

The Buzzard



**Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
quarterly magazine**

No. 237

Autumn 2014

Society Officers and Officials

President:	Frank Gribble, MBE.
Vice Presidents:	Hugh Blofield, Colin Wright and Chris Whittles.
Chairman:	Peter Deans, Springfield, Cross Lane Head, Astley Abbots, Bridgnorth, Shrops. WV16 4SJ. 01746 766718. <i>petedeans@btinternet.com.</i>
Honorary Secretary:	Helen Griffiths, 104 Noel Hill Road, Cross Houses, Shrewsbury, SY5 6LD. 01743 761507. <i>hjgriffiths104@btinternet.com</i>
Treasurer:	Brian Andrews, 6 Sytche Close, Much Wenlock, Shrops. TF13 6JJ. 01952 727531. <i>bafca@yahoo.co.uk</i>
Membership:	Annie Andrews, contact details as above.
Management	Society Officers, Graham Walker and Sue Brealey.
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.
Development/ Publicity Chair:	Sue Brealey, 6 Nobold, Baschurch, Shrewsbury, SY4 2EA. 01939 262450. <i>susan@suebrealey.plus.com</i>
Committee:	Helen Griffiths 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>

www.shropshirebirds.com

Editorial

Next year will mark the Society's diamond anniversary, so the 2015 programme of speakers (see back cover) are all natives of Shropshire or have a long association with the county. There will be more news on the celebrations planned to mark the anniversary in future issues of *The Buzzard*.

As many of you will know, a gallant band of people are working hard to produce *The Birds of Shropshire*, a new avifauna of the county. It's likely that this will be the definitive work on the county's birdlife for many years so the authors and editorial team are under a lot of pressure to get things right, and to very tight deadlines. On page 15 there is an appeal from Tom Wall for information about cliff-nesting Sand Martins and Swifts. If you can help Tom with information please get in touch with him as soon as possible.

The increasing pressure on *BoS* contributors means that many of the people most likely to produce interesting features for *The Buzzard* are already committed, so this is an ideal opportunity for new talent to shine! Anything from a brief illustrated note, like the one about outdoor nesting Swallows, to a paper such as John Tucker's on Rookery recording, will be welcome. I'm happy to discuss ideas for articles or future studies that could be written up here. As a rule of thumb, a page is about 400 words, and images need to work in black and white. It's no problem if articles are shorter or longer than that as I can always add news snippets or shorter features in to avoid blank spaces.

We are still looking for someone to write the quarterly 'Bird Notes' for each edition of *The Buzzard*. The work is important for the Society and it would be nice to give Yvonne Chadwick a break after all this time, and allow her to concentrate on continuing to do such a good job of running the SOS's website.

For more information please email sosbirds@yahoo.co.uk or geoff.holmes.4@btinternet.com

Martin

Copy deadline for the winter 2014 edition of *The Buzzard* is 1st November. Please treat that date as a deadline rather than a start time!

Please send contributions to: martin@thegreenfuse.net

Welcome to our new members

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

Mr D Vaughan, Telford; Mr S E Priestley, Bury; Mr E J Adams, Telford; Mr L A Northwood, Shrewsbury; Mr S Walton, Broseley.

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.

The late Jack Sankey

Thank you to everyone who expressed their appreciation for Jack Sankey's obituary. I have to pass all of this praise on to Jude Duffy for producing the piece and co-ordinating content from so many of Jack's friends. It was a very nice tribute to a very special man.

Jack's son and daughter have passed on some of Jack's journals to Brian Andrews, Treasurer of the SOS.

The items are:

- *British Birds* January 1978 to December 1991 (including indices). This is a complete run with the exception of the July 1982 issue.
- *West Midland Bird Club Annual Report* 1976 to 1989, except 1982.

If anyone is interested in these items please contact Brian: 01952 727531 or bafca@yahoo.co.uk

Brian has also been given a framed, signed Michael Warren print of Ruddy Duck for the Society to dispose of. He will take this to the indoor meeting at Bayston Hill on Wednesday 1st October.

Red Kite in Shropshire 2014

The Welsh Kite Trust and the Shropshire Raptor Study Group again tried to find the nests of all breeding pairs of Red Kite in 2014.

Thirty four breeding pairs were found or reported, but three failed early before the nest was located, and 26 nests were found. Some of these nests are very close together: two are only a kilometre apart, and five sets are less than three kilometres apart.

The outcome of five of these breeding attempts is unknown, and nine of the found nests (plus the three unfound nests that failed early) failed, but 17 were successful, and 31 young fledged from them. Twenty of the fledged young were ringed and tagged.

This is the largest number of nests found in one year since Kites returned to breed here in 2005, after an absence of 130 years, but there were more fledged young (35) in 2011, from only 20 found nests. However productivity was much higher in 2014 than in the previous two years, which were badly affected by severe weather. Since the first successful breeding in 2006, more than 170 young are known to have flown from Shropshire nests, and 141 have been tagged.

