

# ***The Buzzard***



**Shropshire  
Ornithological Society's  
quarterly magazine**

**No. 236**

**Summer 2014**

## Society Officers and Officials

President:	Frank Gribble, MBE.
Vice Presidents:	Hugh Blofield, Colin Wright and Chris Whittles.
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Treasurer:	Brian Andrews, 6 Sytche Close, Much Wenlock, Shrops. TF13 6JJ. 01952 727531. <i>bafca@yahoo.co.uk</i>
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Management Committee:	Society Officers, Graham Walker, Sue Brealey and Yvonne Chadwick.
Conservation Chair:	Graham Walker, 5 Spa Street, Belle Vue, Shrewsbury. SY3 7FU. 01743 351686. <i>gramanda5@btinternet.com</i>
Committee:	John Tucker, Allan Dawes, Geoff. Holmes, Geoff. Smith, Colin Wright, Simon Twigger, Leo Smith and Helen Griffiths.
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Committee:	Helen Griffiths, Jim Almond and Yvonne Chadwick.
Indoor Programme:	Jean Rickard, 98 London Road, Shrewsbury. SY2 6PN 01743 367576. <i>dickrickard@hotmail.co.uk</i>
Field Trip Leaders:	Various Society members as appointed by the Management Committee. See the annual programme.
County Bird Recorder:	Geoff Holmes, 22 Tenbury Drive, Telford Estate, Shrewsbury. SY2 5YF. 01743 364621. <i>geoff.holmes.4@btinternet.com</i>
Website & Bird Notes:	Yvonne Chadwick. <i>sosbirds@yahoo.co.uk</i>

# Editorial

The Swifts are back and Peta Sams of the Shropshire Swift Group organised a series of events for members of the public to welcome the birds back to Ludlow, which I think is a lovely idea. The Group works to make Shropshire more welcoming for Swifts in many ways and volunteers, offers of help or reports of nest sites are always welcome. Please contact Peta by email [shropshireswifts@gmail.com](mailto:shropshireswifts@gmail.com) for more information.

Sadly this issue of *The Buzzard* contains an obituary for the much loved Jack Sankey. I'm very grateful to Jude Duffy who has organised such a nice tribute to one of the giants of Shropshire ornithology, and a very popular man as well.

John Tucker is now adding an online version of the magazine to his magnificent Histo' site at [www.lanius.org.uk/sos/](http://www.lanius.org.uk/sos/) so if you want to refer to an issue (from spring 2014) you can do so from the comfort of your computer!

Finally, a diary date: The Great Stiperstones BioBlitz is a public engagement challenge to survey as much wildlife as possible in 24 hours, and takes place on 22nd/23rd August. For more information please see: [www.bnhc.org.uk/bioblitz/great-stiperstones-bioblitz/](http://www.bnhc.org.uk/bioblitz/great-stiperstones-bioblitz/)

*Martin*

## Volunteer needed to write the 'Bird Notes'

We are looking for someone to write the quarterly 'Bird Notes' for each edition of *The Buzzard*. The notes summarise notable bird sightings for the previous three months and are the first part of the magazine that many people read. Until the Annual Report for that year is published the notes are the official document of record for many species, so it's an important and rewarding job.

For further information on what is involved please email [sosbirds@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sosbirds@yahoo.co.uk) or [geoff.holmes.4@btinternet.com](mailto:geoff.holmes.4@btinternet.com)

**Copy Deadline for the spring 2014 edition of *The Buzzard* is 1st August**

Please send contributions to: [martin@thegreenfuse.net](mailto:martin@thegreenfuse.net)

*Views expressed in The Buzzard are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the SOS or its Committees unless otherwise stated.*

# Welcome to our new members

A very warm welcome to the following new members of the Society:

Mrs L J Bevan, Market Drayton; Mr & Mrs C R Cooke, Craven Arms;  
Miss M E Cousins, All Stretton; Mr & Mrs G Elphick, Presteigne;  
Mr A Griffiths, Maesbury Marsh; Mr & Mrs P Jackson, Bishops Castle;  
Mr R Lee, Shrewsbury; Mr M Wright, Crewe.

We hope you will enjoy your membership of the SOS and that we will get to meet you at a Society event or out in the field. The officers listed on the inside front cover will be pleased to help if you have any enquiries.

Please note that names and addresses are held on computer and anyone who objects should contact the Membership Secretary. Please see our website for more information about the Society and local birding. We hope to see you at our indoor meetings, which are interesting and varied with first class speakers, and on our field trips, which are suitable for beginners and more advanced birders and offer expert advice and identification with the chance to have questions answered.

## Shropshire Ornithological Society AGM *Chairman's Report 2014*

The Society has had another successful year, with the **Finances** in a healthy state and a number of new members joining during the year. Thank you to our Treasurer, Brian Andrews, who manages the finances of the Society so well, and to the Membership Secretary, Annie Andrews.

During the year, a series of **Indoor Meetings** with guest speakers took place in Shrewsbury, Church Stretton and Ludlow. Thanks should go to everyone who helps to make these evenings such successful events, particularly the organisers, those who provide coffee and tea, and those who prepare the hall for the meetings. Many thanks, particularly, to Jean Rickard, who organises the Indoor Meetings for the main Society; up to 100 people attend the meetings and have enjoyed an interesting and varied programme.

A full programme of **Field Trips** took place during the year, organised by the Development and Publicity Sub-committee, Church Stretton and Ludlow branches, and led by a number of different members. Coach trips, in conjunction with the local RSPB group, have proved popular with members. Thank you to Sue Brealey for organising the Society's field trip programme, and to all field trip leaders.

Day-to-day management continues at **Venus Pool**, ensuring that the site remains one of the finest bird reserves in the County, attracting a wide variety of birds throughout the year; the high water levels this winter, have attracted large numbers of duck, lapwing and snipe. As usual, the arable field was planted with bird-friendly crops to attract wintering finches, and buntings. Thanks are due to Chris Whittles for planning the planting regime, and organising the ploughing and sowing of the field.

