

KINGFISHER

Hampshire Ornithological Society Magazine

The magazine for Hampshire birders

Spring 2025 Issue 182



**Spot the
Difference:
Martins**

**Hampshire
Butterflies**

HOS Contacts



Hampshire Ornithological Society
Registered Charity 1042309

President: Chris Packham

Chair: Keith Betton

Honorary Sec: Dave Palmer

County Recorder: Martin Pitt

Website: www.hos.org.uk

@HOSbirding

Hampshire Ornithological Society

Membership forms

www.hos.org.uk/membership-form

Membership Sec: Kay Shillitoe

kay.shillitoe@gmail.com

Westerly, Hundred Acres Road
Wickham

PO17 6HY

01329 833086

HOS Sales: Nicola Whitmarsh

hos.nwhitmarsh@yahoo.com

HOS Walks: Di Warner

warner838@btinternet.com

Kingfisher Editor: Peter Little

hoskingfisher@outlook.com

Picture Editor: Claire Melville

Design: Rob Farnworth



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Stone Curlew by Steve Laycock

Centre spread

Green Woodpecker by Rob Porter

Back cover

Great Crested Grebe by Chris Rose

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer issue of Kingfisher magazine.



Male Common Redstart by Steve Payce

This issue is produced under a dual editorship as Carol Rawlings is stepping down to take on new challenges in life and as I, Pete Little, attempt to step into her esteemed position. I will be more than ably assisted by Rob Farnworth who will complete the layout and the liaison of the production of Kingfisher.

Carol has been a great editor and contributor in many ways for HOS and the Kingfisher with so many other tasks alongside those roles. She has overseen the introduction of the digital version of Kingfisher now read by the majority of HOS members and built up fantastic relationships with article contributors, photographers, printers and HOS as a whole.

I am sure, you like I, wish her all the very best in her new challenge and hope our paths cross on many occasions.

For those of you who have enjoyed Kingfisher over the last three to four years you are not going to see many changes with my editorship. Why break something that works! I will be looking to

add some new ideas including technical reviews of scopes, binoculars, cameras, lenses, new computer technologies etc on an ad hoc basis. To kick this off you will find a review of the Swarovski ATC 17-40x56 Telescope by Keith Betton on page 9. Also in this issue we have articles on the saving of the land at Tipner West from housing development. Plus the repair of the sluice at Farlington Marsh and further articles by two very talented young HOS members and coverage of a reserve worth visiting plus the usual high-level photography received from our members.



Female Common Redstart by Steve Payce

We are keen to feature articles from our members so please do send me your ideas. And your photographs, and your art! Just send them to:
hoskingfisher@outlook.com

Enjoy this issue and enjoy your summer birding.

Peter

Victory for Wildlife

The Government has rejected Portsmouth City Council's plans for a housing and industrial development at Tipner West which would have destroyed important wader habitat had it gone ahead.

The land, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar Site, would have been concreted over, setting a dangerous precedent for planning applications throughout the rest of the country.



Brent Goose by Rob Porter

A massive campaign, led by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, supported by HOS, harnessed local opposition to the plans. Now the Government has upheld important legal environment protections and has insisted that the Council protects these internationally important habitats for future generations by suggesting that future plans include the creation of a nature reserve at the south of the site. This is a hugely positive step in safeguarding habitats that provide vital feeding and roosting grounds for



threatened waders. The area supports 30% of the UK's over-wintering population of Dark-Bellied Brent geese, as well as Dunlin and Black-tailed Godwits and many other wintering waders.

Debbie Tann, Chief Executive of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust said: "After years of fighting various development proposals that would have seen vital habitats for coastal birds lost under concrete, we are delighted that the Secretary of State has agreed with the Trust, RSPB and many local campaigners including HOS members, that any development here must not destroy or negatively impact upon these habitats. Instead, we now hope that a much smaller scale, nature-positive development can be discussed - one that puts nature at its heart and showcases a win-win for the local economy and for wildlife."

HOS Chair Keith Betton said: "This is a massive victory for wildlife and HOS is proud to have played its part in the fight to stop these proposals. Partnership working with organisations like the Wildlife Trust and RSPB is a way that HOS can continue to influence the planning agenda and mobilise our members to resist plans that damage habitats and are a real threat to nature."

Members' Day 2025

Well, just when you think things can't possibly get any better, HOS goes and proves you wrong again!

After an incredibly successful Members' Day in 2024 there was a sense that the bar is now so high that improving the day going forward was going to be difficult.



Chris Packham with HOS Young Members by Ian Julian

But, if member feedback is any indication, we certainly managed to deliver a day that members enjoyed.

From Sea Eagles to butterflies, from Army intervention on Portsmouth Harbour islands to Roseate Terns and a young member's year in pictures, we were treated to interesting and informative speakers - and some funny

moments too. And there was a surprise for HOS Chair Keith Betton when he was awarded the Capercaillie Long Service Award from the RSPB to celebrate 50 years of volunteering for the Society. Congratulations Keith!

We did the business of the AGM, raised over £965 in the auction, around £1,300 in the raffle, £773 on the HOS stall and £442 on the door.

The exhibition was busy, our young members were very much in evidence and Chris Packham was inspiring.

And we also had at least 430 people in attendance on the day, and possibly as many as 450 given that exhibitors didn't sign in - a new record!

Continued on page 6



Keith receiving his Long Service Award by Ian Julian

We know from the feedback forms that the response to the day was overwhelmingly positive, but not everything was perfect. The room was cold, which was due to a boiler malfunction we weren't told about, so apologies for that.

Refreshments on site again caused a few issues and we know we need to do better – we have started to have conversations with the school about providing sandwiches as well as tea and coffee for next year so watch this space!

As ever we have taken all the feedback on board, negative as well as positive and will address those issues before we meet again in 2026.

And if you missed this year's event, or just want to relive your favourite bits, you can find the recording of the day on the HOS website at hos.org.uk
Hope to see even more of you at Members' Day next year which will be on Saturday 28 March.



The Cameron Bepolka Trust was set up in memory of Cameron. He loved nature. We create and sponsor outdoor events for young people from every background to help them discover that same passion for all things wild and natural.

Cameron's Cottage in the New Forest has recently opened. It is our joint venture with the RSPB, providing a residential base from which young people can explore and connect with nature.

Please get in touch if you are an organisation that creates opportunities for groups of young people; we may be able to help with funding and provide access to Cameron's Cottage.

Visit our website to see the range of activities we engage in and the organisations we cooperate with to deliver our aims.

www.cameronbepolka.com info@cameronbepolka.com

Winner!

HOS young member Frederick Browning has won first prize in the junior category of this year's Bird Aware Solent photo competition.

Bird Aware Solent chose Frederick's picture of Sanderlings as the winner after looking at around 300 entries for this category.



Sanderlings by Frederick Browning

Bird Aware Solent said: "The ranger team loved the painterly quality you captured of these lovely birds patiently waiting to feed. Your photo of Turnstones also reached the finals and scooped a

commendation from the judges – many congratulations for doing so well with both photos!"

As well as winning £75 worth of vouchers, Frederick also won a guided birdwatching walk for up to 15 people from one of Bird Aware Solent's expert and friendly ranger team. Frederick's winning picture will also feature in a mini exhibition of the category winning



Turnstones by Frederick Browning

photographs which will be organised later in the year.

Here at Kingfisher we think both pictures are fabulous. Well done Frederick.

Kingfisher issue 183

The next issue of Kingfisher will be out in October 2025.

If you have an idea for an article please contact us at hoskingfisher@outlook.com well before the deadline.

The deadline for finished articles is Monday 1 September 2025.

Articles should be sent as Word documents and pictures should be sent as separate jpeg attachments in the highest resolution possible.

Photographers and artists, please send submissions to hoskingfisher@outlook.com

If you are submitting photos for the website, please send them to photos@hos.org.uk

Money well spent

Grants from HOS are being used to help birds and wildlife across Hampshire. Here we tell you a little more about what the Society is doing with your money.



Lapwing by Chris Rose

Solar Pump to help breeding Lapwing
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust asked for help to protect breeding Lapwing at Blashford Lakes where they now have an area fenced in by an electric fence for breeding.

Usually there are around three pairs of Lapwing breeding on the reserve, but the numbers are up this year to between six and eight pairs, more than expected. There is potentially breeding Little Ringed Plover in that area too.

The Trust has provided pools within the fenced off area where the young will drink and forage away from the shoreline, however these have all dried up after the very dry spring. As things stand, when the eggs hatch, the young are going to be led by the parents down to the shoreline of the main lake to forage, outside the fenced area, where they will be open to predation.

The Trust asked HOS for a grant of £1,000 to fund a solar powered pump to restore these pools which we were happy to provide, especially as this could become an annual issue. Fingers crossed we have good Lapwing breeding success at Blashford this year.



Swift & House Martin tower being installed by Chris Fairchild

Swift and House Martin Tower update
Still at Blashford Lakes, you will have seen in the last issue of Kingfisher that HOS gave £4,100 to the Wildlife Trust to buy and install a Swift and House Martin Tower. Well the tower is up and the new signage and interpretation recognises the support of HOS. So, here's wishing the Swifts and House Martins every success in their new home.

Kit Review Swarovski ATC 17-40x56 Telescope

by Keith Betton

I love my Swarovski ATX 95, with its magnification up to 70x. However, combine that optical brilliance with a sturdy tripod and you have 4kg of kit to carry. I'm OK with that for an hour but not on a longer walk. So, the arrival, in late 2022, of Swarovski's new ATC 17-40x56 excited me. I liked the idea of the lightweight design, but couldn't believe the optical quality would impress me. How wrong I was! I love my new scope!