Only one pair was in the northern half of the County (the SJ ordnance survey grid squares), but there were many reports of individual birds in the north, so breeding is expected here in the near future. The steady move eastwards continued, with two nests very close together on Wenlock Edge, and another almost as far east as Brown Clee. Individual young birds were also seen on Titterstone Clee, but the pair that probably nested there last year did not return.

As the population increases and spreads, nests become harder to find, so the breeding population is now undoubtedly well over the 34 pairs located.

An adult was found dead on the floor directly under one nest. There were no visible signs of injury or persecution, but the landowner had used rat poison in a nearby barn, so it is likely that this caused the death of the Kite. Two well grown chicks were later found dead in the nest, presumably from the same cause. The corpse of the adult has been sent away for post-mortem analysis, but the results have not yet been received. Rat poison is a common cause of death, and it is found in potentially lethal amounts in most dead Kites sent for post-mortem.

Thirteen of the nesting adults had wing tags, and eight were read. A five year old female was found near The Stiperstones, less than two kilometres from her natal site, and a nearby four-year-old male had moved just over four kilometres.

Four three-year-old 2011 birds (two males, a female and an unsexed bird) had moved an average of just over eight kilometres, and the two youngest (the two-year-old 2012 birds) had moved the furthest, an average of just over 13 kilometres.

Six of the eight came from Shropshire nests, but one of the 2011 birds came from near Llanbister in Wales (11 kilometres travelled), and one of the two 2012 birds, a male, had come 11 kilometres from a north Herefordshire nest. The further travelled Kite, the second two-year-old 2012 bird, moved only 16 kilometres, from near Bishop's Castle to Wenlock Edge, illustrating yet again how sedentary Kites are.

If anyone knows the location of a 2014 Kite nest, please don't assume we know about it.

Please tell Leo Smith 01694 720296, leo@leosmith.org.uk

The Red Kite Experience

The Red Kite Experience at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre in Craven Arms now has planning permission, and feeding will start in the autumn, with the aim of attracting a limited number of Kites so people can see these wonderful birds at close quarters. Once they are turning up regularly, visiting arrangements will be displayed on the SOS website. As 10 of these 34 pairs nest within 10 kilometres of the Centre, and there are probably others as well, the wait should not be very long.

New longevity record for Buzzard

The oldest known wild Buzzard has been reported by the BTO. It was ringed as a nestling in Cumbria on 16th June 1985 and found dead 12km to the northeast on 27th July 2013. The typical lifespan of a Buzzard in the wild is 12 years, so GK41814's 28 years 1 month and 11 days, breaking the previous record by nearly three years, is quite special.

Rookery recording: 2007-2012 - county Atlas versus SRS08

John Tucker

Introduction

During the breeding seasons of 2008 to 2011 the SOS carried out fieldwork for the BTO's national breeding bird survey, adding 2012 to top-up the county's own data. Concurrently, in 2008 and with a handful of additional records from the following three years, the author organised the Shropshire Rookeries Survey 2008, SRS08.

This paper compares and contrasts some aspects of both methodologies, one systematic the other random, and their results. It offers a quantification of the extent of a problem common to all bird surveys – the effectiveness of observer cover - and is not a criticism of survey scheme recorders, among whom the author counts himself.

The Atlas 2008-2012 methods

Every one of Shropshire's 870 tetrads was examined for breeding records of all species, rook included. Early in the year rookeries are evident and easy to record as 'confirmed' breeding. Later in the year it is possible to record rooks breeding in a tetrad by seeing young being fed and some such records may have strayed over tetrad boundaries and inflated the assessment.

Most tetrads were allocated to individual recorders, many taking on multiples, and tetrad lists were monitored and where necessary 'topped-up' by additional visits by their designated recorders or by other recorders.

Shropshire Rookery Survey, SRS08, Methods

SRS08 was organised privately by the author. Observers were asked to submit records of all rookeries found during 2008 and to report details such as date and grid reference, nest count and tree species in use. Over the following four years, within the Atlas survey period (see below) a further 20 rookeries were added to that list bringing the total to 560. Special thanks are due to John Harding who kindly put the rookeries on Google Earth maps of the county, online and as they were submitted, so that observers could see the sites already know to the scheme. SRS08 mirrored, in some respects, the BTO rookeries Survey of 1975 (a few into '76 and '77) in which 29 observers were asked to survey entire 10km squares and report site grid references and nest-counts, the records maintained and analysed by tetrad (Wright, 1976).

Of the 137 observers providing records of 560 rookeries to SRS08 some 'adopted' the scheme and submitted many sites. Notably, those submitting ten or more were as follows, the author (83), Geoff Holmes (75), John Harding and Leigh Jones (37), Mike Wooton and Clive Williamson (35), Martin Grant (19), Sally Cuthbertson (17) and Mike Wallace (10). Sincere thanks are extended to all contributing observers.

