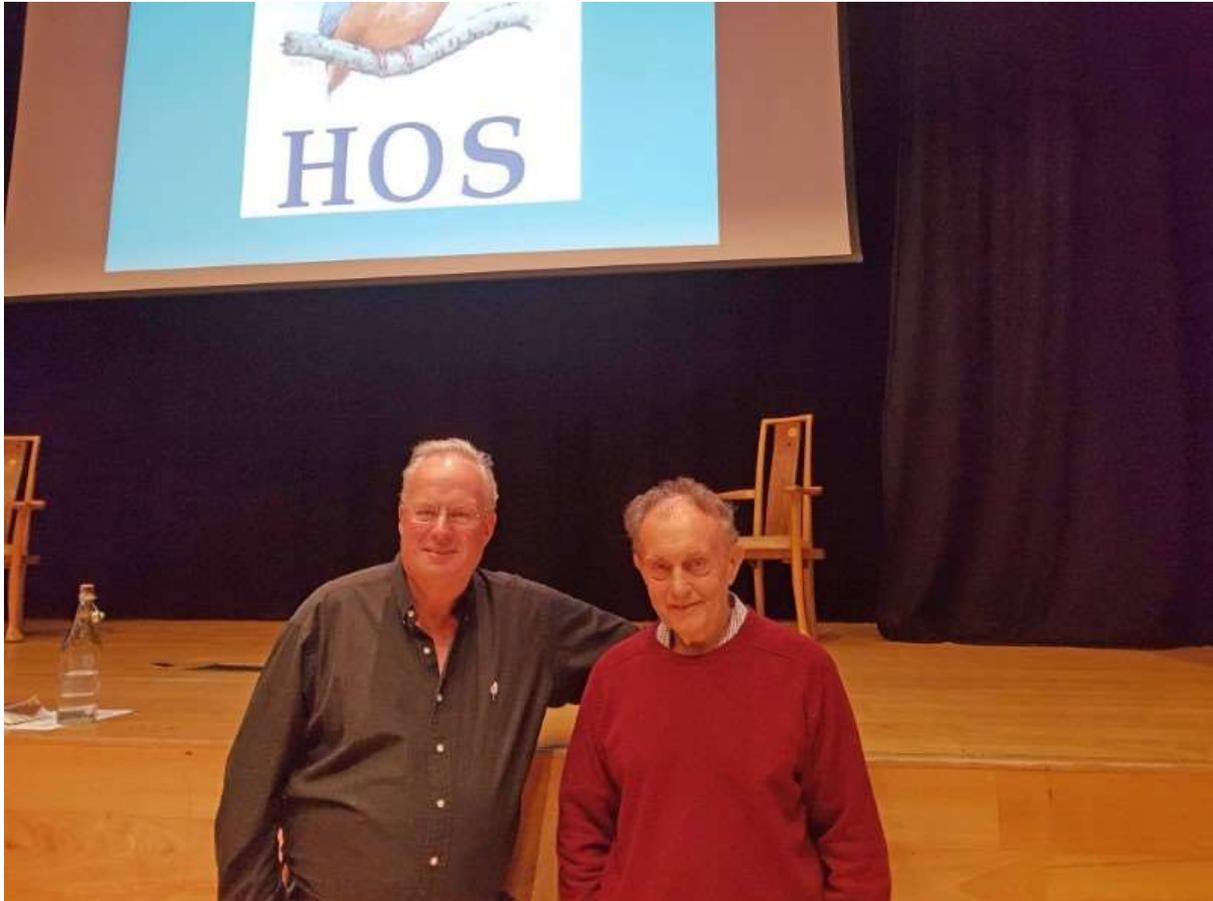


## HOS Members' Day - A report by Ian Julian

IAN NEWTON



*Ian Newton and Keith Betton*

Rather than write a bio of Ian Newton, I nicked Keith's introduction, which says it all - -

Born and raised in north Derbyshire, Ian graduated from the Universities of Bristol and then Oxford receiving Doctorates in Philosophy and Science.

As a teenager he became particularly fascinated by finches, but also raptors and he completed a 27-year study of the Sparrowhawk.