The ATC is short for Angled Telescope Compact. There is also a straight version – the ATS alternative.



This new scope is one complete unit, with the same eyepiece as my large telescope, but with an almost disproportionately small body. The objective lens has been fixed at 56 mm, which matches their largest binocular allowing magnification between 17x and 40x. Importantly it weighs less than 1kg.

There are no plans to sell a slip on case for such a small telescope, but it can easily go into a bag or even a deep jacket pocket. The ATC mounts to a tripod via a threaded connection port with a plate with stabilizer pins for a secure, rock-solid attachment.

The closest focus is 3.4 m, and at that range the clarity is breathtaking. As you zoom up the image the clarity remains sharp. Being used to pin-sharp images from my big scope (at twice the price) I did notice

the difference once you reach 40x. The ATC will work with mobile phone adapters if that's what you like to do.

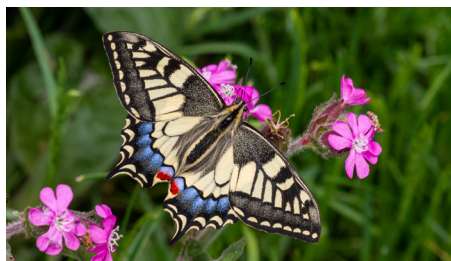
I still have my large ATX 95 but the small ATC goes with me on longer walks and when I am on my bike. I love them both.

Price: around £2,000 (check for deals)
Magnification: 17-40x
Size: 258 x 65 x 142 mm
Weight: 980g
Guarantee: 10 years

Hampshire Riches

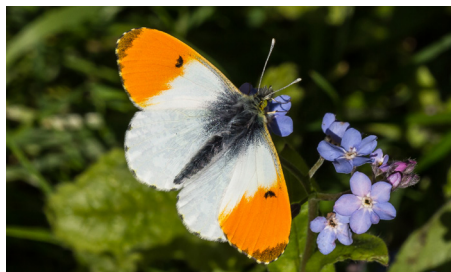
By Peter Eeles, author and creator of the UK Butterflies website

Of the 59 species of butterfly that are considered resident or a regular migrant, Hampshire is blessed in being home to 44 of them, making it one of the richest counties in Britain. They are also a diverse set, with representatives of five of the six butterfly families found worldwide present, and all six if you include the continental Swallowtail that is a rare migrant from



Continental Swallowtail

mainland Europe. This richness comes about thanks to both the climate and diversity of habitat. Some of our species are widespread and can turn up just about anywhere, including gardens, such as the Large and Small Whites, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Brimstone, Green-veined White and Orange-tip. Most

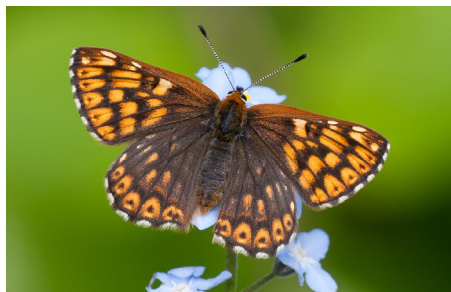


Orange-tip (male)



Adonis Blue (male)

species, however, are 'habitat specialists', especially our rarer butterflies. For example, the Adonis and Chalk Hill Blue butterflies are found on chalk grassland where the foodplant of their caterpillar, Horseshoe Vetch, grows. These species can be found, for example, along the Bokerley Dyke at Martin Down, at Stockbridge Down and Magdalen Hill Down, on the outskirts of Winchester. Martin Down and Magdalen Hill Down also play host to one of our rarest species, the Marsh Fritillary, whose caterpillars feed on scabious species, such as Small Scabious and, especially, Devil's-bit Scabious.



Duke of Burgundy

The diminutive Duke of Burgundy is a lovely little butterfly whose caterpillars feed on species of Primula, namely Cowslip at grassland sites and Primrose in woodland clearings. Good sites to see this species include Noar Hill and Butser Hill, with a small population also found at Stockbridge Down.

Heathland is also an important habitat that is used by the Grayling butterfly, where its caterpillars feed on Bristle Bent, and I have fond memories of coming across this species in some numbers in the New Forest near Godshill.



Silver-studded Blue (mating pair, male on left)

The Silver-studded Blue is another heathland species and I'm lucky to live near a colony found at Silchester Common in the north of the county. Silchester Common abuts one of my favourite woodland sites – namely



Grayling

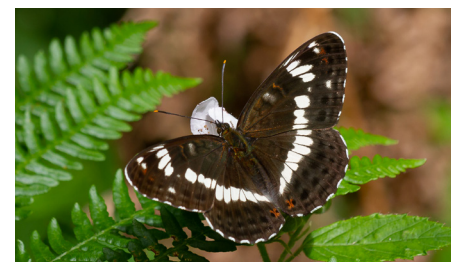
Pamber Forest. Along with other significant deciduous woodland sites, such as Alice Holt Forest and the various inclosures within the New Forest, you may be lucky enough to come across woodland specialists such as the Silver-washed Fritillary, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral and Purple Emperor.



Silver-washed Fritillary



Purple Hairstreak (female)



White Admiral



Purple Emperor (male)

If you would like to know more about Hampshire's best butterfly sites and the species found there, then I highly recommend 'Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Butterfly Walks' available through the NHBS website.

News from the Ladybirders

Our HOS Ladybirders group continues to grow in membership and activity. Members post daily on the What's App group – everything from help with bird identification to what is being seen where. And there are always offers of company for anyone going birding.

It's a very friendly group and it was wonderful to see so many Ladybirders visiting our stand at HOS Members' Day where they were able to admire our new banner. This is certainly eye catching and will help raise our profile at future HOS events.



If you are a woman member of HOS and interested in joining the Ladybirders group please get in touch at jaysongrove@yahoo.co.uk.

For those already in the group please do consider hosting a walk in your local area. You don't need to be an experienced walk leader, just happy to show people where you bird and what you see. It's a brilliant way for people to discover new places - and enjoy friendly company and local knowledge while they do it.

Janice Beck



Ladybirders enjoying a Nightjar Walk

Hampshire House Martins



House Martin by Andy Tew

House Martins were put on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern in 2021 after records showed a 72% decline in the UK population over the last 50 years. We think the population in Hampshire has also shrunk dramatically but more data is needed to determine if this is the case.

What's the problem?

When they return from Africa each spring House Martins face significant challenges. A lack of insects makes it difficult for them to find sufficient food, especially where ponds and other insect-rich habitats have become degraded. Sometimes it is difficult for them to find soft mud from which to build their nests. Nests also stick less easily to modern plastic soffits and may fall off, killing eggs and young and wasting weeks of time and nest-building effort.

What can we all do to help?

HOS has started a project to find out

where House Martins are breeding in Hampshire and we need your help. Please enter your 2025 sightings of House Martin nests on this website: <https://hampshirehousemartins.org.uk/>. It's really quick and easy to do.

Please also spread the word beyond the HOS membership, including via your friends, neighbours and work colleagues. We want as many

people as possible to get involved.

To keep it simple, the website asks for only very basic information. We would therefore like to send HOS volunteers to follow up on records submitted through the website to collect a little more information on individual nests, breeding success and surrounding habitats. If you would like to be part of this follow-up team, please let us know.

Future plans

Next year we hope to offer artificial nest cups to extend existing colonies. This would save House Martins valuable time, make the nests more robust and hopefully boost breeding success. We may also run a more structured survey, so that we can compare the current House Martin breeding population with the national survey carried out in 2015.

Nigel Matthews and Helen Schneider
admin@hampshirehousemartins.org.uk

Farlington Marshes

Water levels at the Farlington Marshes Nature Reserve are back under control



allowing the salinity levels to return to normal and eventually for the reedbeds to return. The cause of the flooding was a failure of the sluice gates that discharge the flow of fresh water into Langstone Harbour. This arrangement failed early in 2024, and the sluice gates jammed open allowing seawater into the marsh so flooding the lagoons and reed beds. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) manages the site on behalf of Portsmouth City Council, but the Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for the maintenance of the sea wall and water level control systems. Despite active lobbying from HIWWT and HOS, EA could not justify repair works and the job was placed in a queue awaiting additional funding.

Fortunately, a HOS member wrote a letter directly to Natural England (NE) explaining the serious impacts of the flooded marshes on the protected habitats and bird species that over winter and breed on the site. This letter was sufficient for NE to

place an emergency designation on the work so releasing additional funding to EA. Access to the sluice gates for the heavy lift equipment was difficult but work started in November 2024 and the contractor completed a partial repair sufficient to control the water levels. A new gate is being manufactured in the Netherlands and will be fitted later this year, but the water level control has been re-established.

Our thanks go to all those in HIWWT, Portsmouth Council, NE and the HOS members that worked together to achieve this success.

George Baker
HOS Conservation Liaison Officer

HOS Young Members



Chris Packham with HOS Young Members by Ian Julian

Once again we have been able to keep HOS Young Members busy with events and as always I send out our grateful thanks to those who volunteer to help us. Tom Parsons, Ian Packer and Jon Cranfield have all given up their time to lead bird walks at Wherwell and Harewood Forest, Keyhaven and a reptile walk.

Our Young Members get so much from these events, not just the help in identification of different species of birds but the opportunity to share this experience with other young people.

On our reptile walk, Jon Cranfield was able to show us how the building of a new housing estate adversely impacted the herpetofauna of an area that used to have an abundance of species.

HOS AGM and Members Day was an exciting event for everyone. Chris Packham once again gave a generous amount of time to the young members, showing 25 of them his feather collection that he had started in the 1970's. As always, Chris was more than happy to accommodate photo opportunities. We are so fortunate to have Chris as such a hands on President. Like all of us he is busy, but I have never known him to say no when we have requested some of his time. Thank you Chris.