Comparison of results

1. The Atlas recorded confirmed/probable breeding in 488 of the 870 tetrads (56.1%) of county tetrads), more than half of them, while SRS08 recorded rookeries in only 337 tetrads (38.7%), over a third of them. This is not surprising, the Atlas forcing a search of every tetrad so found breeding in 151 tetrads more than did SRS08.

While there was considerable overlap of positive tetrads being recorded by both surveys, in 275, each found positive squares which the other missed.

2. The Atlas recorded breeding in 210 tetrads in which SRS08 did not. Again, for the same reason given in 1, this is not surprising – Atlas observers were getting everywhere.

3. SRS08 recorded breeding in 62 tetrads in which the Atlas did not. This may be surprising but should not be. The Atlas method is, evidently, effective at detecting breeding but, even with a species such as rook when their colonies are amply evident given a decent view, and are often within hearing range, some can be overlooked.

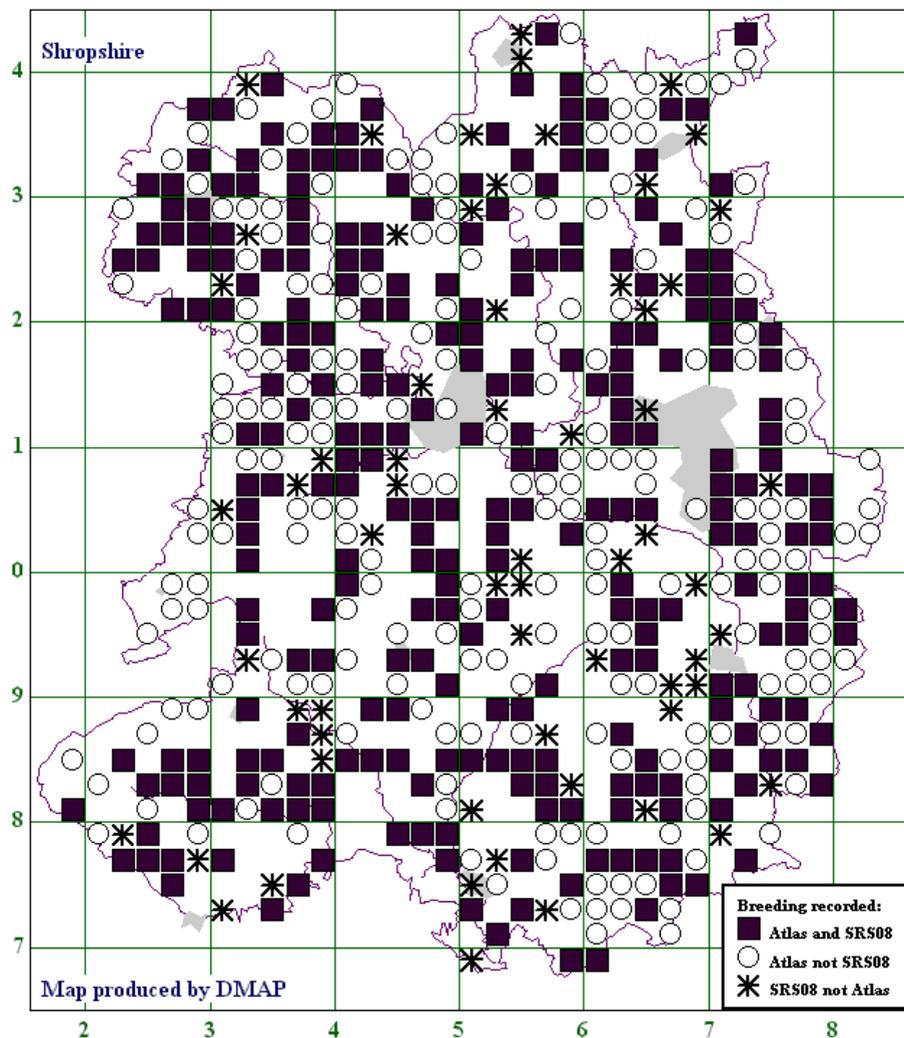
4. Among the 62 tetrads found by SRS08 and missed by the Atlas were 75 rookeries (average 1.21 per tetrad). Most 'missed' tetrads contained only one rookery and a few contained more, leaving less excuse for having missed them; six 'missed' tetrads were reported with two, two contained three and one contained four rookeries.

Conclusion

Survey schemes vary in their effectiveness and results always need to be viewed with a mind to their limitations. This note draws attention to some differences detected during two concurrent attempts to examine the distribution of one species in one county, the rook in Shropshire.

The last sentence of the introduction deserves repeating in that this paper "offers a quantification of the extent of a problem common to all bird surveys – effectiveness of observer cover - the and is not a criticism of scheme recorders, among whom the author counts himself."

Rooks breeding in Shropshire tetrads; two surveys



Note: The data for this paper derive from a spreadsheet logging county data from the 1975/76 BTO National Rookeries Survey along with that from both SOS 2008-2012 county Atlas and SRS08. Great care has been taken in the compilation and analyses of the data and it is believed to be accurate. A copy of the spreadsheet has been lodged with the SOS.