The Society's Hebridean sheep continue to graze areas of the Reserve where the vegetation needs to be controlled, particularly the marshy areas. Several work parties were held at which volunteers cut willow, weeded the islands, and trimmed vegetation, and numerous small jobs are taken care of regularly. Thanks are due to everyone who is involved in any way with the management of Venus Pool, particularly Graham Walker, Geoff Holmes and Helen Griffiths. Thank you also to the volunteers who attend the work parties; special mention should be made of our most regular "workers", Doug Hampson and Vera Roberts, who, as far as we can remember, have never missed a work party!

The **Conservation Sub-committee** continues to meet regularly and members of the committee are involved in many different aspects of ornithology in the County, from co-ordinating bird recording to representing the Society on various groups including the BAP Steering Group and the AONB group. They are all involved in a practical way with many aspects of bird-related work, such as providing management advice, involvement with community groups, research, liaison with Natural England, RSPB and the Wildlife Trust, and generally taking an overview of nature conservation work in Shropshire. So, thank you to Graham Walker and his Sub-committee for their efforts.

A number of members were involved in **Bird Recording** during the year, contributing to national surveys such as the BTO Atlas, the ongoing Breeding Bird Survey, and the Wetland Bird Survey, and by submitting their own records to the County Recorder and to Birdtrack. Field work for the new national BTO Atlas started at the beginning of 2007 and was completed in the summer of 2011, and the Atlas has now been published. Fieldwork for the Shropshire Avifauna was completed during 2013. and preparation of the book is now well underway, with a proposed publication date of late 2015. Thank

you to all those who have contributed in any way to bird recording in Shropshire during the year, and particular thanks should go to Allan Dawes, Leo Smith, and Geoff Holmes, the County Recorder, for their efforts.

There has been some progress on the production of **Annual Reports** during the year; 2008 was published in the autumn, and 2009 is almost ready to be printed. The editor, Martyn Owen, is currently working with the Conservation Sub-committee on the Annual Reports for 2010 and 2011, so we are catching up slowly.

The Society's **website** has now been running for a number of years and continues to be popular with our own members as well as with many other people throughout the country. Thank you to Yvonne Chadwick who is now responsible for the website and for producing the quarterly Bird Notes.

Thanks are due to Richard Camp who compiled our quarterly bulletin, "**The Buzzard**" for several years, and to Martin George who has recently taken on this task. I would also like to thank the team who get together four times a year to prepare the bulletin packages for posting to members each quarter.

Thanks are also due to CJ WildBird Foods for their continued support of the Society.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation for the work of the Management Committee, the Sub-committees and the branches during another busy year, and to all those people who contribute in any way to the smooth operation of the Society.

Finally, I would like to thank all members for their support of the Society as we look forward to another successful year in 2014.

***P G Deans, Chairman***

## **Long distance Woodcock**

A Woodcock ringed in North Shropshire on New Year's Eve 2013 has been recovered 2,622km away in Russia.

For more information and images please visit the Shropshire Ringing Group's blog: <http://shropshirerg.wordpress.com>

# Jack Sankey (1931-2014)

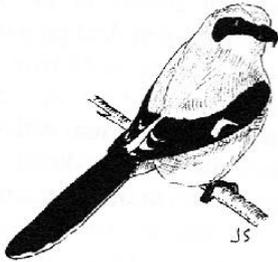


There will be many SOS members besides myself, saddened by the sudden loss of Jack Sankey who died peacefully during the early morning of Wednesday, 21st May in the Lady Forrester Home at Much Wenlock, a month after being hospitalised.

It's difficult to know where to start to pay tribute to this larger than life, warm-hearted, generous spirited, contented, immensely humorous and down-to-earth fellow Lancastrian.

After his two children, Stephen and Elaine, his main interest in life was the Great Outdoors. His encyclopaedic knowledge of birds from came from years of patient observation combined with extensive reading. He shared this knowledge during his time as a Lecturer for Birmingham University's Adult Education department and as a speaker for several SOS meetings and countless W.I. evenings.

He could have an audience in stitches with his spontaneous jokes and stories of his misadventures. Interwoven with the humour, he projected, literally(!), some of his own beautiful slides and imparted many facts.

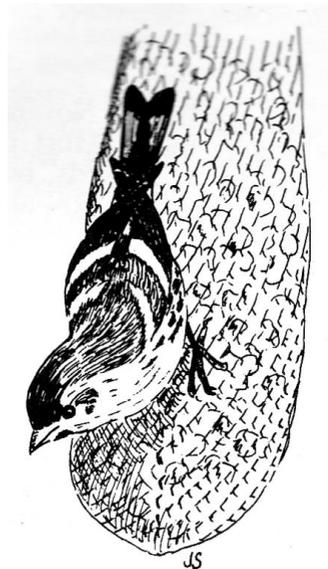


Indeed, on quitting his career as draughtsman and moving down to Shropshire, he inspired many youngsters via his RSPB club during his time as teacher at William Brookes School where he willingly led excursions and camping trips.