Two of our Young Members took to the stage this year, not as young members, but as part of the HOS membership. Amy Squire gave a great account of the work that went into protecting the Roseate Terns that successfully nested at Normandy in 2024. Felix Walker-Nix gave



Young HOS Members ring-banding

a photographic slide show of his year through a lens - enviable photographs. Well done to you both.

Not everyone will be aware that we have an Annual Careers online chat

for our young members who are of an age where they are taking steps towards choosing options for college and their future career. This year our guest speakers were David Lock, Dawn Balmer, Nick Tomalin and Samuel Levy. 13 of our young members signed up for this event and I know at least one of them ended up with a work experience opportunity at a Wildlife rescue service. This is just another example of how generous people are with their time - thank you.

What is ahead? One of our most popular events for YM is bird ringing, always subject to environmental factors but for the first time we are able to offer Goshawk chick ringing experience, photographic tuition, Dragonflies, more walks - and one that I am rather looking forward to myself - live small mammal trapping.

Janice Beck



Juvenile female Goshawk by Richard Jacobs

My favourite summer visitor Stone-curlew

by Keith Betton

but a more rapid decline followed with numbers hitting an all-time low of fewer than 170 pairs in the 1980s. The RSPB has worked with farmers to get the numbers up again. We now have over 350 pairs.



Stone Curlew by Steve Laycock

Once nicknamed the “goggle-eyed plover” or “wailing heath-chicken”, Stone-curlews are by far my favourite summer migrants. They are only away from Hampshire for about 15 weeks, and most head to Spain and North Africa.

March is an exciting month, as I await their return to the farms that I visit on the North Hampshire Downs. The farmers I work with love them just as much as I do. They wear it as a badge of honour that they have a pair nesting, and those that have two pairs are extremely proud.

The Stone-curlew was once widespread from Dorset to Yorkshire. The population of around 1,000–2,000 pairs in the 1930s was already much reduced from that which had existed in the 19th century,

Between April and July, I and my fellow volunteers help the RSPB by locating nests and alerting the farmers to the birds' presence so that farming operations are carried out with extra care. We move the chicks temporarily if tractors need to be nearby, and without doubt we save lives every year.

Proof that this was all worth it came when the Government downgraded the Stone-curlew from Red to Amber in the list of Birds of Conservation Concern. It's an amazing feeling to know that I and my colleagues are helping to save a species that would be crushed under the wheels of tractors if we were not involved.

That's why they are my favourite summer migrant.

Listening for Lesser Spots

By Ken and Linda Smith

This year HOS has funded a highly innovative project with the BTO to develop their Acoustic Pipeline to support Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Hawfinches. This follows successful trials in 2024 in which Linda and I showed that PAM was very effective in detecting Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in known territories in the New Forest.

Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) is well suited to the problems posed by surveys of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Hawfinches: automatic recording units can be deployed for long periods to listen for rare vocalisations, enabling a small number of surveyors to effectively cover more ground to get a better picture of the true status of this enigmatic species.

This is very much work in progress but so far Simon Gillings of the BTO has developed an automated system on the BTO Acoustic Pipeline for detecting Lesser Spotted Woodpecker drums and calls amongst the cacophony of other woodland bird sounds. This can be made available on the BTO Acoustic Pipeline.

Meanwhile HOS has purchased three recording units (Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter Mini 2's) and we have been coordinating members to deploy them at potential LSW sites away from the New Forest. These recorders have proved



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker by Chris Rose

to be incredibly successful. From mid February to the end of April (the main LSW drumming and calling period) they have been deployed at 26 Hampshire sites away from the Forest with LSWs detected at 13 (50%) of them. Of the 26 sites only four had a recent history of LSW records so the automatic recorders have found LSWs at sites where they had not been recorded for some time.

We are sure LSWs have genuinely declined over most of Hampshire but this evidence suggests they are far more common than the records suggest. It will take a while to digest what this all means but it is clear that PAM will be important in future LSW surveys in Hampshire and elsewhere. The work with LSW has been so successful that it has dominated the project so far. The next stage for the BTO is to develop the acoustic tools for Hawfinches. We can then set about finding Hawfinches away from their known stronghold in the New Forest.

This project has only been possible with the help of HOS members to deploy the recorders. We thank them all. If you would like to be involved in future acoustic surveys please get in touch.

Notes from the Recorder's desk Redpolls

Continuing the topical themes, this time with the matter of changes in taxonomy and the confusion it causes. Most birders will have come across the seemingly continual changes in naming and concepts of species that have become regular, seemingly almost daily, since the scientific community has adopted the techniques of DNA analysis to determine species.

Species definitions that seemed constant for decades, have gone through multiple changes and as soon as any publication has been released to us mere mortals they are out of date and species have new names and new identification criteria. For a Hampshire context this has been somewhat peripheral in the main although the split of Iberian Chiffchaff from Common Chiffchaff and the non-split of Siberian Chiffchaff has exercised the keener Hampshire birders for a while.

Last year, in an odd reversal of the current trends, the International Ornithological Committee (IOC) and the Working Group on Avian Checklists (WGAC) agreed to combine three 'species' of Redpoll into a single species. In the case of the former, the British Ornithological Union (BOU) that determines our species follows their guidance and therefore the British Checklist lost two species overnight. Never the easiest of species to tell apart, some breathed a sign of relief, but the normalisation of the three



Redpoll by Brian Cartwright

species Lesser, Common (or Mealy) and Arctic Redpoll under the title of simply Redpoll has led to confusion as to which Redpolls are reported.

Within Hampshire, we have long continued to collect data on subspecies that are distinctive and relatively scarce in the county, where other than our normal subspecies is seen, for example Brent Goose is assumed to be Dark-bellied unless and until Light-bellied Brent or Black Brant are specified.

In the case of Redpoll, we intend to keep to this approach. Therefore, we would request that all records continue using the name Lesser Redpoll. If you are lucky enough to find a continental Common Redpoll, this will continue to need to be supported by descriptions and preferably photographic images. They will continue to be reviewed as a description (sub) species by the Records Panel. To date, no one has been lucky enough to find a bona fide Arctic Redpoll in Hampshire, but should this occur, again this would need to be considered as previously by the BB Records Committee.

Martin Pitt
Hampshire County Bird Recorder

Out Birding Keyhaven Sunday 27th April

by Ian Packer

It was a sunny warm day when 20 or so members turned up at Keyhaven, including some on their first HOS walk.



Whitethroat by Rob Porter

We saw between 65 and 75 species (depending where you were in the line) a pretty respectable haul. Swallow and Whitethroat were soon on the list, followed by Reed and Sedge Warblers singing well. The Eider flew in, landing distantly on the sea.



Marsh Harrier by Chris Rose

We had five species of raptors. Sparrowhawk, male Kestrel posing on a chimney and soaring views of both Buzzards and Marsh Harriers.

And speaking of structure, we were able to drill down into the niceties on Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, always a testing pair for many, and could admire their wonderful chestnut breast feathers of breeding plumage.

There was a shout of "Red Kites" and we were treated to the lovely spectacle of seven lazing and drifting along as only Kites can do. Terrific.

Another feature bird of this day was Whimbrel which were everywhere - no doubt on passage north to breed. Adding spice on the wader front were several Little Ringed Plovers which are always super to see.



Whimbrel by Chris Rose

We nailed all three of the anticipated terns with the Little Terns being particularly enchanting as they always are.

There was a good selection of passerines, including Wheatear, Jay, Reed Bunting, Cetti's Warbler, Raven and a female House Sparrow creeping along in a ditch which confused a few until it showed well.

In all we'd had a good day at Keyhaven.

Walk the Walk

If you want to come on a HOS walk you generally don't need to book. However, there are some exceptions, so please check on the HOS website at hos.org.uk.



Goldcrest by Brian Cartwright

If booking is required please call or text HOS Walks Co-ordinator Di Warner on 07883 344724 or email warner@btinternet.com. Don't just turn up where booking is required as you will not be able to join the walk.

We have only put the dates and times of the walks here. There is more detailed information on the HOS website and do please check to make sure there have been no changes since Kingfisher was published, or to see if any new walks have been added. If you can't get to the website please contact Di.

Walks are for HOS members but non-members are welcome. For general queries about HOS walks contact Di. Contact the walk leader (details on website) for specific walk information.

July 2025

Saturday 5 July

Martin Down (2-3 miles)
Leaders: Keith Betton and Janice Beck
9am-12.30pm

Saturday 12 July

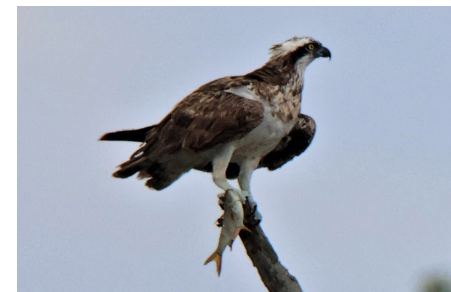
Burton Common (1-2 miles)
Leader: Bob Groves 8.30-10pm

Sunday 20 July

Farmland around the rivers Lyde and Loddon, nr Hook (3.5 miles)
Leader Simon Stacey 9am-12.30pm

Sunday 27 July

Normandy Lagoon and Oxey Marshes (3 miles)
Leader: Ian Packer 9:30am-2:30pm



Osprey by Andy Tew

August 2025

Saturday 30 August

Migrant Birds at Farlington Marshes (5 miles)
Leader: Ian Packer 9.30 am-2.30 pm

Sunday 31 August

Old Winchester Hill (2-3 miles)
Leader: George Baker 9am-12.30pm

continued on page 22



Pintail by Chris Rose

September 2025

Saturday 13 September

Edenbrook Country Park, Fleet (3 miles)

Leader: John Blithe 10am-12.30pm

Sunday 14 September

RSPB Pagham Harbour (3-4 miles)

Leader: Julian Moseley 10.30am-3.30pm

Saturday 20 September

Keyhaven (5 miles)

Leader: Ian Packer 9.30am-3.30pm

Sunday 21 September

Migrant Birds at Farlington Marshes (5 miles)

Leader: Kevin Stouse 9.3 am-2.30pm

October 2025

Sunday 4 October

Blashford Lakes HWT (3-4 miles)

Leader: Julian Moseley 10.30am-3.30pm

Sunday 26 October

Normandy Lagoon & Oxe Marshes (3 miles)

Leader: Ian Packer 9.30am-2.30pm



Common Sandpiper by Richard Jacobs

Out Birding Poole Harbour Saturday 25th January

By Julian Moseley

A small group gathered at the ferry terminal which gradually grew larger until 12 people were assembled. The usual Cormorant, Black-headed gull, Herring gulls and a couple of Pied Wagtails completed the list before the walk to the shore of Littlesea on the western side. Meadow Pipits flew up from the damp grass and the familiar calls of House Sparrows and Blue Tits were heard around the National Trust car park.