“Ghost of the Himalayas”

A 5-minute film clip showing the first ever footage of a Snow Leopard hunting, filmed by Doug Allan and Mark Smith aired on the BBC “Planet Earth” instantly catapulted this feline apparition into pole position on my 'bucket list'! The hostile, inaccessible environment, its rarity, not forgetting how beautiful this cat is all make for a challenging, amazing experience. One location has in recent years consistently produced reliable sightings, more importantly it is accessible to travellers, Hemis National Park. Located in India's northern state of Ladakh, Hemis has a high density of Snow Leopards due to healthy population of prey species, typically, Blue Sheep, Argali, Urial and Ibex. This high concentration of cats is accentuated during the winter months when their prey descend into the valleys in search of pasture and in the early part of the year Snow Leopards are actively seeking mates.

So with flights organised to Leh via Delhi, the adventure was under way. The flight from Delhi to Leh is a short but a spectacular one. Flying over the snow covered Great Himalayas range, like white peaks of icing crowning a cake, it's a stunning introduction to this epic mountain range. Spending my first 2 days in Leh acclimatising to the altitude 3000m asl (above sea level). Gentle birding walks, short birding trips from my hotel, species like Ibisbill reside on the River Choglomsar nearby. Alternatively shopping around the town, pashmina shawls are a speciality here, or visiting nearby monasteries. The Delo Llama has a summer palace which he visits during July when thousands of pilgrims descend on the town.



The morning of the third day I'm driven to Hemis NP as far as vehicle access allows, then a trek to Rumbak camp via a steep sided valley complete with a frozen river. My tent etc. is carried on mule trains, after 1 or 2 hours I arrived in camp at an altitude of 3500m asl. Its then I realise the enormity of my task, looking around at mountain peaks and ridges, sheer cliffs, rocky scree slopes stretching away in all directions, how on earth do I find a large cat that is so well adapted and can disappear into its surroundings amongst this vast landscape? The sheer scale of the environment is breathtaking it's then I realise why these beautiful cats are so elusive.

My first afternoon was spent above camp on one of the many lookouts with my guide Dorjay. The lookouts are small hillocks 300-400m high and give panoramic views across valleys and mountain slopes. The 'spotters' (usually local village boys or NP rangers) spend hours looking out for any movement or signs of leopards. We spent several hours scanning the scree and ridge lines looking for any sign of movement. From our lookout we noticed a group of Swedish trekkers getting animated on a higher lookout, adjusting scopes and shuffling around taking turns to look through a particular scope. They were onto something! We quickly descended from our position, and with all my respiratory organs at bursting point and my heart trying to explode from my chest we ascended the next hill. When I finally reached the summit I just about mouthed "what can you see?" the response almost saw me go into cardiac arrest, "LEOPARD"! "WHERE?" I screamed, whimpered is probably more accurate, "look through this scope" someone replied. I could barely hold the scope steady, there in the middle of the field of view a Snow Leopard was walking nonchalantly up a scree slope on the other side of the valley no more than 1.5 km away!!

I could barely contain myself, less than 5hours into my 8 day stay in Hemis I had nailed the 'Holy Grail' of big cats. To see this awesome cat in the flesh is just indescribable. Even though 1.5km sounds distant it was much more than I could ever have expected of this elusive animal. Whoops and high fives all round and possibly 1 or 2 expletives.....no-one could quite believe how lucky we were. We watched in silence as this magnificent cat walked slowly up the slope, 'sprain-ting' prominent rocks as he went, we watched this beautiful, powerful, majestic creature just amble up the opposite mountain for a good hour before it crossed into the next valley. The light was fading on my first afternoon in Rumbak Valley, you couldn't have wished for a better start to any mammal trip, the camp was 'buzzing' that night with everyone well and truly delighted with our Snow Leopard encounter and the local rum was flowing freely!

The following day Dorjay and I made a 7 hour trek up into a remote valley, the direction the Snow Leopard was heading the night before. Unfortunately we found only tracks, no sign of any animals. Tibetan Partridge was the highlight today in the fields near the house of Dorjay's aunt, where we had butter tea and a welcome rest. She told us that her family had brought down their yaks from the mountain, because the previous evening local wolves had been seen nearby. The wolf tracks were clearly visible in the snow covering the slopes above their house. Hemis also supports good numbers of Wolves, Lynx and Fox.

The next few days followed the same pattern trekking into different valleys, plenty of 'signs' but no leopards. The birding in winter is very slow, but its all quality, White Browed Tit-warblers forage amongst the willows alongside the frozen river. Brandts Mountain Finch and Tibetan Snowfinch form roaming flocks on the scree slopes and fallow fields, Hill Pigeon, Fire Fronted Serin, Twite and Horned Lark feeding in fields around Rumbak Junction. Robin and Brown Accentors are common as are Golden Eagle, Lammergeir, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Red and Yellow Billed Chough. Chukars are everywhere and Himalayan Snowcock 'whistle' from the mountain sides. In Leh town a small stream near my hotel held Brown Dipper, White Capped Water Redstart and a Wallcreeper. Black Throated Thrush and White Winged Redstart are very common, hundreds are seen in any scrub like vegetation near town.