He became the Senior Ornithologist at the Natural Environment Research Council. He was also Head of Avian Biology at the Monks Wood Research Station.

Ian has held many positions – these have included Chairman of The Peregrine Fund, Chairman of the RSPB, Chairman of the BTO, President of the British Ornithologists' Union and President of the British Ecological Society.

He is also visiting Professor of Ornithology at the University of Oxford.

The amount of work he has undertaken is immense.

He has written ten major books, and author/co-authored hundreds of scientific papers.

In 2007 he wrote the highly authoritative book *The Migration Ecology of Birds* – the authoritative work on bird migration. In 2010 he created a New Naturalist book on the subject – *Bird Migration* which has become a best seller.

## HOS MEMBERS' DAY – WITH NO MENTION OF BREXIT - 7th April 2019

Who are your heroes? Pop stars, war leaders, writers, prophets, philanthropists, perhaps a leaver or remainer (oops)? Mine are a pretty predictable bunch – Brunel, Shakespeare, Bar-tailed Godwit, Shackleton, – usual suspects.

Once again to St Swithun's School for HOS AGM and Members' day, a perfect venue, easy to find, get to, park, super venue and hall. As usual, everything ultra-professional, terrific speakers, loads of exhibits, permanent queue at Rosemary and Dan's artwork stall, all went smoothly, no coffeegate this year, the catering was excellent.

Afterwards, several of us went to Cheesefoot Head to see the 2 Dotterels that had just arrived, obliging in the evening light. On their travels, and were going to move on, but nothing to do with Brexit (oops).



*Some of the attendees*

Keith Betton ran the day, skipping through the AGM in a matter of minutes, introducing the speakers, keeping things moving. Well done to HOS for getting 20 youngsters to join and another 164 members! This day is always a well-oiled, professionally run, and an example to other societies how to rush through an AGM and have an enjoyable day of talks, meeting-up old friends and adversaries, but -

Enough compliments, it is far easier to write about things going wrong, as a writer I would much prefer a serious roof collapse or hostage situation, and let me voice one suggestion, which I am certain will have little support.