Chaffinch by Brian Cartwright

Moving further west, Dunnock, Robin and Chaffinch were heard in the woodland scrub, with Grey Heron, and a single Kestrel represented the raptors. Fortuitously, gathering at a spot on the shore of Littlesea, we discovered the release pen for the beaver project which has been scheduled for the area.

Arriving slightly later at the bird hide we were confronted by the brick skeleton of the building but the hide itself had completely gone. To judge by the very charred length of plastic drainpipe lying



Cormorant by Brian Cartwright

in the heather, the building had obviously been burned either deliberately or accidentally in a heathland fire.

On Brands Bay after an open air lunch, a winter duck population of Teal, Wigeon, Shelduck, Pintail, Grey Plover for the waders were joined by Black-tailed godwit, Oystercatcher, Dunlin and Curlew complemented by Brent Geese, Little Egret and Turnstone with Great-crested grebe out on the open water.



Grey Plover by Rob Porter

A pair of Ringed Plover was seen on a shingle spit and a rather elusive Long Tailed Duck was identified about 20 metres or so from the shore. Long-tailed Tits flitted through the shoreline birches, whilst a pair of water birds cruising nonchalantly offshore turned out to be two Slavonian Grebes, much to the delight of several members of the group.

Did you know? How birds build nests

In this column I often write about things that we can't do, but birds can. The list is quite long – laying eggs, flying, and navigating accurately around the globe. Let's face it – birds are brilliant!



King Penguin colony by Keith Betton

When it comes to breeding, yet again they put us humans into the shade. Almost all birds build a nest to house their eggs and young.



Paumotu nest by Keith Betton

They vary greatly in size, shape, and the materials used. Here are the main types of nest used by birds.

Scrape nests: These are the simplest, often just a shallow depression in the ground or vegetation and are common among waders such as Ringed Plover and other ground-nesting birds such as Little Terns. On public beaches they often need our protection in order to succeed.

Cup nests: Many garden birds, like the Song Thrush and Blackbird, build cup-shaped nests using materials like twigs, bark, and mud, often lining them with softer materials like grass and feathers.

Mud nests: In a few species the entire nest may be made of mud. A good

example is the House Martin, which uses saliva and wet mud to create a strong structure that is attached to a building, under an overhang.

Woven nests: Some birds, like the Chiffchaff, weave grass and plant material into intricate, cup-shaped nests, often deep within vegetation.

Platform nests: These are large, bulky structures made of sticks and twigs, used by birds like eagles, herons, and Ospreys, and often reused for multiple nesting seasons. They are also used



Royal Penguin nesting pair by Keith Betton

by other species in later years. Red Kites always use the old nest of another species.

Cavity nests: Some birds, like woodpeckers, excavate holes in trees while others, like some tits utilize these holes or use nestboxes. Usually, they only use these once.



White Stork nest by Keith Betton

Floating nests: Some birds, like grebes, Coots and Moorhens, build floating platform nests on water. The nest is anchored to fixed vegetation so that it does not drift away. If the water level rises such nests have to be built up to avoid being flooded.

Burrow nests: Some seabirds, such as Puffins and Manx Shearwaters excavate

burrows in the ground. They often use old rabbit burrows. Sand Martins burrow into sand banks and like to be in colonies. There are extremes in the nesting world, and some birds in Australasia build nest mounds that can be several metres in diameter and height. For example, the Malleefowl of Australia lays its eggs in such an earth mound and uses the warmth of the sunshine to incubate the



Laughing Dove nest by Keith Betton

eggs. That means that if there is a cooler spell the eggs will take longer to hatch. At the other extreme, King Penguins do not build nests. Instead, they tuck their eggs and chicks between their feet and folds of skin on their lower bellies which allows them to move about a bit if they need to avoid danger.

If you try to make a bird nest yourself, you'll find it isn't as easy as you may think, and you have hands to move the materials around with, and yet birds just use their beak. Their first attempts at just a year old may lack the strength of a nest made by an older bird. Having recently tried to build a stick nest and completely failed my respect for birds has increased even more!

Keith Betton



What's been spotted January to April 2025

by Tom Jordan

Around 218 species were seen during the period. This summary focuses on larger counts, scarcer species and unexpected localities reported throughout the period. 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.



Lesser Scaup by Chris Rose

Whooper Swan: Woolmer Pond 27/4
White-fronted Goose: Keyhaven 10/4
Garganey: Rooksbury Mill, Andover 20/3; Pennington Marshes 2 21/3; Taddiford 2 22/3; Posbrook Floods 29/3-31/3, 3/4
Green-winged Teal: Pennington Marshes 2/4-6/4
Red-crested Pochard: Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 7/1, 2/2, 30/4

Ferruginous Duck: Normandy Marsh 12/1; Brownwich Pond 13/1, 14/1; Posbrook Floods 3/3
Scaup: Stokes Bay 1/1, 2/1; Milton Common, Portsmouth 3 1/1-19/2; Chilling 4/1; Weston Shore 13/3
LESSER SCAUP: Hamer Warren 1/1-15/1
Velvet Scoter: Hill Head/Brownwich max. 6 13/1-19/2; Lepe 10/2; Gunner Point, Hayling Island 3 13/2; Eastoke, Hayling Island 2 18/4
Long-tailed Duck: Weston Shore 5/2-8/2; Hamble Point 10/2-25/2; Hill Head 11/2, 12/2, 17/2; Hook-with-Warsash 11/2, 19/3; Brownwich 1/3, 2/3, 16/3, 27/3
Crane: Fordingbridge 2 27/2
Red-necked Grebe: Weston Shore 3/1-2/3; Normandy Marsh 4/1; Hill Head-Chilling 8/1, 25/1-31/1, 11/2, 4/3, 6/3, 17/3, 19/3; Southsea Castle 19/1, 2/2, 12/2, 13/2, 19/3-23/3; Hythe Pier 21/1; Lepe 25/1; Lee-on-the-Solent 25/1; Gunner Point, Hayling Island 15/2
Slavonian Grebe: Weston Shore 1-2 2/1-5/2; Lymington-Keyhaven 1-4 3/1-14/3; Portsmouth Harbour 7/1, 10/1; Lepe 15/1, 2 16/1, 2 11/2; Brownwich/Chilling 21/1, 30/1, 1/2; Hythe 21/1, 24/1, 2 25/1; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 28/1, 8 31/1, 3 1/2; Langstone Harbour 11/2
Black-necked Grebe: Langstone Harbour 1-5 2/1-4/3; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 1-4 6/1- 8/4; Black Point, Hayling Island 2 22/1, 5/2; Lepe 22/1; Solent Breezes 21/3
Kentish Plover: Hurst Beach 30/4
AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER: Farlington Marshes 30/4
Ruff: Farlington Marshes 30/1, 2 30/4; Titchfield Haven 31/1; Avon Causeway 15/2; Pennington Marsh 2 2/4, 20 29/4; Pennington Marshes 2 10/4
Curlew Sandpiper: Bunny Meadows,

Warsash 8/1; Normandy Marsh 17/4, 19/4; Farlington Marshes 30/4
LEAST SANDPIPER: Needs Ore 22/3-23/3
Wood Sandpiper: Testwood Lakes 26/4-28/4; Pennington Marshes 30/4; Farlington Marshes 4 30/4; Lepe 30/4
LESSER YELLOWLEGS: Keyhaven/Pennington Marshes 2/1-18/1



Spotted Redshank by Rob Porter

Spotted Redshank: Hamble Estuary 2/1; Lymington-Keyhaven 1-2 3/1-25/4; Bunny Meadows, Warsash 4/1-8/1, 22/1, 30/1, 19/3; Lepe 11/1, 30/1, 3/2, 15/2; Titchfield Haven 29/3; Hook-with-Warsash 12/4; River Hamble Country Park 21/4
Kittiwake: Weston Shore 2 1/1, 15/4; Southsea 3/4, 6/4; Lee-on-the-Solent 4/4; Southsea 6/4; Brownwich 2 25/4
Little Gull: Hill Head 5/1, 20/3; Chilling 11/1; Langstone Harbour 12/1; Titchfield Haven 26/1; Hook-with-Warsash 28/1; Keyhaven/Pennington Marshes 1/2-2/2, 2 21/3, 10/4; Winchester Sewage Farm 27/2; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 3 11/3, 31/3, 18 1/4, 16 4/4, 15/4-26/4; Lee-on-the-Solent 20/3, 4 18/4; Gunner Point, Hayling Island 3 22/3, 45 12/4; Fleet Pond 5 4/4, 2 6/4, 3 8/4, 2 10/4, 11/4, 12/4; Brownwich 8 12/4; Eastoke, Hayling Island 4 18/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 11 26/4, 16 29/4
Caspian Gull: Hill Head 18/1, 25/3;