Late in the afternoon of day 4 we 'lucked in' again. A group had stopped for a picnic lunch at Rumbak Junction with their guide. Someone noticed movement in the distance, easily 3 km away, then the guide saw it too. A female and well grown Leopard cub were walking along a distant ridge. This was just outrageous, 3 Leopards in 4 days.....we managed to stalk these two animals for over 2 hours before we finally had to head back to camp in the failing light. We easily got to within 800m of these fantastic cats. Despite the park rangers being out just after dawn the following morning there was no sign of last nights cats, just their trail in the snow as they crossed over the summit the night before.

The 9th March dawned bitterly cold but sun shining. whilst enjoying a hot coffee in the dining tent I heard a commotion outside and Dorjay burst in "Leopard" he shouted, all hell let loose..... a female and well grown cub were on a scree slope above camp. Within minutes scopes were set up and directions given, incredible Snow Leopard before breakfast! I know I've been described as "lucky" but this was ridiculous. We watched, what proved to be the same female and cub from the previous sighting, practically all day from camp. They spent a good part of the day sleeping in amongst the rocks with just the occasional spurt of activity.



Their ability to completely blend in to their surroundings is just amazing. Even though they are in the scope and you know exactly where they are, they just melt into their surroundings. At one point the adult went into hunting mode, down on her belly she was stalking something. We thought she was interested in a nearby Snowcock when suddenly she sprinted towards some scree and a Woolly Hare broke cover and bounded across the slope to freedom only narrowly escaping. She casually walked back to the rocks and groomed her offspring before they disappeared over the ridge.

The 11th March we had the only snowfall of the trip, starting just before lunch and continuing all day and into the night, at least the temperatures rose from -10 to -4 during the night. The nights are incredibly cold in your tent. Any type of liquid or gel freezes unless you put it into your sleeping bag with you. The coldest I experienced was -19 C, however the previous week it had been -28 C.

The morning dawned with snow lying all around, as this was my last full day in Hemis I was keen to get a look at one more cat before I left. With the fresh lying snow it was obvious that leopards had been right in the middle of camp, following the frozen river downstream through the valley.

With all the fresh tracks it was obvious which valley to try. We walked downstream following the leopard tracks into Tarbung valley. Halfway up the valley there were so many tracks it made it very difficult to decipher what and how many leopards were in the the valley and which way they had progressed.

It was now midday and all of the mammal watchers left in camp had come to this valley, so the porters arrived with our hot lunch. Yes hot lunch, not matter how far from camp you were a young porter brought you a hot lunch onto the mountainside and if you're near to camp afternoon tea & biscuits, very civilised!

We ate lunch, which was always delicious, and had been sitting around for about 2 hours when suddenly one the spotters pointed out 2 Leopards on the cliff side opposite where we sat, there eyesight is amazing, at least 10 experienced naturalists/birders had been scanning the area for hours and had not seen these animals sitting there looking straight at us. This was by far the best sighting of all, 300 metres across the valley 2 full grown cubs sat in the sun occasionally stretching and plenty of yawning.

Ten minutes later mum was found lying at the bottom of the cliff sleeping 200m below. The confusing multiple tracks suddenly made sense, mum and offspring had been hunting the valley during the night. We sat and watched this fantastic sight for the remainder of the day, soaking in the experience which I will remember for a very long time.

I feel privileged and extremely lucky to have seen 6 individual animals during my time in the park, many people don't see any. Luck always plays some part in these experiences but by putting yourself in the right place at the appropriate time, and make a determined effort, will make a huge difference between success and failure.....now where was that Yeti last seen?

Andy Latham

Cliff-nesting Sand Martins and Swifts

Research for 'The Birds of Shropshire' by way of John Tucker's wonderful 'Historical Ornithology' of the county has thrown up a number of references to the use by Sand Martins of cliff sites, where they have tunnelled into exposures of softer rocks. In particular, William Beckwith, writing in 1893, refers to nest sites in 'limestone cliffs along Wenlock Edge, the soft sandstone rocks about Bridgnorth and Shifnal, together with innumerable railway cuttings'. There is also, in 1910, a reference in the 'Transactions' of the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club to the use of cliffs at Shelton Rough to the west of Shrewsbury, while the 'Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire' mentions that 'holes were even dug in sandstone cliffs exposed in the construction of the Shropshire Union Canal at Tyrley, Market Drayton'.

And what about Swifts? There is a reference in 1890 to the possibility of them using rock exposures near the Devil's Mouth on the Long Mynd, and Beckwith reported them 'going in and out of the fissures in the perpendicular face of the High Rock near Bridgnorth'.

