

# ***The Buzzard***



**Shropshire  
Ornithological Society's  
quarterly magazine**

**No. 241**

**Autumn 2015**

## Society Officers and Officials

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# Church Stretton Branch Meetings

## **October 26th, 2015. “The Raptors of Shropshire and Beyond” (Allan Heath)**

This talk aims to give an overview of this fascinating group of birds, along with an insight into the status of raptors within Shropshire. It also highlights some of the work being undertaken by members of the Shropshire Raptor Study Group and the Shropshire Ringing Group.

## **November 23rd, 2015. “The History of Ornithology in Shropshire” (John Tucker)**

This talk explores the history of human interest in birds in the county, from the first written bird record, of an ‘yron’ (White-tailed Eagle) near Worfield in 1514 (for which one William Hichecox was paid 3d), through the killings occasioned by the Tudor Acts ‘for the preservation of grayne’ to the present day.

## **January 25th, 2016. AGM, followed by “The Complete Owl” (Michael Leach)**

Based on Michael’s best-selling book of the same name, this talk reveals resident British owls in folklore and fact; it looks at barn owls and tawny owls, little owls and cat owls, and the specialised techniques that help them hunt. It dispels myths and reveals the realities of an owl’s life. The talk is illustrated with dramatic high-speed photographs of owls in flight.

## **February 22nd, 2016. “Birds in Shropshire Gardens” (John Arnfield)**

What are the top ten most often reported birds in gardens in Shropshire? If you don’t know now, you will after this talk, illustrated by images from the library of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). In this talk, John focuses on Shropshire gardens as habitats for avian life.

## **March 21st, 2016. “British Wildlife in Macro” (Nigel Spencer)**

Nigel is an award-winning wildlife photographer from southern Leicestershire. This new lecture focuses on the UK’s smaller wildlife including butterflies, orchids, dragonflies, moths, and many other species. Nigel has photographed all 58 species of British butterfly and describes some of the challenges of this project. Visit his website at <http://www.nigelspencer.co.uk/> for examples of his spectacular images and more on his photographic objectives.

## **Copy deadline for the winter 2015 issue is 1<sup>st</sup> November.**

Please send contributions or suggestions 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.*

# 60th Anniversary Dinner

Friday 27th November 2015.

Shrewsbury Town Football Club, Shrewsbury.

Reception 7.00p.m. Dinner 7.30p.m. Dress Informal.

Come and celebrate the Society's 60th Anniversary. It is intended to combine dinner with a review of the Society's achievements presented by Jim Almond and an introduction to the forthcoming publication of the county avifauna - "The Birds of Shropshire" given by Leo Smith.

The menu choices are:

## Starters

- Melon and pineapple salad with Malibu syrup
- Cream of winter vegetable soup
- Hot smoked salmon, prawns and pea shoots
- Chicken liver pate with fruit chutney

## Mains

- Traditional finest roast sirloin of beef, Yorkshire pudding, buttered mash and pan gravy
- Shropshire reared chicken breast with cream leek sauce
- Seabass fillets with stir fried vegetables and noodles
- Pea and leek creamed risotto (V)

All mains are served with a selection of fresh seasonal vegetables, herb roasted potatoes and buttered new potatoes

## Desserts

- Raspberry Bakewell tart & custard
- Salted caramel cheesecake, raspberry cream
- Chocolate orange tart, strawberry compote
- Selection of English and Welsh cheeses, biscuits, celery, grapes and house chutney
- Freshly brewed tea or coffee with petit fours

Tickets will shortly be available and will be priced at £20.00. Please put the date in your diary.

It would be helpful to the organisers if in the meantime you could indicate your interest by e-mail, post or telephone to:

Mrs. Annie Andrews  
6 Sytche Close  
Much Wenlock  
TF13 6JJ.  
01952 727531  
bafca@yahoo.co.uk

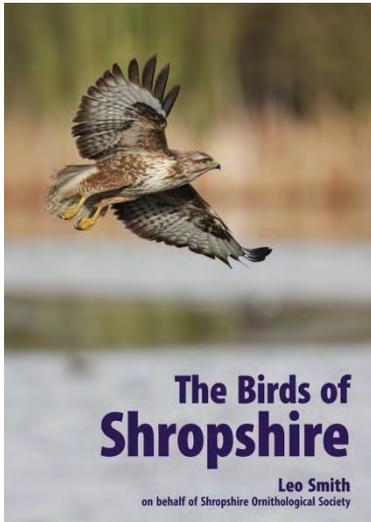
# Welcome to our new members

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

Mr B G Lyon, Shawbury; Mr N Mathers, Whitchurch; Mrs S Jarvis, Shavington; Mr & Mrs D Kelly, Shrewsbury; Mr & Mrs R Broadhurst, Shrewsbury.

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 Birds of Shropshire*** ***A County Avifauna*** ***Planned Publication:*** ***Spring 2016***

*The Birds of Shropshire* will be the most comprehensive record of the County's avifauna ever published. It is being produced by Shropshire Ornithological Society, and will be based largely on the results of six years fieldwork up until 2013, winter and summer, by over 650 different observers who submitted over 333,400 records. These records have been used to produce maps showing the current distribution of almost 200 different species.