Titchfield Haven 26/3; Keyhaven Marsh 12/4
Yellow-legged Gull: Redbridge Wharf 13/1; Hill Head 19/1, 11/3; Winchester College Water Meadows 14/2; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 22/2; Alresford Pond 14/3; Hook-with-Warsash 7/4
Arctic Tern: Hill Head 3 24/4; Fleet Pond 24/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 25/4; Hamble Point 30/4
Black Tern: Sandy Point, Hayling Island 19/4
Great Skua: Sandy Point, Hayling Island 24/4
Pomarine Skua: Milford on Sea 2 26/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 2 26/4
Arctic Skua: Stokes Bay 18/4; Eastoke, Hayling Island 4 18/4; Lepe 4 19/4 28/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 2 25/4; Hurst Beach 25/4, 2 28/4, 28/4; Hill Head 2 28/4, 3 29/4, 30/4
Guillemot: Lepe 19/4
Razorbill: Southsea 4/1; Hill Head 4/1; Stokes Bay 26/1; Southsea 7/4; Lepe 19/4
Red-throated Diver: Hill Head 11/1; Brownwich 15/1, 25/4; Lee-on-the-Solent 17/1; Chilling 19/1; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 18 1/2, 5 13/2; Lepe 6 5/2, 19/3; Barton on Sea 28/2; Hordle Cliff 1/3; Stokes Bay 21/3; Taddiford 4 12/4
Black-throated Diver: Weston Shore 1/1, 7/2; Lepe 6/1, 10/2, 12/3, 13/3; Eastney 30/1; Bury Marshes 6/2; Barton on Sea 24/3; Southsea 2 24/4; Brownwich 25/4
Great Northern Diver: Weston Shore 1-4 1/1-4/3; Redbridge Wharf 3/1, 4/1, 19/1; Lepe 1-2 11/1-11/2, 15/3, 29/3; Netley 1-3 12/1-14/2; Langstone Harbour 12/1, 23/1; Eastney 15/1, 4 19/2; Hill Head 17/1, 2 3/2, 3/3; Calshot 24/1; Chilling 2 25/1, 2 1/2, 3/2; Hook-with-Warsash 29/1, 4/2, 7/2, 29/3; Hythe 29/1, 9/2; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 4 1/2, 4/2, 2 12/2-13/2; Brownwich 7/2, 16/3, 27/3; Hamble Shore 8/2, 2 9/2, 15/2; Southsea 13/2;

Stokes Bay 17/3

Fulmar: Hordle Cliff 22/3; Southsea 13/4; Lee-on-the-Solent 18/4; Milford-on-Sea 18/4; Brownwich 19/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 24/4

BLACK STORK: Applemore, NF 19/4

Gannet: Stokes Bay 21 1/1; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 3 8/3; Southsea Castle 3/4, 6/4, 10/4; Milford Shelter 18 18/4, 20/4; Calshot 23/4



Gannets by Zac Welling

Shag: Southsea 2/1-7/2, 3 18/3, 19/3, 3 8/4, 3 10/4; Lepe 7/1, 15/1, 22/1, 29/1; Weston Shore 8/1, 18/1, 24/1, 29/1, 1/2, 2 17/4; Gosport 25/1; Woolston 27/1; Netley 27/1; Barton on Sea 2 4/3, 17/3; Hamble Cliff 28/3; Milford Shelter 18/4



Glossy Ibis by Rob Porter

Glossy Ibis: Titchfield Canal Path max. 8 2/1-8/4; Titchfield Haven 3 8/4

Spoonbill: Lymington-Keyhaven max. 20 2/1-24/4; Lepe 6/1, 6 16/1, 3 20/1, 7 21/1, 3 7/2, 7, 6/2, 4 8/2, 7 12/3, 15/4; Langstone Harbour 2 20/1; Titchfield Haven 3 22/1, 1/2, 3 7/2, 23/2, 2 8/3, 3 5/4, 2 9/4, 2 12/4, 2 15/4; Hamble Estuary 2 22/1; Farlington Marshes 1-2 23/1-23/2, 12/3, 2 26/3, 5/4, 3 8/4, 22/4-30/4; Calshot 2 8/2; Hook-with-Warsash 4 19/3; Fishlake Meadows 3 21/3; Titchfield Haven Canal Path 4 13/4

Bittern: Fishlake Meadows 1-2 3/1-8/4; Winchester College Water Meadows 10/3; Mottisfont 2 1/4

Night Heron: Posbrook Floods 11/4; Titchfield Haven 12/4

Cattle Egret: Warblington max. 24 1/1-14/3; Harbridge 21/1; Fishlake Meadows 3 22/2, 3 8/3, 2 21/4, 22/4; Farlington Marshes 4 14/3; Titchfield Haven 26/3; Fleet Pond 21/4; Sandy Point, Hayling Island 2 24/4

Osprey: Lymington River 16/3; Fishlake Meadows 18/3, 20/4; Farlington Marshes 19/3; Peartree Green 20/3, 20/4; Lower Test Marshes 22/3, 29/3; Woolmer Pond 25/3; Brownwich 28/3; Titchfield Haven 1/4; Keyhaven/Pennington Marshes 3/4, 6/4, 26/4; Fleet Pond 4/4; Compton Down 6/4; Weston Shore 19/4; Ranvilles Lane 26/4; Sowley 28/4

Hen Harrier: Normandy Marsh 4/1; Woolmer Forest 6/1, 9/1, 22/3; Widden Bottom 8/1, 4/2; Chichester Harbour 25/1; Milkham Bottom, NF 1/2; Blackhamsley Hill 1/2, 4/2; Shatterford 8/2; Buckherd Bottom, NF 9/2; Whitsbury Down 16/2; Bramshaw Telegraph, NF 17/2; Breamore Down 2 19/2, 2 22/2; Deadman Hill, NF 22/2; Ocknell Pond 25/2; Millersford Bottom 25/2; Avon



Hen Harrier by Rob Porter

Causeway 13/3; Fritham Plain, NF 16/3; Martin Down 18/3; Hatchet Pond 20/3; Sandy Ridge, NF 27/3; Bratley Plain, NF 29/3; Ipley, NF 31/3; Leaden Hall, NF 4/4; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 5/4; Hook-with-Warsash 9/4; Picket Hill 20/4

Short-eared Owl: Lymington-Keyhaven 13/1-15/1, 16/2; Gunner Point, Hayling Island 30/1; Hurst Beach 16/2; Farlington Marshes 20/4; Newtown 25/4



Short Eared Owl by Sheila Williams

Hoopoe: Barton on Sea 8/4; Hythe 9/4, 11/4; Dibden Purlieu 13/4; Romsey 14/4; Warsash Common 17/4; Bentley 17/4; Sherborne St John 26/4

Merlin: Broomy Inclosure, NF 4/1; Milkham Bottom, NF 10/1, 19/1; Whitsbury Down 11/1; Bishops Dyke 13/1; Keyhaven/Pennington Marshes

18/1, 29/1, 14/3, 20/3, 26/3; Hill Head 23/1; Gander Down 28/1; Chilling Cliffs 2/2; Titchfield Haven 2/2; Lower Test Marshes 2/2; Posbrook Floods 4/2; Goodworth Clatford 9/2; Barton on Sea 13/2; High Corner NF 18/2; Bramdean 19/2; Trigpoint Hill, Timsbury 21/2; The Grange Lake, Northington 26/2; RSPB Hazeley Heath 2/3; Shatterford 6/3; Martin Down 9/3; Fritham, NF 10/3; Shatterford Bottom, NF 16/3; Badminton GP 31/3; Sutton Scotney 1/4; Ipley, NF 2/4; Ibsley Common 26/4-28/4

Great Grey Shrike:

Goodworth Clatford 8/2, 9/2



Red-backed Shrike (male) by Rob Porter

Red-backed Shrike: Farlington Marshes 25/4

Yellow-browed Warbler: Eastleigh Sewage Farm 4/1-8/1; Overton 5/1

Siberian Chiffchaff: Titchfield Canal Path 19/1

Ring Ouzel: Gunner Point, Hayling Island 6/4, 7/4; Thedden 9/4; Casbrook Common 13/4; Black Knowl, NF 15/4

BLACK-THROATED THRUSH:

Bordon 23/2-3/3

Bluethroat: Keyhaven 20/4

Black Redstart: Daedalus Airfield 1-2 2/1-8/3; Southsea Castle 1-2 2/1-23/3; Calshot 3/1-13/4; Winchester College Water Meadows 1/2; Gosport 13/2; Calmore 15/2, 18/2; South Hayling Island 19/2; Testwood Lakes 2/3; Eastleigh 11/3; Eastleigh Railway Yard 14/3; Bickton 22/3; Emsworth 23/3; Funtley 23/3, 24/3; Highland Road Cemetery, Southsea 23/3; North Hayling Island 2 3/4; Barton on Sea 8/4, 2 9/4, 10/4; Whitsbury Down 8/4; Hook-with-Warsash 10/4; Oxey Marsh 10/4; Fawley Power Station 11/4, 13/4; Hucklesbrook Gravel Pit 25/4

Whinchat: Martin Down 10/3; Hayling Oyster Beds 12/4; Lower Test Marshes



Whinchat by Steve Payce

21/4; Hook-with-Warsash 29/4; Milford on Sea 29/4; Fishlake Meadows 30/4

Blue-headed Wagtail: Farlington Marshes 25/3-26/3; Pennington Marshes 2 28/3

Water Pipit: Keyhaven/Pennington Marshes 2/1, 10/1, 2 21/3, 23/3; Newlands Farm, Stubbington 11/1; Titchfield Haven 19/1; Titchfield Canal Path 3 19/1, 3 9/2; Alresford Watercress Beds 1-3 23/2-18/3; Ibsley Water, Blashford Lakes 13/3

Serin: Sandy Point, Hayling Island 10/4; Hill Head 13/4; Fareham 25/4

Please send records to the County Recorder so they can be included in the HOS Database and Hampshire Bird Report.