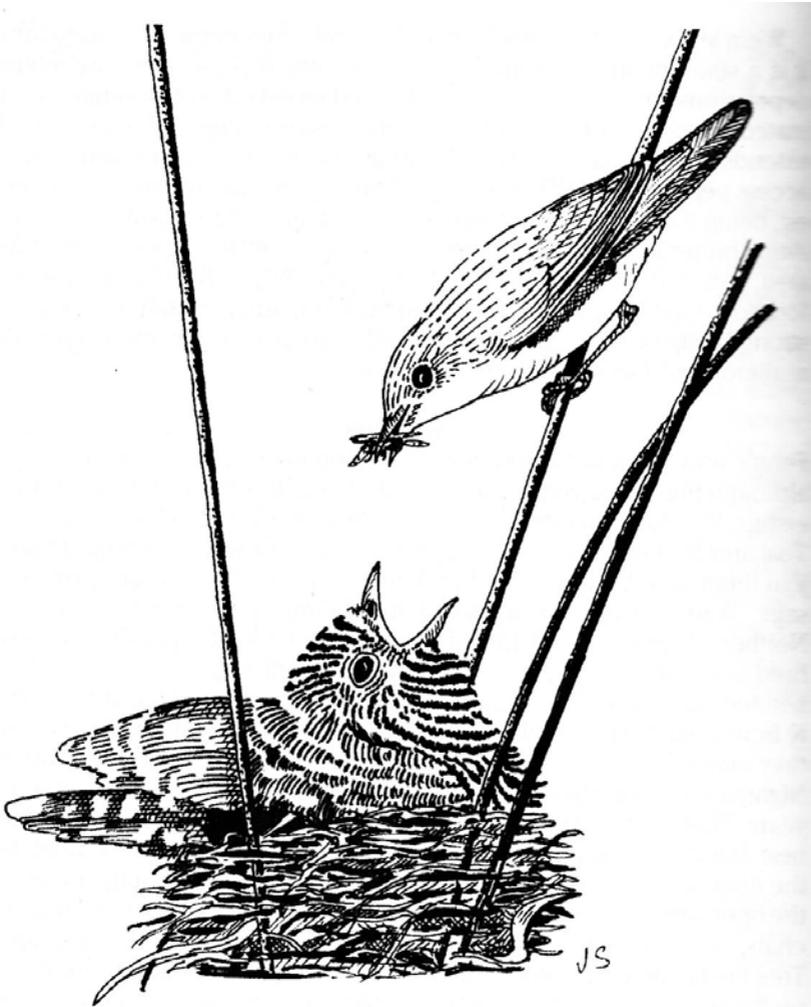
Jack would tell you this was the best move of his life – how he adored Much Wenlock and Shropshire in general! His second best move was taking early retirement at the age of 54.

In his youth, a road-racer of some renown who competed at national level, this fit young retiree would set off every day to explore either some new path or some old favourite, maybe up the Long Mynd, maybe along a canal towpath and invariably accompanied by a beloved poodle. He was Shropshire's own Wainwright! Those of us, lucky enough to accompany him, will vouch for his fitness

.....Then in an evening, he would creep out along the Edge all eyes and ears (not strictly true; his hearing was damaged from too much rifle practice during his National Service). He would sit motionless on the Edge to await the appearance of fox, deer and badger - a crepuscular creature himself!



Life wasn't all play. As County Bird Recorder from 1983, when he took over from Colin Wright, until 1990, he diligently collated countless records, tactfully corroborating rarities with his own eyes. His draughtsman skills came to the fore as he included delightful sketches in his reports. In 1987 he co-authored a book in the 'Where to Watch Birds' series, covering Shropshire, and again in 1997 when the second edition came out, but not before he had re-walked all the routes and made any necessary updates



*Common Cuckoos delegate parental duties to Reed Warblers  
along the Prees Branch Canal*

Venus Pool remained dear to him to the end of his days. He knew of its attraction to birds even before its acquisition by SOS. As his health started to fail him, he liked simply sitting and quietly observing – and drinking coffee. Obviously, to see more unusual birds was a bonus, but simply watching the antics of squabbling coot, marauding gulls or gliding swans gave him great pleasure.

Hopefully, many SOS members will endorse the above facts. Maybe less well known is the fact that they represent just one facet of Jack's interests. Rugby league inc. Wigan Warriors, good beer and drinking with mates, having a cuppa and chat with other lifelong friends, listening to all types of music, going to folk concerts, collecting DVDs, reading, learning French (despite at one time refusing to eat French apples!), attending film shows.....the list goes on and on, but above all, meeting up with Elaine who lives locally, and visiting Scotland to see Stephen and his grandson, Sami remained top of the list. Incidentally, Steven has followed in his father's footsteps and is a great naturalist, now living in Orkney and running Wildlife Tours [for more on that please see <http://orcadianwildlife.co.uk/typical-tours/> ].

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Elaine and Stephen and his family. Personally, I feel very privileged to have spent many hours in the company of this special friend, shared many wonderful walks,( inc. pub lunches) and had lots of fun over the course of nearly 30 years. I know others also have fond memories.....

.....from Nigel Green:- "It was Jack who got me interested in birds when a few of us went camping at Mr Lewis's camp site in St David's - probably about 1973 .....and we have had some great bird watching trips together. Waiting on a wet Hilbre island for the tide to go out, getting wet but still seeing some good birds and having a few laughs. Jack was a great guy who passed on his love of birds to anyone who went out with him."

.....from Leo Smith:- "When I first moved to Shropshire in 1985 I bought a copy of the Shropshire Bird Report in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum shop, and sent a few records to the County Bird Recorder. Jack immediately came round, encouraged me to do more, and in no time had persuaded me to join SOS, then help organise the first Bird Atlas, and then recruited me onto the SOS Management Committee.

We worked closely together on the Atlas, as he not only did many of the illustrations himself, but he also commissioned several other artists and collected a drawing for every species. His efforts and energy have contributed a lot to the SOS we have today.

He also introduced me to his favourite places in the Shropshire hills, especially the birds of the Long Mynd and Stiperstones, and he taught me a lot about them.

I particularly remember being in Callow Hollow (Long Mynd) with Jack in October 1986, when a large bird appeared out of the low mist. We each turned to the other and said simultaneously "Great Skua". An amazing sight, and still the only SOS record.

I am saddened by his death – the loss of a warm hearted friend, and a great influence and inspiration. I owe him a lot."

Colin Wright, with whom he worked closely at different times over the years, supplies the following information:

"Jack joined the SOS in 1969 a few years after he moved to Much Wenlock and his initials appeared in the Shropshire Bird Report (SBR) as a contributor of records from that year on almost until the present. By 1972 he had joined the Committee of the SOS serving until 1982. When I finally retired as County Bird Recorder in 1983 Jack assisted with the preparation of the SBR for that year and then took over as Recorder up to 1990 when he handed over to Geoff Smith.