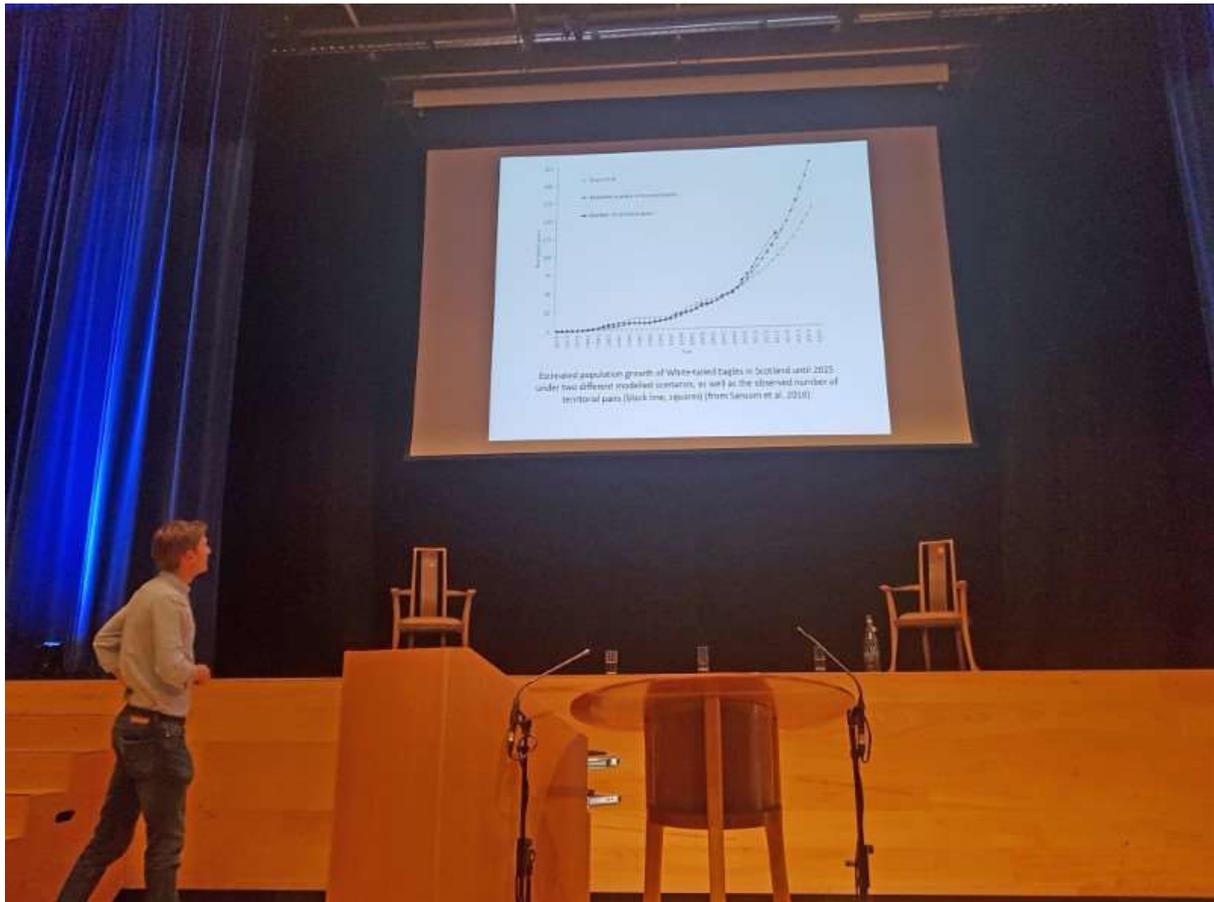
The talks were of the standard we have come to expect, the best speakers on birds, but perhaps we could have some lighter moments, maybe read out the lottery winners or something. We are trying to encourage younger people. Maybe give a few of them 5 minutes on a subject dear to them. No way suggesting dumbing-down, there is a difference. Just saying. Of course, Chris Packham does this naturally, imparts knowledge and conservation in a manner where you little realise there is deep science or conservation being taught - but then he is better at this than anyone.



*Jenny Gill*

Jenny Gill talked us through the Black-tailed Godwits, well known to Hants, but quite obviously her passion and favourite bird. When we delve into their lives, it seems that like every species in the animal kingdom, it is quite extraordinary; they should all be treasured.

Tim Mackrill was similarly devoted to his Ospreys and their continuing success story; and White-tailed Eagles, where it does seem as if the reintroduction will go ahead on the Isle of Wight, although as he pointed out, it is going to be a slow process.



*Tim Mackrill*

Chris Packham, John Eyre, Keith Betton describe Ian Newton as being Britain's top ornithologist, so we accept he is, but taking his knowledge as a given, the most striking thing is after a lifetime of studying ornithology, his enthusiasm judging by his talk, has if anything, increased. New technology is showing that our avian friends are even more mind-boggling than we thought, and none more so than the Bar-tailed Godwit.

We can just about accept the wonders of the Swift, not landing for 3 or 4 years after fledging, because they look, and are, aerodynamic perfections, whereas a Godwit is designed for - wading. Yet somehow, and no one knows how, they migrate 11,000 kilometres, non-stop, day and night for over 8 days, having to flap continuously.

They return from New Zealand to the Alaskan Arctic, via China, allowing one more stopover making a total of 29,000 kms with just 2 stops, having to fly the entire way. The more we learn the less we know, the more questions arise. Do they sleep with half of their brain? It is a large part of why many of us love the natural world. They, and all birds, are wonders.

Keith announced a warm tribute to Ted Barnes, who has been made an Honorary Member for organising about - - - 500 walks! To organise one walk is difficult, no margin for a single mistake, and you have to be pro-active. More about this and Ted in the next issue of Kingfisher. It will be warts and all. That will give him some sleepless nights.

We can only thank all the unpaid volunteers for another great day, another huge crowd. If it looks easy, you can be pretty sure it isn't, it is hard painstaking work getting everything right, and not bad for free.



*Ted Barnes*

Report by Ian Julian