Have all these sites now been abandoned? If you know of these or any other such sites still being in use I would be very pleased to hear from you so that the accounts for these species in 'The Birds of Shropshire' can be as complete and up to date as possible.

Tom Wall
walltom@hotmail.co.uk

Outdoor-nesting Swallows



Swallows have used this unusual nest site, on an outside wall sheltered by an adjacent portable building, every year since 2009, successfully raising two broods annually.

The nest is at CJ Wildlife's offices near Upton Magna.



BTO News

Allan P. Dawes 01691-654245
allandawes@btinternet.com

How clever are your rooks?

I very seldom have rooks visiting my garden and I have to confess that I am not unhappy about the situation. However studies done with Rooks in the lab have shown that they are extremely intelligent and able to solve complex puzzles using objects and teamwork. Apart from their social behaviour, little is known about the behaviour of Rooks in the wild, and especially in gardens. Gardens provide the perfect opportunity to study the behaviour of Rooks as there are new problems for them to solve, such as how to feed from bird feeders. Anecdotal evidence shows that Rooks can quickly learn to how to unhook feeders in order to drop them on the ground, or how to pull up food dangling by a string with their feet. The Garden Rook Survey will be building on previous studies and will be looking at a range of behaviours including feeding, social and object manipulation to try to learn more about how common these behaviours are in the wild. All that is needed to take part is a garden that is visited by Rooks. To find out more about the Garden Rook Survey or to download the instructions on how to take part, visit www.bto.org/rooksurvey.

Wading birds feel the strain

Living in an inland county visits to estuaries such as the Dee to witness large wheeling flocks of wading birds is an occasional treat but I do not envy the Wetland Bird Surveyors who have to count them each month. Data collected by these stalwarts show that populations of the most familiar coastal waders have declined markedly in the last ten years. Ringed Plover, Redshank, Dunlin, Curlew and Oystercatcher are among the eight most abundant wintering waders on UK estuaries, yet the populations of all of them are declining. In contrast, Avocet and Black-tailed Godwits that just a few decades ago were relatively scarce in the UK have increased. Precise reasons why these bird populations are changing are not fully understood, but are likely to be due to a combination of factors. Firstly, counts from across northwest Europe show that the distributions of many wintering waterbirds have shifted, mostly northeastwards, in recent decades in response to milder winter temperatures. Secondly, declines noted in the UK may indicate that fewer young waders are being produced in the Arctic – improved information is therefore needed on the annual productivity of waders. The rising winter numbers of Avocet and Black-tailed Godwit are attributable to increases in their populations in the UK and Iceland, respectively.

Bird Notes April, May and June 2014

Yvonne Chadwick

Mandarin Duck One or two were seen at White Mere, Bucknell, Plowden, Arley, Chelmarsh and Wyre Forest. Breeding was confirmed at Betton Moss with a pair and 11 eggs noted on 5 May.

Shelduck Broods were seen at Knighton Reservoir (the first confirmed breeding here), Wilcot Marsh, Wall Farm, Venus Pool and Cound Moor.

Pintail A drake was on Springfield Mere, Shrewsbury, seen on 11 & 23 Apr.

Garganey A female was on the floods at Wall Farm from 6 May, with a pair being seen from 17 May. Sightings here continued until 17 June. Two pairs were at Stapleton on 9 Apr, with one pair remaining the next morning. A drake was at Wood Lane 18-26 Apr and another at Venus Pool on 8 May.

Pochard Most of the reports were from Venus Pool during Apr when up to 4 were counted, with 2 reported on 22 May. Elsewhere, 2 were noted at Wood Lane on 7 Apr.

Ring-necked Duck A drake was found at Wood Lane on 27 Apr. It was then seen regularly at White Mere, The Mere and Wood Lane, up to the 7 May.

Grey Partridge The twenty seven sightings came from eight locations. Pairs were at Wall Farm, Whattal, Shifnal, Venus Pool, Cantlop and Hordley, with single birds seen at Pole Cottage on the Long Mynd and Wood Lane.

Quail Heard at Pen-yr-estyn and meadows near Rednal on 23 May. Two were also noted on 11 June at Bromley Hall, Bagley.

Marsh Harrier A female flew through Whixall Moss early on 7 May, mobbed by a juv Peregrine. This bird was also seen hunting over the Moss on 9 May. One was also seen in the Wildmoor area of the Long Mynd on the evening of 15 May.

Hen Harrier A male was mobbed as it flew over Little Berriewood on 18 May.

Osprey The first noted was on 31 Mar at Cound. At Chelmarsh Reservoir, one headed north on 4 Apr and another over Oswestry Golf Course on 16 Apr.

Hobby Two at Venus Pool on 26 Apr were the earliest. Also recorded at Whixall Moss, Long Mynd and Wall Farm.

Water Rail Seen at Venus Pool, Wood Lane (max 2) and the sewage works at Kemberton.

Little Egret One was at Wall Farm on 2 Jun and Venus Pool 26-27 June.