Send to: Martin Pitt, 35 Clere Gardens, Chineham, Basingstoke, Hants, RG24 8LZ
mjpitt35clere@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>

Thankyou
Tom Jordan

Helping HOS

As a HOS member you know how much the Society does for birds, conservation and birders in Hampshire. Can you help us spread the word to others who may be interested in joining us? Because the more members we have the more we can do. We have produced a card which can be handed to people you meet while birding, which will hopefully encourage them to join. Just contact Dave Palmer dave.palmer64@btinternet.com to get hold of some cards.

Thanks.



Focus on Cheesfoot Head, Longwood Warren and Fawley Down

In this issue we focus on Cheesfoot Head, Longwood Warren and Fawley Down to the east of Winchester.

Habitat

Cheesfoot Head is the highest point on the downs immediately to the east of Winchester. Much of the area is given over to farmland with remnant downland habitats restricted to the steeper slopes. There are some patches of mostly mature deciduous woodland to the north and east in the general vicinity of Temple Valley.

Species

This area is one of the more reliable downland sites for Corn Buntings which still breed in small numbers.

Other breeding birds typical of open chalk downland and scrub include Red-legged Partridge, Skylark, Linnet and Yellowhammer. Grey Partridge still possibly breeds in the general vicinity and Quail can often be heard in good years for the species. The woodlands north and east of Cheesfoot Head support breeding Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatch.

Raptors are an important feature of the area. Common Buzzards and Kestrels breed locally and can be seen on most visits. Red Kite is a daily visitor throughout the year, while Hen Harrier, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon and Short-eared Owl are all distinct possibilities during the winter and at times of passage. There were also several reports of Rough-legged Buzzards in winters during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but this is a mega-rarity in Hampshire these days! During the winter flocks of Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, winter thrushes, finches and buntings roam the area in search of food. The finch and bunting flocks



Temple Valley by Keith Betton



Cheesefoot Down by Jim Campion

usually include good numbers of Reed and Corn Buntings. In some winters large flocks of Bramblings have appeared in Hampshire, and at these times Cheesefoot Head often holds several hundreds, and during the 2003/2004 winter up to 1,100 were seen in early January.



Dotterel at Cheesefoot Head by Keith Betton

Landbird migrants such as Whinchat and Northern Wheatear can be expected particularly in the autumn, while Ring Ouzels have occurred in both spring and autumn. There have also been several spring sightings of Dotterel.

Timing

This area is very popular with visitors at weekends when the car park can be full, so early morning visits are recommended.

Facilities: Car park (free)

Access

Cheesefoot Head car park (free) lies directly off the A272 Winchester to Petersfield road 1.1 miles south-east from the junction with the A31 Winchester to Alton road. From the car park a footpath gives access north-east along Temple Valley towards the A31. On the opposite side of the road, there are separate footpaths south along Longwood Warren and south-west along Fawley Down.



Kestrel by Chris Rose

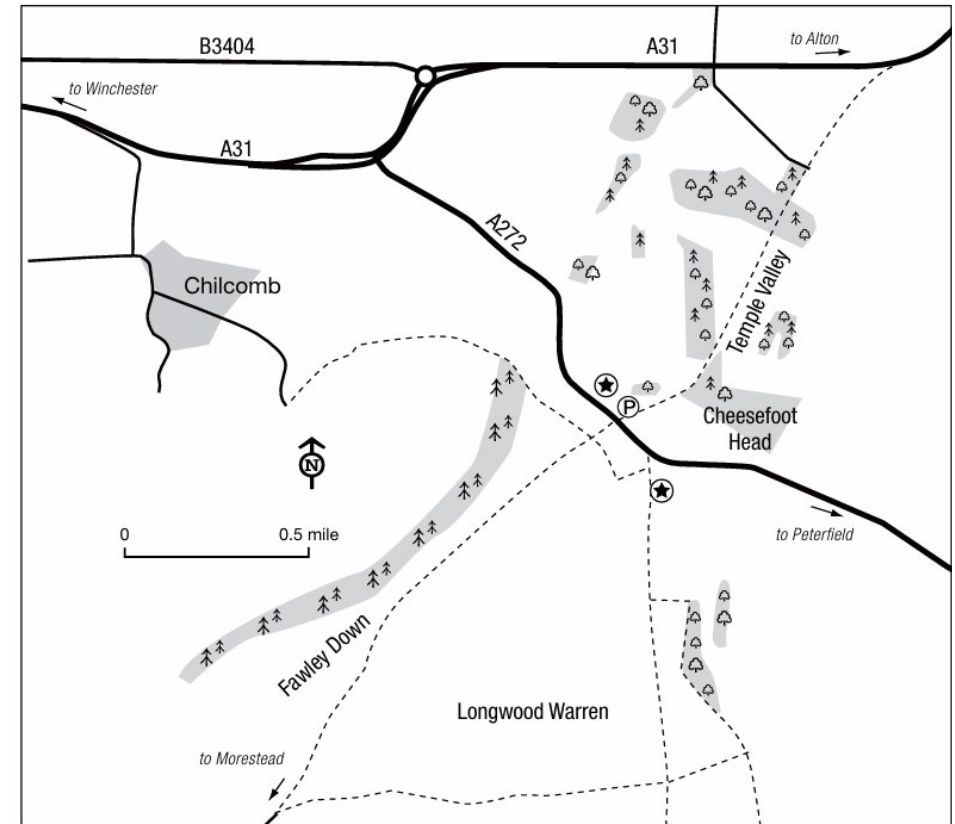
Calendar

All year: Red-legged Partridge, Red Kite, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Skylark, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting.

April–October: common landbird migrants including Whinchat and Northern Wheatear.

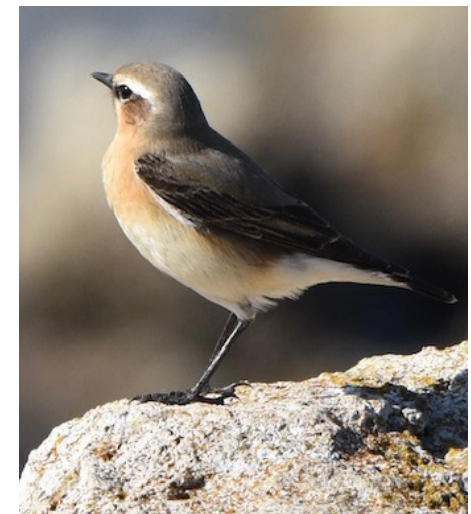
November–March:

Meadow Pipit, winter thrushes, finches including Brambling, Reed Bunting.



The information in this article is taken from **Where to Watch Birds in Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight** by HOS Chair Keith Betton.

It's a must have book for any Hampshire birder, so if you haven't got a copy get online or head to your local bookshop and pick one up. You'll wonder how you ever managed without it.



Wheatear by Peter Hyde

TAKE 5

Our focus on local photographers: Steve Payce



Steve Payce

It was very difficult to choose just five images as I have been lucky enough to take many shots of some lovely birds over recent years. I have always been a keen photographer and remember developing black and white film many years ago in my parents' bathroom, doubling up as a makeshift darkroom. I then joined Gosport camera club and was motivated by seeing the creativity of other photographers work and entering the regular competitions. It was only in the past five years that I started taking bird photographs seriously. The thing that got me hooked was making my first visit to Fishtail Lagoon when I saw eight Spoonbills, a first for me. However, they were mostly asleep, so I took a few

shots and walked on along the path. Then I suddenly heard the Search and Rescue Helicopter coming down the Solent, so on a hunch I dashed back to the lagoon, just to see if it made the Spoonbills take flight. Sure enough, the flock took off, circled around and landed back in the same spot. It was a magnificent sight and got me hooked on capturing birds in flight. My interest and knowledge in birding grew and now today I consider myself to be a hybrid birder/photographer. My local patch is Titchfield Haven, so not a surprise that many of my favourite photographs have been taken there.

I now have the Sony A1 mk II with 200-600mm lens and am enjoying experimenting with the pre-capture, subject recognition and high shutter speeds. These features enhance the chances of capturing special moments of birds in flight.



Bittern at Titchfield Haven 18th Aug 23 by Steve Payce



Little Tern at Pennington Marshes 20th July 22 by Steve Payce

Bittern – Fishlake Meadows

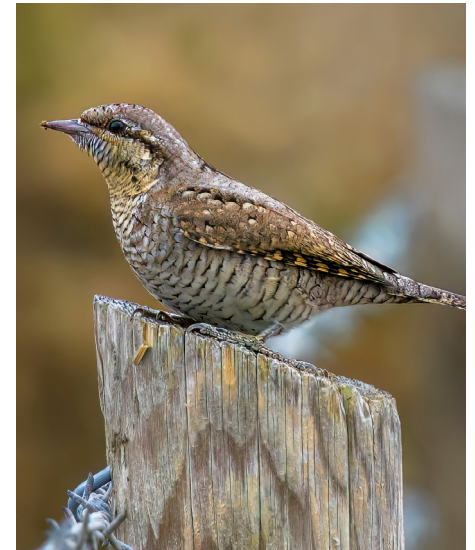
Top of my list is the Bittern, an elusive bird I had heard several times booming at Fishlake Meadows, but never seen. Then, late one afternoon in September, a Bittern appeared in front of the Meon Shore Hide at the Haven. I was so excited I almost forgot to press the shutter button. This gorgeous and unusual looking bird walked through the reeds towards me, and I managed some lovely close-up shots.

