughtful little book describes the quest by the author to follow Snow Geese on their northward migration from Texas to Baffin Island. It mixes the marvels of migration with stories of the people he met on his journey, nostalgia for his parents' home in Wales and a strong sense of home-coming. Just right for a lonely castaway!



Nightjar, New Forest, Martin Bennett

Please continue to send your articles and observations, by email or letters, however short or lengthy to: photos@hos.org.uk

All pictures could subsequently be sent to the Hampshire Bird Report and for future HOS publications. We welcome and enjoy all of your pictures and articles, even those we might not use immediately.

If possible, right click then 'rename' the jpeg file giving the species, where and when and do not forget to include your name.

DO NOT FORGET OUR FORUM – 'hoslist' – and our sightings programme – 'goingbirding'. See www.hos.org.uk for easy access to these.

**DEADLINE FOR THE WINTER KINGFISHER
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