Black Stork One flew south over Whixall Moss on 28 Apr.

Common Crane Two ringed birds believed to have originated from The Great Crane Project reintroduction scheme in Somerset were at Wall Farm on 4-5 May.

Avocet Two were at Wood Lane from 18-20 May, showing well at times. One was also at Venus Pool 31 May.

Little Ringed Plover Sitting birds were reported from four sites; however it is thought that none of these were successful.

Ringed Plover The highest counts were at Wall Farm, with a peak of 19 on 7 May. Also seen at Whixall, Venus Pool and Long Mynd.

Dotterel On 17 Apr, 12 were found in sheep field on the Long Mynd. They showed well at times and remained until midday on 18 Apr.

Golden Plover Just the one flock reported; in a ploughed field at Bushmoor around 60 were present in early April.

Grey Plover One was on the floods at Wall Farm, Kynnersley on 15 May.

Sanderling One was at Venus Pool on 22 May.

Dunlin Most of the twenty one reports related to birds seen in May. These were at Polemere, Venus Pool (max 3) and Wall Farm, with a peak of 13 here on 11 May.

Ruff Two in near summer plumage were on floods at Wall Farm on 4-6 May.

Black-tailed Godwit Noted at Wood Lane on eleven dates, with 6 in early Apr, 2 at the end of Apr and 1 at the end of May. One was at Wall Farm 13-19 Apr, six at Venus Pool on 18 Apr and up to 3 in early May.

Bar-tailed Godwit One was photographed at Venus Pool on 5 May.

Whimbrel An excellent count of 23 birds was photographed on a brief stop at Wood Lane, before they flew off north, on 28 Apr. Other sightings, which were all of single birds, came from Venus Pool on 26 April, 8 May and 9 May and also Whixall floods on 28 Apr.

Common Redshank There were several sightings during April from Whixall floods, Venus Pool and Wood Lane.

Greenshank Two records during this quarter; seen at Venus Pool on 3 Apr and Polemere on 8 Apr.

Green Sandpiper Up to four birds were counted at Whixall floods, with singles at Heathton, Devil's Dingle and Venus Pool.

Wood Sandpiper One was on floods at Wall Farm on 30-31 May.

Mediterranean Gull A 2nd calendar year bird was at Venus Pool most days between 5 & 18 Apr. A pair were at Wood Lane 4-7 Apr with a single bird there on 24 June.

Little Gull An adult was at Trench Pool on 2 Apr and a first summer on the floods at Wall Farm on 15 June

Iceland Gull One was noted in the log book at Wood Lane on 5 Apr.

Kittiwake The Priorslee bird (an adult) that had been present at the end of March, was seen again on 4 Apr. There was also a five minute sighting of one at Venus Pool on the same date, before it flew off south. An immature was found dead at Venus Pool 29 Apr.

Common Tern Two were at Chelmarsh on 24 Apr. One at Wood Lane on 3 May and 28 June and another at Whitemere on 19 May.

Arctic Tern One flew over the summit of The Wrekin on 11 May.

Turtle Dove A report was received of a pair at Leaton Heath on 3 May.

Ring-necked Parakeet The Chelmarsh bird was again seen near the Reservoir, on the road to Dinney Farm on 4 Apr. Another visited bird feeders in a garden at Cleeton St Mary for around an hour on the morning of 27 Apr.

Cuckoo Over one hundred reports; the earliest heard was in the Batch Valley area of the Long Mynd on 14 Apr.

Barn Owl The thirteen records came from ten different sites; breeding was confirmed at one of these.

Nightjar One was heard in the south of the County on several dates in late June.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Seen at four different sites, including an adult with fledged young.

Woodlark A pair was reported on the heath north of Mitchell's Fold on 11 May.

House Martin The earliest reported were on 3 Apr, seen at Venus Pool.

Ring Ouzel At Titterstone Clee one was present on 1 Apr, then up to 4 birds during the following two weeks. Also, 2 at The Wrekin 6 Apr, 2 at Stiperstones 11 Apr and up to 10 in Batch Valley on the Long Mynd between 19 & 24 Apr. A female was also seen in Minton Batch on the Long Mynd on 25 May.

Grasshopper Warbler Heard at Hordley, Underhill Hall, Priorslee Lake, Whixall Moss (2) and the Long Mynd (2).

Fieldfare Cefn Coch was the location of the last reported, on 6 May.

Redwing The latest birds seen were at Nedge Hill and Granville CP on 4 Apr.

Reed Warbler Chelmarsh Scrape held the first arrivals on 21 Apr.

Garden Warbler First seen at Colemere and Church Stretton on 8 Apr.

Lesser Whitethroat Two were seen at Venus Pool on 13 Apr, this was the first report. Then Trefonen, Chelmarsh and Devil's Dingle on the 14 & 18 Apr. Noted at nineteen locations during the period.

Whitethroat The earliest sighting came on 13 Apr at Haughmond Hill, soon followed by more at Nedge Hill, Whixall Moss, Chelmarsh, Sambrook, Devil's Dingle and Adeney on 17/18 Apr.