Jack was always good at sketching birds and his line illustrations often featured in the reports from the 1980s until photographs finally took over. Jack contributed a number of special papers for the SBR writing on Nightingales in the Ironbridge Gorge (SBR 1973), on Sparrowhawks in the Wenlock area (SBR1978/79), on the Buzzard in Shropshire (SBR 1983) when he correctly predicted the spread of this species in Shropshire, on the Little Ringed Plover in Shropshire (SBR 1984) and in 1990 he wrote "A look into the past" when he reviewed the bird records in H E Forrest's Fauna of Shropshire which had been published in 1899. The last article I can find was a report on the first Long-tailed Skua to appear in Shropshire for 100 years (SBR 1999). If all this was not enough he was on the editorial committee of The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire which was finally published in 1992. Jack was responsible for many of the species accounts in that Atlas as well as many of the illustrations and as County Recorder during the period of the fieldwork for the Atlas 1985 to 1990 he was responsible for all the confidential records of the rarer species that were recorded.

The first County Atlas was pioneering work and Jack will always be remembered for his involvement in that project and for his regular contribution to bird recording in Shropshire from his arrival in the County until his death.  
.....He will be sadly missed..”

Finally, at the family's request, I include the following:

It was Jack's wish that any money donated in his memory be divided equally between the Alzheimer's Society and Shropshire Ornithological Society. Please would anybody wishing to make a contribution, make a cheque payable to Northwood and Sons and include on the reverse, "In memory of Jack Sankey".

(Address to send the donation to: Northwood and Sons, 52, High Street, Much Wenlock, TF13 6AE)

*Jude Duffy*



# Why our bird records must be made to count

Many readers of The Buzzard will share a common experience from the last six years. One involving early starts, tramping through the countryside in all kinds of weather and discovering forgotten corners of their home county. I am of course referring to the National and County Bird Atlases, which give us an up-to-date picture of the range and abundance of birds in Shropshire and beyond.

Once the Shropshire County Avifauna is residing on bookshelves across the county, what will be the legacy for nature conservation? The Avifauna is likely to contain a lot of good news, with some species being found across more of the county, perhaps with one or two new breeding species. I am certain there will also be plenty of bad news, with many species showing big declines. When the next Atlas is undertaken we may not see Turtle Dove gracing its pages, but what will the maps look like for Wood Warbler and Curlew?

Information is fundamental to nature conservation. Unless we know how the population and range of any particular species is changing, we cannot effectively conserve it. Importantly, we are also less able to convince others of the need for action and for resources to be found. There are ever growing threats to nature with the continued loss of habitats and species, the spectre of climate change and increased pressures on land. Money for nature conservation is becoming more difficult to access, and more than ever before information is going to be absolutely vital in making sure the money available for conservation is being directed to the right places. This is where bird survey information comes in.

It does not stop with the Atlas of course, as there are many other ways that bird information is used for conservation purposes. The red grouse survey on the Long Mynd is helping to inform the National Trust on the management of this SSSI. Surveys by Community Wildlife Groups are building a picture of the populations of breeding waders in the Shropshire Hills and are now directing conservation action. The BTO's Breeding Bird Survey enables us to monitor population trends and is vital in advocating the need for conservation action across the wider countryside. WeBS counts have been used to protect sites through the EU Birds Directive and Ramsar. And by uploading our records onto BirdTrack, we can contribute to a huge amount of data to support conservation action, every time that we go birdwatching.

I am already poring over the Shropshire Atlas maps to better understand the scale of the conservation challenges and how I can convince others of the same. I am sure that I will not be alone.

*Mike Shurmer*

# Good news from South Africa

The Southern Oceans seem very distant from land-locked Shropshire. Aside from the odd moribund Magnificent Frigatebird, spectacular seabirds are not something you could envisage finding, for example, on Chelmarsh Reservoir (apart from in some birders more fanciful dreams). However, we all feel great sadness for the dire problems that many of the world's seabirds face.

Seventeen of the world's 22 albatross species are threatened with extinction. Bycatch in trawl and longline fisheries is a key reason behind their decline, especially in areas around the Southern Ocean. This led to the establishment of the Albatross Task Force ([www.rspb.org.uk/albatross](http://www.rspb.org.uk/albatross)) in 2005, by the RSPB and Birdlife International, which first started in South Africa and now operates in seven countries.

There are quick, economical and easy techniques that can reduce seabird deaths, and the Task Force employs a team of instructors working with fishermen at sea, and fisheries management bodies, to find ways of reducing the numbers of seabirds being entangled or otherwise harmed by fishing operations.

Recent news from the South African hake trawl fishery has shown how effective these measures can be, with an astonishing 99% reduction in the number of albatrosses being killed. Bronwyn Maree, Albatross Task Force Leader for BirdLife South Africa, is quoted in a recent report as saying "We've worked closely with this fishery to demonstrate that avoiding seabird bycatch is good for business and for the environment. Moreover it's relatively easy given the right tools. Bird-scaring lines have now become part of everyday life at sea and fishermen no longer resist their use".

Being part of the Albatross Task Force is no easy job. It involves going to sea in all kinds of weathers in some of the wildest oceans of the world, building respect and credibility with fishing crews and convincing fishermen to use practical techniques to avoid albatross mortality. These are true conservation heroes on the front line who deserve our support, and the Albatross Task Force blog give a real insight into their work <http://bit.ly/1gvsMUY>

*Mike Shurmer*

# Recent field trip reports

*Organised by Sue Brealey*

**RSPB Ynys Hir**  
**Sunday, 30th March 2014**

A group of about 18 people arrived after driving from Shropshire to this popular reserve on the banks of the river Dovey. The weather was clear, if a bit chilly at times.