Wryneck – Hook-with-Warsash

The Wryneck was another first for me. It appeared on a post out of nowhere at Hook-with- Warsash and I managed a few shots of this amazing bird before it disappeared. One day I hope to capture one with its neck extended, which looks quite amazing

Little Tern – Normandy Lagoon

I love photographing Terns in flight and was delighted by the variety you can see



Wryneck at Hook w Warsash 25Aug 22 by Steve Payce



Osprey at Titchfield Haven 24 Sept 22 by Steve Payce

at Normandy Lagoon. This Little Tern is such a beautiful and graceful flyer, offering up some wonderful poses as it hovers, searching for prey in the waters below. I tried to be creative and capture this by increasing the highlights with a soft focus. I do spend a lot of time post processing my best shots as this is part of the enjoyment for me.

Osprey – Titchfield Haven

The Osprey is a bird I had seen from a distance at the Haven with a fish in its claws, but not up close. One day I was in the Suffern hide and saw an Osprey flying South down the river. Its large wing span and slow wingbeat was unmistakable. It circled in front of the hide and I managed to almost fill the frame, providing good detail. Only thing that was missing was the dive and catching a fish – hopefully, one day!



Puffin Landing on Clifftop 19th July 23 by Steve Payce

Puffin – Skomer Island

I clearly wasn't in Hampshire when I took this one! I managed this Puffin shot as it came into land on the clifftop. I love this shot because of the detail, backlighting and Bokeh in the background. I also managed some classic shots of their beaks full of Sandeels as they land and scurry into their burrows to feed their young. I highly recommend a trip to Skomer to see this spectacle.

There is always a bird you haven't seen or photographed the behaviour of, which is why many of us keep up this wonderful hobby, year after year. We can now share images with our community on a range of Social Media Apps and have HOS to help build our knowledge and let us know about sightings in Hampshire. HOS also provides a means to display our images on their website and if you are lucky enough, in Kingfisher magazine. This publication has certainly helped me increase my birding knowledge and there is always more to learn.

Book Review

By Keith Betton

Owls of Europe, Biology, Identification and Conservation

By Wolfgang Scherzinger & Theodor Mebs, Helm/Bloomsbury Publishing 2025

416 pages, 300+ colour photographs and line drawings

£60 ISBN: 978-1-3994-1079-3

If I had to choose a group of birds to be fascinated about then it would be owls and I have many owl books. This book first appeared in German in 2000. Now the book is in its third edition and updated to reflect our improved knowledge on owls, but importantly we now have an English edition to read thanks to an excellent translation by all-round naturalist and author Martin Walters.

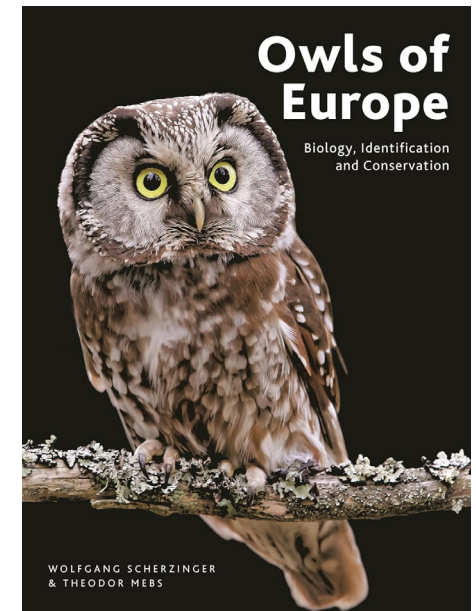
The first 124 pages discuss how owls are adapted to a life (mostly) in the dark with heightened optical and acoustic awareness. Some choose to sit and wait for prey while others actively hunt, sometimes in daylight. Much of this section explains how owls breed, and not surprisingly a lot of the information is drawn from Central Europe (rather than the UK) because this is where the largest concentration of European owls live. For example, in Germany there are nine breeding species compared to just five in the UK (and Hampshire).

In total there are 13 owl species in the book each with a chapter of around 20 pages with up-to-date information on distribution, population estimates, along

with detailed texts on behaviour, voice, brood biology and juvenile development, life strategies, hunting techniques, choice of prey and habitat requirements for each species. It also explores human interactions with owls, from the threats posed to determined conservation efforts.

This is quite an expensive book at £60, but Bloomsbury currently offer it at £54, and there are copies on Amazon at £42.

If you love owls, then you'll enjoy the photos. If you are looking for a gentle introductory text on owls, then this book may be more complex than you want. However, it is well laid out and allows the reader to easily cherry-pick the information they want, or to engross themselves in a particular aspect of owl ecology if preferred.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

by Martin Pitt

The latest in our regular series of articles aimed at helping you to identify those species that can be difficult to distinguish.

In this issue Martin Pitt, Hampshire County Bird Recorder, takes a closer look at Hampshire's Hirundines. With Spring firmly with us as I write this piece, it is time to turn thoughts to those species that join us for the summer months who are often the harbingers of the warmer weather, the hirundines. Hampshire has a particular affinity with the species, in part as Gilbert White was regarded as the foremost expert on hirundines in the 18th Century and presented the first paper on the group to the Royal Society in 1775.

Hirundines are a group of species that are familiar to us all, yet with three species present namely House Martin, Sand Martin and Barn Swallow it is always the question of which one? Separation is also needed from Common Swift, technically not a hirundine but another highly adapted aerial insect hunter. We also have a few records of more southerly Red-rumped Swallows that first occurred in 1987 but have yielded 18 records since. Even scarcer is a single record of American Cliff Swallow that joined a flock of hirundines on 1 October 2000 – however this is was only the ninth for the whole of the UK. All of the hirundines are summer migrants and have a similar body size

and 'design' optimised for hunting insects on the wing. However, they each have a unique solution to breeding and as they have dashing flight can be difficult to assess all of the diagnostic features when on the wing, a situation made more complex when they are in mixed flocks.

Sand Martins are traditionally the earliest of the three to arrive in the spring. Although they may have travelled over 4,000 km to reach us, they arrive just as winter is loosening its grip in early March, with a few hardy pioneers often in February. They are colonial nesters, excavating tunnels in sandy banks along rivers and in the lake banks and we have six or so colonies in the county, both in established artificial banks and more temporary in sand quarries and gravel works. The least numerous of the three species with 70 thousand pairs, their population is stable in the UK, but scarce in Hampshire. We do see many during migration when they are not only the first to arrive but also the first to leave in the autumn.

House Martins are of major concern due to a 44% reduction in their population since 1995. The habitat of colonially nesting in a mud build nest on the eaves of houses meant that they were a familiar sight around our houses and in the UK as a whole there are believed to be 480 thousand pairs. Anecdotally, this is a thing of the past in many parts of Hampshire and we have launched a House Martin Survey (see page 13 of this issue of Kingfisher) in an attempt to quantify their current range in the county – please do take part. They tend to be

the last of our hirundines to arrive and being double brooded they can also be one of the last to leave staying late into October and a few can even be found in November in warm years. We still do not know exactly where 'our birds' winter in sub-Saharan Africa.

Barn Swallows are the most numerous of the three with about 700 thousand pairs in the UK, although as with House Martins this has shown a decline of 24% since 1995. Unlike the other two species, they are not colonial nesters but form a cup in the rafters or eaves of barns and outhouses. They arrive in March and the majority leave in October to migrate to Southern Africa. However, more and more attempt to short stop and a few have over-wintered in SW England including Hampshire. They are often seen close to farms and flying and their noisy chattering as they establish their pair bond and nest site in spring is, to many, the harbinger of the summer ahead.

Plumage characteristics

All three species are evolved for their aerial prowess with swept back triangular wings and rapid flight. Although passerines, their legs and feet are small and rarely visible on flying birds and inconspicuous even when perched. Their beaks are small and dark but create a prodigious gape to enable them to Hoover up flying insects. All three can be described as dark on the back and pale underneath, but their plumages are distinctive enough to be able to distinguish each species even when in mixed groups.

A scarce addition to the list is the Red-rumped Swallow that is seen almost

annually. Here the basic pattern is similar to a Barn Swallow, but the tail & lower vent is all black – akin to the hind part of the bird being dipped in ink – and the rump is salmon pink. Its flight is less frenetic interspersed with frequent glides.

Further references

BTO Bird facts: Barn Swallow

<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/birdfacts/swallow>

BTO Bird facts: House Martin

<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/birdfacts/house-martin>

BTO Bird facts: Sand Martin

<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/birdfacts/sand-martin>

BTO Bird ID Hirundines and Swift

<https://www.bto.org/develop-your-skills/bird-identification/videos/bto-bird-id-hirundines-and-swift>

Visualisation of Barn Swallow migration

<https://science.ebird.org/en/status-and-trends/species/barswa/abundance-map-weekly?week=1>

Visualisation of Sand Martin migration

<https://science.ebird.org/en/status-and-trends/species/banswa/abundance-map-weekly?week=1>



Swallow by Rob Porter



Sand Martin by Andy Tew



House Martin by Andy Tew

Barn Swallow

Elegant outline optimised for flight

- Long tail- streamers to dark tail with white sub-terminal spots form a band visible above and below
- Dark back often appearing black but dark blue in good light.
- Dark throat immediately separates this from the other hirundines show deep red in good light
- Clean white underparts
- Strong direct and dashing flight

Sand Martin

Similar to structure of House Martin

- Distinctly brown on back lacking the darker tones of House Martin
- Rump brown as mantle and back
- Underparts duskier and not as 'clean white' as House Martin or Swallow
- Distinct chest band – although it can be difficult to gauge in moving birds
- More distinctly capped appearance due to pale partial neck band
- More fluttering flight than House Martin and more associated with waterside habitats.