Wood Warbler Seen at nine sites, the earliest was found on 21 Apr in the Wyre Forest.

Firecrest One was seen at Knuck Wood, near Cefn Einion on 13 Apr.

Spotted Flycatcher Pairs were at Kinnerley (3 chicks in a nest box), Bury Ditches, Habberley and the Stiperstones. Singles were seen at Bedstone (the earliest record on 14 May), Berriewood, Ford, Hordley, Church Stretton, The Hurst and Plowden.

Pied Flycatcher Seen at ten locations, the earliest on 13 Apr. Counts of singing males included 4 at Bridges, 3 at The Wrekin, 2 at Candy Valley and 2 at Clunton Coppice.

Tree Sparrow The ten reports came from Clunbury (up to 10), Pentre (5), Ightfield and also near to Baggy Moor.

Brambling The six sightings in early Apr with singles at Whitcliffe, Postenplain and under a bird table at Oerley Hall. Also 3 at Market Drayton.

Two-barred Crossbill Three were reported in the Postenplain area of the Wyre Forest again on 31 Mar, followed by one on 8 Apr and 25 Apr.

Corn Bunting Between one and five were counted at ten sites, during Apr and May. Frequent sightings came from the Tibberton area, also Wall Farm, Child's Ercall, Shifnal, Nesscliffe, Badger, The Hurst, Stanlow and Conqueror Heath.

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

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

Records: 11899

Species: 162

Please send sightings in by 7 October 2014 at the latest, thank you.

Church Stretton Branch meetings

Fourth Mondays at 7.30pm in Methodist Church Hall, free to Members.

Visitors very welcome; non-members £2, including refreshments.

Secretary: John Arnfield (01694 724 170 or arnfield.2@osu.edu).

October 27th

"Shetland to Scilly, Birds of the British Isles" by Ashley Grove

November 24th

"Dragons of the Long Mynd!" by Sue McLamb

January 26th

AGM and "The Complete Owl" by Michael Leach

February 23rd

"The Wild Wood" by Keith Offord

March 23rd

"Secret Wildlife of the Forest of Dean" by Nick Martin

Indoor meetings, Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, 7:15pm.

- 1st October William Boyce Anything That Flies
- 5th November David Tolliday Sights and Sounds of British Wildlife
- 3rd December Chris Ward Quetzal Quest: Costa Rica

Field Trips – Full Details in the Programme or on the website

Sunday 19 October - **Belvide Reservoir** - by car.

Leader: Rob Swift from West Midlands Bird Club

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 9.30am Grid Ref: **SJ818413**

Take A5 from Telford towards the Midlands. Go past Weston Park, and at Ivetsey Bank turn right for Bishops Wood. Turn right for Brewood. Just after a pub turn left into Shutt Green Lane. Reserve on the left after about a mile. Permit cost - to be announced.

Sunday 9 November - **Leasowes, RSPB Burton Marshes** - by car.

Leader: Estelle Hughes

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 10am Grid Ref: **SD353205**

Sunday 7 December - **WWT Martinmere** - by coach.

Organiser: Sue Brealey

Full Day – Meet at the Shirehall, leaving promptly at 8.00am

Travel towards the Wirral, getting onto the M53. Come off at J1, onto A554 going north. At the T-junction left onto A551. Just as the road turns left go straight ahead onto rough road towards lighthouse. Car Park on the right.

Costs will be £12.50 for the coach and open to anyone interested including non-members.

Entrance fees for those who are not members of WWT: Adult £10.08,
Concession (65 years & over, full-time students, unemployed) £7.45

2015 Indoor meetings, Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, 7:15pm.

7th January Keith Offord: Land of Contrasts

Keith starts the year for us with a talk on Namibia's various habitats which are home to wildlife ranging from endemic birds to the endangered black rhino.

4th February Alan Heath: The Raptors of Shropshire and Beyond

Many of you will know Alan and will look forward to hearing more about our local raptors, plus a few not so local.

4th March Jim Almond: Memorable Birding Moments

Our very own Jim returns for a ramble around his most exciting and rewarding birding moments.

1st April Baz Fewster: Shropshire Wildlife Trust, its work and vision for the future.

This talk about the Trust and the work they do should be interesting and enlightening.

7th October Mark Sissons: White and Wild

Mark hails from Newport and some of you may have read his column in the Shropshire Magazine. He runs photography workshops as well and tonight will speak on wildlife in colder climes.

4th November John Hawking: Extremadura - Spain's hidden paradise

Born in Ellesmere, John is new to us and along with birds, will bring mammals, reptiles and plants into his talk.

2nd December Michael Leach: Enchanted Islands

The Galapagos Islands are home to some extraordinary wildlife. Michael has visited several times and will tell the story of many of the animals that live there.

Please share cars whenever possible.

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.

Shropshire Ornithological Society is supported by CJ Wildlife

www.birdfood.co.uk