It was decided to walk the Salt Marsh route for the morning and so this was started after having looked at the feeding station by the reception centre. Here Siskin, a welcome observation, Chaffinch, Robin, Great Tit, Blue Tit were noted. On the pool below Canada Geese and Mallard were noted. On walking through the wooded area there were good views of Magpie and a very busy Jay, with Chiffchaff, plus Treecreeper. On arrival at the Marian Mawr Hide, there were good views over the recently worked areas bellows. A great many trees had been taken down leaving a quite bare area, but the group were rewarded with good views of a couple of Wheatear, a Little Grebe on the pool, Little Egret further out. Having decided that there was not much else to view, the group started off towards the Saltings Hide. The path can be closed due to flooding, but it was clear on this occasion. From this hide, the salt marsh was further studied and Barnacle Geese, Shelduck, Herring Gull, Pintail, Oystercatcher, Great black backed Gull, Black headed Gull, Curlew, Cormorant, Redshank, Widgeon and Red headed Merganser were noted. On the other grassland, Pied Wagtail and Pheasant were noted. Having had such a good morning, the group returned to reception centre to have lunch at the picnic area. While observing the feeding station again Great Spotted Woodpecker, Goldfinch and a very smart Redpoll were added to the list.

After lunch the group started going through the wooded area towards the Ynys Hir Hide which gives such lovely views over the reserve, but it was rather quiet there so the group moved on to the Boardwalk trail. Along here Meadow Pipit were noted as well as Brimstone and Peacock butterflies. At the new Ynys Feurig Hide, Teal, Mute Swan, Reed Bunting, Stonechat, and Blackcap were noted. After walking back towards the reception centre Blackbird and Buzzard were seen. Some members of the group saw Goldcrest, Coal Tit, and Nuthatch. A Raven flew overhead.

The group arrived back in order to start the journey back to Shropshire having had a really good day out. Approximately 50 birds were seen.

## **Rutland Water Nature Reserve**

### **Sunday, 27th April 2014**

A group of 24 people arrived at the Shirehall, and the coach started off promptly for the journey to Rutland Water. The weather forecast showers so all were hoping that these would not occur. On arrival at the and after paying the entrance fee to the reserve at the Egleton Reception Centre, the group split up to look at this very large reserve with many hides.

As everyone went their own way the reporter can only mention those areas which she visited starting off with the Sandpiper Hide which overlooked Lagoon 4. Before the walk to this hide the feeding station was looked and here Blackbird, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow & Pheasant were noted. Once at the hide Mute Swan, Shelduck, Coot, Lapwing, Tufted Duck, Greylag Goose, Mallard, Great crested Grebe were some of the commoner birds seen. But there was also a Sanderling, a couple of Ringed Plover, an Egyptian Goose, Common Gull, Whimbrel, Dunlin, and a short glimpse of a Linnet. On a final look round some Wigeon were noted and Oystercatcher. Unfortunately the Shoveller Hide overlooking Lagoon 3 was not visited but other group members did go there and Black Tern and Garganey were the highlights. Visits to the Osprey, Grebe and Redshank Hides overlooking Lagoon 2, proved interesting with an artificial Sand Martin Bank, which was fully occupied by plenty of Sand Martin. The only other hirundine present were Swallow. Also present were Black Headed Gull, Common Tern, Pochard, Teal, Little Grebe and 2 Stove Dove landed to rest. In between the hides and on the walk back to the centre, having had lunch in one of the hides, Sedge Warbler, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Garden Warbler were seen but a Wood Warbler was heard.

At this point, the group travelled in the coach round to the Lyndon end of the reserve. At a feeding station, Tree Sparrow were seen to the delight of all plus Chaffinch, and Goldfinch. Then the group slowly made their way to the Waderscrape Hide, where there were good views of Osprey. On the way, Red legged Partridge, Woodpigeon, Carrion Crow, Rook, Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler were seen. Other birds seen at the Waderscrape Hide Lapwing, Pheasant, on the opposite bank, Great crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Reed Bunting, Grey Heron, Common Tern, Moorhen and Coot. To the delight of the group, a Water Vole kept passing between the scrapes. It was great to see this endangered animal. On the way back some of the group visited the Tufted Duck Hide, where there was not much to see, and then came to the Deep Water Hide. On the way, Buzzard was seen flying, a Dunnock seen and Wren heard. At the hide Gadwall were noted and it seemed that that was that.

But then a very sharp eyed member saw what was another bird of the day, a Great Northern Diver, nearly in full summer plumage.

Back at the centre, great fun was had at the feeding station where Robin and Kestrel were seen, by a Bank Vole which was housed under the bird table which came out every so often at blistering speed before returning to its nest.

This proved a fitting end to an enjoyable day had by all, where the rain did keep in abeyance, only coming down on the journey back.

Other birds seen by the group included Shoveller, Marsh Harrier, Arctic Tern, Lesser Whitethroat, Greenfinch. The total species seen could be between 55 and 60.

## **The BTO – nice organisation, shame about the logo!**

I am a lifelong member and supporter of the BTO but I confess that I don't like their new 'eye' logo, or the strapline 'Looking out for birds' and I know that I am not alone. The old logo was a gannet over sea, the waves representing graphs. Central to the work of the BTO is surveying and counting birds and interpreting data, scientifically; then BTO's data can be used by others including government agencies, the RSPB etc. The new logo and strapline 'Looking out for birds' suggest only that, just looking or perhaps some level of protection for them, which is more what the RSPB does.



John's old Gannet & graph  
BTO membership badge

A logo and strapline should express, graphically, an organisation's Unique Selling Feature (USF) - what it does that others do not, and the old BTO logo did just that. The new logo seems to me to be a triumph of marketing people over those understanding the true nature of the BTO. So I would not have chosen the 'eye' logo and would have gone for a strapline such as 'Making your birds count', with the double meanings directly relevant to the BTO.

So, though I'm not a badge person, I do still sometimes wear an old 'gannet' badge – and I remain 100% behind the BTO's real work.