House Martin

Structurally similar to Sand Martin

- Stronger and long supercilium
- Dark back seeming almost black in most lights although actually dark blue
- Large and distinctive white rump
- Silvery white underparts giving clean contrast with upper parts
- A more direct flight than Sand Martin but similar in many cases and will form mixed flights
- Will forage over water, but anywhere where their insect prey congregates

BOOK REVIEW

By Keith Betton

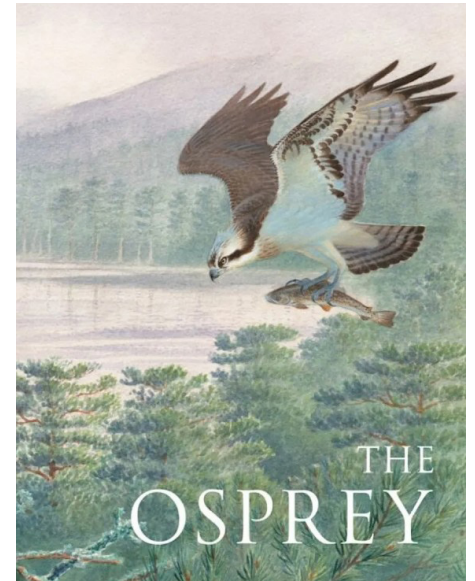
The Osprey by Tim Mackrill
Bloomsbury Publishing/T&AD Poyser, 2024

304 pages, colour illustrated
£60.00 (hbk) ISBN 978-1-4729-9262-8
£35.00 (pbk) ISBN 978-1-4729-9261-1

It is now 65 years since Ospreys first nested in Scotland, and for much of that time the population remained in a relatively small area, but today we can celebrate the fact that around 300 pairs breed in all three of the British countries and Ireland. They are nesting in Poole Harbour so we can only hope that their young consider Hampshire as a possible nesting area too.

The book looks at every aspect of the birds' lives, including hunting, dispersal, nesting, migration and survival. With the author's involvement at Rutland Water, there is an appendix detailing breeding attempts there from 2001 to 2022, and a list of key viewing sites around Britain. Remembering that the Osprey is one of only six landbird species that occur on every continent except Antarctica, there is a huge set of references from around the world. There are also 150 colour photographs, plus maps and charts.

Ospreys are so impressive. Watching one dive into a lake from up to 40 metres, one can only marvel at their skill, but we learn that the angle of this dive may be adjusted according to the type of fish being caught. In addition, Ospreys can move their toes differently to other raptors to provide a better grip on their fish. They are also



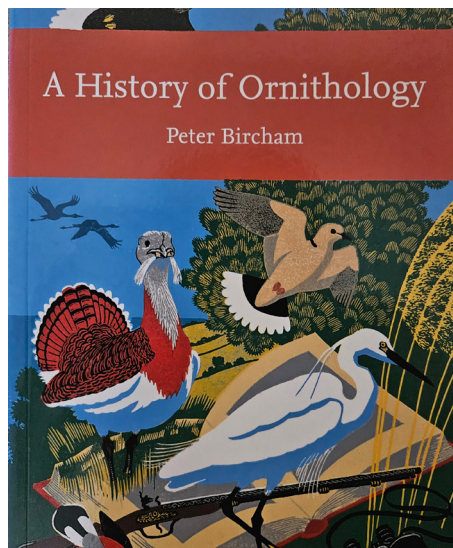
adaptable with their diet, and our British birds take freshwater fish in lakes during the summer and then willingly switch to exclusively saltwater fish in West Africa in the winter.

UK Ospreys usually select either an isolated or very tall flat-topped tree for nesting. Around the world many other structures have been used such as electricity pylons and phone masts, and with recent introduction schemes they have readily accepted human-made nests. In much of Europe Ospreys breed at low densities, but in North America there are even cases of more than one pair nesting in the same tree!

Not only is this book well constructed and engagingly written, but it is also very timely as your chances of seeing an Osprey flying over are now greater than at any time: in 2023 there were over 500 Hampshire sightings on nearly 140 dates.

Desert Island Books

Our castaway this issue is Peter Little, the new editor of Kingfisher. Here he selects five books to take if marooned on a desert island – and you will notice one of his books is slightly off track!



The History of Ornithology Peter Bircham (2007 by Collins)

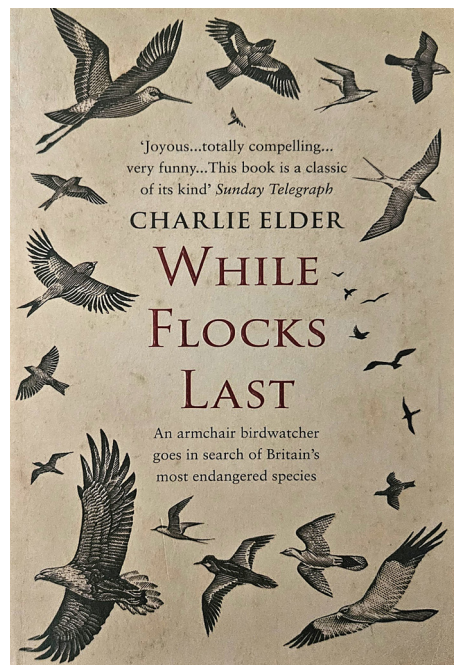
When I first got interested in the more historical side of ornithology this book was recommended in a book review. Upon the first read I was disappointed as nothing seemed to flow in order so I promptly put it on my bookshelf until someone else mentioned their thoughts on it.

So, I went to the bookshelf only to find the book was not there, forcing me to buy another copy. And I'm glad I did. It covers approximately a thousand years of texts, their authors, the engravings

and other works of depiction and I recommend the chapter on the formation of the British Ornithologists Union.

While Flocks Last Charlie Elder (2009 by Corgi Books)

I discovered this book in an old telephone box used as a book stall in Somerset. It covers the journey of



Charlie Elder to see those UK's birds on the red list - which at that time stood at 40 species.

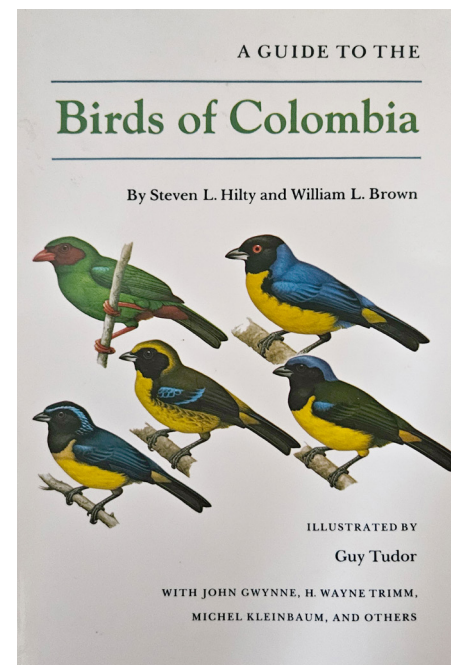
He records the reasons behind their decline, the projects to increase their numbers, the people involved and the role of birders, birdwatchers and scientists.

This is a light, and at times, humorous read, but despite its light-hearted approach it is a wonderful book.

Fragile (Birds, Eggs and Habitats) Colin Prior (2020 by Merrell Publishers)



I was lucky enough to have an email exchange with Colin Prior on his writings about the Karakorum Mountains in Pakistan. Then, in a phone call he told me about the book "Fragile" and some



of the work that went into it. If you want a record of UK birds their eggs, nests and habitats this is the one. Exquisitely photographed with well researched text, this is an absolute joy of a book.

A guide to the Birds of Colombia Hilty and Brown (1986 by Princeton University Press)

If you require a book to add colour to your ornithological knowledge and to pick you up on a dreary day this wonderful book will do that. South America is an ornithologist's dream and this book somehow makes that dream a little closer to reality.

A Passion for Trains Richard Steinheimer (2004 by W.W. Norton and Co)

OK, so I'm going off track here, but I am a bit of a railway nerd and this book, capturing the early days of diesel power on the North American Railroads, shows the sheer hard work and grime that went in working on those wonderful machines. I would want this on my desert island.

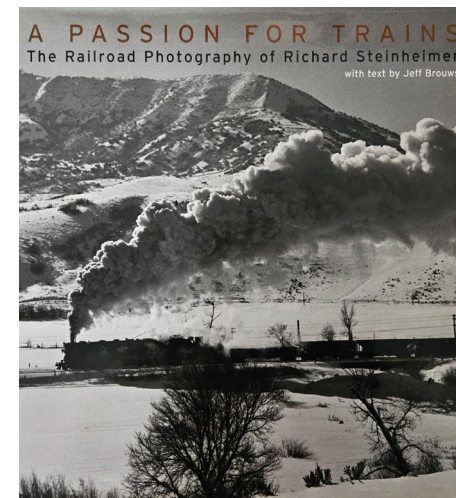


Photo Finish



You looking at me? Eider by Chris Rose



Camo outfit! Meadow Pipit by Rob Porter



Whiter than! Whitethroat by Andy Tew



Look out below! Chiffchaff by Rob Porter



No room today! Pigeons by Jennifer Spring Smyth



Sounding Proud! Song Thrush by Gavin Branch



Mine's longer! Curlew by Andy Tew



Aaahh! Mallard family by Brian Cartwright



Big View! Hawfinch by Steve Payce



Watch behind! Linnet by Peter Hyde