*John Tucker*



# Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Sarah Gibson, Communications Officer

## A boost for butterflies

Butterflies are off to a flying start this spring, thanks to warmer weather. One of their Shropshire hotspots is the Oswestry hills, where several national rarities are still found, along with many other commoner species. Pearl-bordered fritillaries were sighted in April at Llanymynech Rocks and Jones's Rough nature reserves and another adjoining site.

Many butterfly species are in decline, so it is a cause of great celebration that the Trust has been awarded a grant from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Limited) which will fund work on nature reserves and 18 Wildlife Sites in the botanically rich area of the Oswestry hills for the next five years.

The aim is to restore and connect species-rich limestone grassland and increase butterfly populations throughout a series of core sites, wildlife corridors and stepping stones. Linking butterfly colonies gives them a much stronger chance of survival and expansion: where populations are isolated, they become weakened through in-breeding and vulnerable to local extinction.

More than 30 species of butterflies have been recorded in the Oswestry hills and the restoration of flower-rich grasslands will benefit all these beautiful insects; common blues, small coppers, peacocks, tortoiseshells and commas among them. We are particularly concerned to help certain rarer butterflies, which have undergone steep declines across the UK, but still have strongholds in this area: small pearl-bordered fritillary, grizzled skipper, green hairstreak and dingy skipper.

As with all wildlife conservation, the overwhelming need is to get the habitat right. We have found 18 Wildlife Site owners willing to take part in the project, to make changes to the management of their land that will allow flower-rich

grassland to flourish and attract butterflies, bees and a host of other insects. The landowners will be supported by the project in practical ways, including help with scrub clearance and financial assistance towards the cost of fencing to enable grazing. The Trust has a small flock of Hebridean/Shropshire sheep that munch key nature reserves into shape.

Botanical surveys by local volunteers will take place throughout the summer to ensure we get the management right. Meanwhile, we have been teaching another group of people identification skills so they can monitor butterfly numbers on the participating sites.

A further course has been arranged for 12th August, when Dr Simon Spencer will run a training day in the identification of late summer species including browns and skippers.

Please contact Rhona Goddard, Reserves Officer, if you would like to come along: 01743 284292, [Rhonag@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:Rhonag@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)

## **Share your enthusiasm with the naturalists of tomorrow**

They were still talking enthusiastically as they boarded their bus: “Thought birds might be boring but this was exciting.” “Never guessed I’d see a real live snake.” “Must find out more about beetles.” “The birdsong makes it beautiful.” “Just brilliant.”

In two hours at Venus Pool these twelve children of various ages had listed birds, butterflies and flowers, asking thoughtful questions as they moved from place to place. Their sharp eyes noticed beetles and moths new to the adults present. We all learned from one another. When they return to the classroom their Learning Mentors will make sure they apply their new knowledge to other areas of the curriculum.

If you want to see your local patch through new keen eyes and recall the thrill of early birding, contact your local primary school and offer an expedition.

There is great satisfaction to be had in sharing experience with those who will one day be responsible for safeguarding Shropshire’s wildlife.

*David Peck*



## BTO News

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### **National Atlas Maps**

Many of you will have contributed to the latest national atlas and I know that some of you have been involved in all the atlases since the first one in 1968. For the first time ever, over 3,500 maps showing the distribution, range change and abundance for over five hundred different species of bird that have been recorded in Britain and Ireland since 1968 are freely available online. Those for the Corncrake show the huge range loss that the species has experienced since 1968, while those for the Gadwall show its spread out of the east. The spectacular recovery of the Marsh Harrier, which was down to a single breeding pair in the early 70s, is the perfect illustration of the importance of collecting and storing data over time. This huge resource produced by the BTO would not have been possible without the help of countless volunteers. Visit [www.bto.org/mapstore](http://www.bto.org/mapstore) to view maps.

### **Woodcock survey**

Last year 20 sites were visited at dusk to look for roding woodcock and birds were found at just four of them. This was a repeat of a survey carried out in 2003 when 23 sites were covered and woodcock found at six. The results are not directly comparable as the coverage of sites was not consistent in the two surveys. National results confirm an overall decline as indicated in Bird Atlas 2007-11, however there were differences between regions with some, particularly northern England showing an increase. Further analysis of the data and habitat are ongoing. Volunteers who are willing to monitor woodcock sites annually are required and should contact Greg Conway [woodcock@bto.org](mailto:woodcock@bto.org) for more details.

### **Bird Track goes global**

Even in the UK it can be a problem submitting records to the correct person when in an unfamiliar location, this becomes more difficult when travelling abroad. All your records can now be entered on Bird Track and they will find their way to the appropriate organisation. For those of you suffering withdrawal symptoms from atlas fieldwork your European records will contribute to the second European Breeding Atlas.

### **Early spring**

After the prolonged cold of last year Garden Bird Watchers reported good numbers of small tortoiseshell this spring, two weeks ahead of normal.

# Bird Notes January, February and March 2014

*Yvonne Chadwick*

**Mute Swan** Once again, the highest counts were at Coundlane, with a peak of 119 noted on 9 Feb.

**Bewick's Swan** The family of 4 continued to be seen regularly early in the year at both Coundlane and Venus Pool. The last sighting came on 23 Feb.

**Whooper Swan** On 17 Feb a count of 15 was made at Coundlane, the highest of the winter for this location. Between 2 and 8 birds were regularly here and at Venus Pool until the last sighting on 3 Mar. In Edgerley and Melverley there were 20+ birds on 3 Jan and 24 on 16 Jan, with 7 remaining on 18 Mar.

**Egyptian Goose** A pair were seen at Knighton Reservoir on 9 Mar and one was at Venus Pool on 13 Mar.

**Pintail** By far the highest counts came from the floods at Pentre and Edgerley, with 50+ on 7 Jan and 40+ on 16 Jan. Elsewhere, 9 were at Whixall floods on 5 Jan, with 14 on 19 Jan. Up to 4 birds were seen at Venus Pool during Jan and one was at Springfield Mere in Shrewsbury at the end of Feb.

**Scaup** The two 1st winter females at Priorslee Lake continued to be seen at the beginning of the year and were joined by a 1st winter drake on 11 Jan. Sightings of the 3 birds were regular through to 19 Feb, when 5 (2 drakes) were noted. Just one female was then reported on 24 Feb & 13 Mar. Elsewhere, a 1st winter female was at The Mere on 15 Feb and one at Wood Lane on 24 Feb.

**Velvet Scoter** A first winter female was found at Priorslee Lake on 15 Jan. It was then seen at Priorslee Flash, before moving back to the Lake. Reported most days through to 15 Feb. Another report came from Trench Pool on 7 Mar.

**Goldeneye** Seen at The Mere, Ellesmere (max 23 on 19 Jan), floods at Cound Lane (3 on 17 Feb), Cole Mere and Venus Pool.

**Grey Partridge** Present at Venus Pool (max 12), Berwick Park (2), Broseley (2) and Wood Lane (1).

**Great Northern Diver** The juvenile on The Mere at Ellesmere continued to be reported in early Jan, with the last sighting being on 19 Jan.

**Black-necked Grebe** One was seen near the dam at Chelmarsh on 4 Feb.

**Osprey** One flew over Meole Village, Shrewsbury on 23 Mar.

**Hen Harrier** On Whixall Moss a male continued to be seen, with sightings of a ringtail also being noted from 4 Jan. Both birds were last reported on 11 Jan.

**Merlin** Sightings came from Ightfield 1 Jan, Whixall floods 19 Jan, Pen-yr-Estyn wetland 14 Feb and Venus Pool 27 Mar. One was also seen attacking Starlings at the Westbury roost on 10 Mar.

**Little Egret** Single birds were seen at Wood Lane, Ludlow, White Mere, Prescott and The Mere. Three were also at Whixall Moss on 18 Mar.

**Water Rail** Sightings came from Ludlow, Venus Pool, Wood Lane, Benthall, Oswestry Golf Course and Priorslee Lake.

**Golden Plover** High counts in Jan were; 700 at Smythemoor, 430 at Edgmond, 220 at Brown Clee and 200 at Tong, with others at Stiperstones, Shifnal, Long Mynd and Hunkington. The largest flock however were by floods at Tern Hill, with 600+ seen on several dates and a peak of 1000 on 26 Jan.

**Dunlin** Two were flying with Lapwings at Tern Hill on 2 Feb.

**Jack Snipe** Up to 4 were in the marsh behind the fishing pool at Benthall in Jan. One was also at Venus Pool, seen on 15 & 18 Mar and another was photographed on Catherton Common in Mar.

**Woodcock** Seen at Black Rhadley, Decker Hill, Mason's Bank, Woolston, Priorslee Lake, Market Drayton and flying over Overley near Wellington.

**Common Redshank** Two were on the floods at Pentre and another at Venus Pool, all on 17 Mar.

**Mediterranean Gull** Three adults were at The Mere on 8 Feb, with 2 also in the roost on 20 Feb and 1 Mar. One adult was at Priorslee Lake on 12 Feb.

**Iceland Gull** A 1st or 2nd winter was in the roost at Chelmarsh on 8 Feb. At The Mere, a 1st win was seen in the roost 20 Feb-14 Mar, and also at Wood Lane. In Telford, an adult, a 1st win and a 2nd win were all seen in late Feb and early Mar. Another adult was then at Candles Landfill in Telford on 26 Mar.

**Caspian Gull** The eighteen records from Telford were approx 7 individuals, from 1st win to adults, seen up to 6 Mar. At Chelmarsh an adult roosted on 20 Jan and two reports came from The Mere in Feb, a 2nd win and an adult.

**Kittiwake** The eight sightings of adult birds came from Chelmarsh on 3 Jan, Horsehay on 3-4 Jan, Ellesmere on 15 Feb, Oswestry on 20 Feb and Priorslee Lake on 25 Feb. Then Priorslee Flash and Lake between 23 & 27 Mar.

**Barn Owl** A pair was seen at one location in Feb. A further seven sites were mentioned where single birds were seen, most of these on more than one occasion during the quarter. A total of 15 records.

**Little Owl** Just two reports, both in March. These were at Eaton Constantine and Broseley. Pellets were also found in the Darnford area.

**Short-eared Owl** One was photographed on Whixall Moss late afternoon on 8 Jan and one was seen on the Long Mynd on 1 Mar.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** One was recorded in the Aston-on-Clun area on 18 Feb.

**Sand Martin** The earliest were at Venus Pool and Priorslee Lake on 18 Mar.

**Swallow** First seen at Venus Pool on 20 Mar.

**Stonechat** Not many reports; but birds were seen at Catherton Common, Titterstone Clee, Stiperstones and Long Mynd.

**Wheatear** The earliest seen was a single bird at Titterstone Clee on 11 Mar, with further sightings here on 19 & 24 Mar. Other records during the period came from Squilver on 18 Mar and Long Mynd on 20 Mar.

**Willow Warbler** The only report making it into this quarter, was of one singing at Middle Pool, Trench on 25 Mar.

**Firecrest** One was seen in a yew tree at The Mere, Ellesmere on 13 Feb.

**Willow Tit** Two birds were seen on several occasions at feeders on Betton Moss. At Priorslee Lake, singing was heard at three locations and one was noted at Middle Pool in Trench, the first time the observer had noted one there.

**Starling** A huge murmuration of an estimated 500,000 was at Westbury throughout Feb and continued to be seen into the middle of March. Elsewhere,

40-50,000 were in Bridgnorth and 10,000 in Newport. Wood Lane also reported 3,000.

**Brambling** Twenty two sightings came from seventeen widespread locations throughout the quarter. The highest counts being 25 in Ludlow on 3 Jan, 25 at Bowhills near Alveley on 2 Feb and 14 at Betton Moss on 15 Mar.

**Linnet** A large flock present at Venus Pool during the winter, with peak counts of around 150 on 2 Jan and 120 on 23 Jan. In Upper Dinchope at least 250 were present on 31 Jan and 227 at Upton Magna on 24 Mar.

**Common Redpoll** Reports were received between 24 Jan and 18 Mar from Randley, Ightfield, Postenplain, Decker Hill and Whixall Moss.

**Two-barred Crossbill** The 2 males and 1 female continued to be seen throughout Jan-Mar in the Postenplain area of the Wyre Forest.

**Parrot Crossbill** One was reported on 18 Feb at Postenplain. Then an immature male on 15 Mar and a pair on 16 Mar.

**Snow Bunting** One was seen on the Brown Clee on 2 Feb.

**Corn Bunting** The seven reports came from Edgmond, Badger, Decker Hill, Waters Upton, Eyton upon the Weald Moors and Child's Ercall Airfield.

Also recorded: Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Cackling Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Barnacle Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pochard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Goosander, Red Grouse, Red-legged Partridge, Pheasant, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Red Kite, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Curlew, Green Sandpiper, Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Feral Pigeon, Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Tawny Owl, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, GS Woodpecker, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Dipper, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Crow, Raven, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Redpoll, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Common Crossbill.

Records: **9,307** Species: **136**

Some sightings are subject to acceptance by the County Records Committee.

**Records for the next Bird Notes by 7 July please.**

## Records Accepted by the County Records Committee:

### 2012

Caspian Gull	One (adult)	Candles Landfill	30 Nov-8 Feb '13
Caspian Gull	One (1st win)	Candles Landfill	27 Dec-1 Feb '13
Nightjar	Two (max)	South Shropshire	12-28 Jun

### 2013

Tundra Bean Goose	One (uncertain origin)	Venus Pool	1 Oct-16 Nov
Cackling Goose	One (presumed escape)	Priorslee Flash, and Venus Pool	5 Apr-27 Aug
Great White Egret	One	Tittenley Pool	13 Oct
Glossy Ibis	One	Stokesay, Craven Arms	29 Sep & 5-11 Oct
Spoonbill	One	Venus Pool	28 Sep-3 Oct
Common Crane	One	Whixall Moss	26 Apr
Knot	One	Long Lane floods	15 May
Caspian Gull	One (3rd win)	Candles Landfill, River Severn Buildwas	3 Jan-10 Feb
Caspian Gull	One (adult)	Priorslee Lake, Candles Landfill	5-15 Jan
Caspian Gull	One (1st win)	Priorslee Lake, Horsehay, Candles Landfill	12 Jan-13 Feb
Caspian Gull	One (adult)	Candles Landfill	1 Feb
Caspian Gull	One (4th win)	Horsehay Pool, Candles Landfill	12-13 Feb
Caspian Gull	One (1st win)	Buildwas, Candles Landfill	21 Feb
Caspian Gull	One (1st win)	Priorslee Lake	28 Feb
Caspian Gull	One (1st win)	Candles Landfill	6 Mar
Caspian Gull	One (3rd win)	Candles Landfill	18 Mar
Iceland Gull	One (adult)	The Mere, Ellesmere	12 Jan
Iceland Gull	One (1st win)	Candles Landfill, Buildwas, Priorslee Lake	1-24 Feb
Iceland Gull	One (2nd win)	Horsehay Pool, Candles, Priorslee Lake	13-28 Feb
Iceland Gull	One (2nd win)	Horsehay Pool, Candles Landfill	21-22 Feb
Iceland Gull	One (1st win)	Priorslee Lake, Candles Landfill	12-28 Mar
Glaucous Gull	One (1st win)	Candles, River Severn, Venus Pool, Priorslee Lake	3 Jan-22 Feb
Glaucous Gull	One (2nd win)	The Mere, Ellesmere	2 Feb
Glaucous Gull	One (1st win)	Candles Landfill	6 Feb
Glaucous Gull	One (2nd win)	Candles Landfill, Priorslee Lake, Horsehay	22-28 Feb
Glaucous Gull	One (1st win)	Candles Landfill, Priorslee Lake	28 Mar

Nightjar	One	South Shropshire	2-3 Jun & 11 Jul
Nightjar	Two (max)	Central Shropshire	11-14 Jul
Hoopoe	One	Nr Felindre	20 May
Great Grey Shrike	One	All Saints Church, nr Richards Castle	3 Feb
Black Redstart	One	Farlow	7 Oct
Common Redpoll	One	Venus Pool	28 Nov
Coues' Arctic Redpoll	One (ringed)	Whixall Moss	9 Nov

## Ludlow Branch Programme

Secretary: Eileen Russell. Tel: 01584 876758.

Wednesday trips: Jim Martin. Tel: 01299 271532.

Weekend trips: John Mackintosh: Tel: 01584 861688.

9th July.

**Whixall Moss.** Half day by car. Meet at 10 am at Morris' Bridge. SJ 493355.

13th Aug.

**Chelmarsh.** Half day by car. Meet 10 am at SO 740874.

10th Sept.

**Venus Pool.** Half day by car. Meet 10 am in car park. SJ 548060.

# Main Society Field Trips

Indoor meetings resume in October, details in the programme, SOS website and the autumn issue of *The Buzzard*.

## Field Trips – Full Details in the Programme

(Check the website for fuller details)

Sunday 6 July - **Wyre Forest** (by car) – Joint trip with Shropshire RSPB Local Group - Leader: Ian Bagglely

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at the end of Dry Mill Lane at 9am

Grid Ref: SO772764

Directions – Having arrived in Bewdley from Button Oak, take B4190 (Cleobury Road). Turn right onto Hop Pole Lane, and then left into Dry Mill Lane. Car Park is at the end.

*There will be no Field Trips in August & September, the programme resumes on Sunday 19 October with a full day at Belvide Reservoir (by car).*

**Please share cars whenever possible.**

Shropshire Ornithological Society is supported by CJ Wildlife

[www.birdfood.co.uk](http://www.birdfood.co.uk)