Leo Smith will give a presentation on the publication of this once in a generation text at the Society's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November (details above). The publication date has been moved back to the spring, but it will be well worth the wait!

# **Cuan Wildlife Rescue Visit**

## **Wednesday 30th September 2015, 3:00pm**

The Society recently made a donation of £500.00 to the rescue centre in appreciation of the work that they do with injured wildlife in general and birds in particular. It is hoped that our donation will fund the building of a new aviary for rehabilitation prior to release.

In acknowledgment Anna Nicholas (who has taken over from her mother Megan Morris-Jones) has issued an open invitation to the Society to have a tour of the newly opened centre on Wednesday 30th September at 3:00pm. The full address is The Signals, Stretton Road, Much Wenlock, TF13 6DD.

It would be helpful, in order to get some idea of the numbers attending, if members would either e-mail or telephone by Monday 28th September. (bafca@yahoo.co.uk or 01952 727531).

*Brian Andrews*

# **SOS Vice President Colin Wright**

## **honoured for his conservation work**

Colin Wright, who will be well known to many SOS members, has been honoured by the Government of the Falkland Islands for his many years of dedicated service to wildlife conservation in the Islands through his role as honorary secretary of the Falkland Islands Association (FIA).

Colin was presented with the Queen's Certificate and Badge of Honour at a small ceremony at his home in Shrewsbury on Monday, 31 August 2015. The presentation was attended by his wife and daughter and her partner, and by the vicar of St George's church who has ministered to Colin throughout his illness. Former Governor and FIA Chairman, Alan Huckle, was given special permission to present the award on behalf of the current Governor, His Excellency E Colin Roberts, since Colin was not strong enough to travel to London.

With his typical modesty, Colin said that the award was as much an acknowledgement of the work of the Association in support of the Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination as it was a tribute to his own contribution to it. But he was clearly very proud – and grateful – that his role had been recognised by the Falkland Islands Government.

# The Garden Moth Scheme

*By Bill Watkins*

Two previous articles about moths which appeared in The Buzzard have mentioned “The Garden Moth Scheme”.

The Garden Moth Scheme began in 2003 here in the West Midlands by a few moth recorders whose aim was to trap and record species of moths in gardens to find out which moths were declining or increasing. Until this time there was a very limited amount of moth records so little was known about the relative abundance or otherwise of moth species. However, it was known that moths are an ideal way to study Biodiversity.

Today, in 2015, the Garden Moth Scheme, or GMS as it is known operates across the United Kingdom receiving weekly results from about 350 moth trapping recorders. The aim is to attract and record moths which come to the light traps every Friday night for 36 weeks from March to November. This is the Summer survey. A similar survey takes place from November to March to record the winter species but these are far fewer in both of species and numbers. Anyone with an interest in recording moths can take part in the Garden Moth Scheme. All that is required is a garden, a suitable light trap and a good identification guide. The light source needs to be of Ultra Violet or Mercury Vapour type to attract the insects and these can be purchased from a supplier of Lepidoptera equipment. (Try [www.angleps.com](http://www.angleps.com)) The traps can also be purchased but can be home-made from light wood materials by a competent DIY carpenter. GMS has its own Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/gardenmothscheme](http://www.facebook.com/gardenmothscheme)

I have trapped over 400 species of moths in my garden since 2008 using a similar trap to that shown in the photograph. More sophisticated light traps with a stronger Mercury Vapour light source will attract even greater numbers and species of moths. Just like birding the thrill of finding an unusual or rare moth is the driving force to the “hobby”. It is a bit like Christmas when you don’t know what you are going to get until you open the box. The differing shapes, sizes, colours and patterns of species of moths is a constant source of wonder. Each week and month will reveal a different range of species. It is a fascinating, rewarding and worthwhile pastime which can contribute much to science. After the trapped moths are identified and recorded they are released unharmed back into their environment.



*Home-made Skinner-type moth trap with a purchased 15w Actinic light tube*

Typical Spring species include Dotted Border and Spring Usher. The common names of moths often reflect some obvious feature of the moth itself. For example the Dotted Border has a row of small dots along the trailing edge of its wings.



1933 Dotted Border *Agriopsis marginaria*



1932 Spring Usher *Agriopsis leucophaeria*

# Recording the first-record dates of summer migrants.

*By John Tucker*

In the early days of bird recording in the county, in the late 1800s, as few as half a dozen observers were contributing records. What, I sometimes wonder, was the effect of having so few observers on the recording on the 'real' first arrival dates of migrants? So this year I set up an SOS experiment, by asking as many people as possible to send me their first arrival dates, appealing for data for at least six most common and distinctive species, Chiffchaff, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Cuckoo and Swift.

It failed. It was not a competition and there were no correct answers – I was just after a wide range of dates of records – I received just 24 lists of arrival dates. So with my own I had five fewer than the absolute minimum needed for a mathematical analysis but I have attempted it for just one species. My sincere thanks to the few who did respond.

Swallow, for which I received 23 first dates. The actual first among them all was on 1 April (day 91, recorded by two observers), the latest on day 109, 19th. What first arrival dates would I have had even fewer observers had sent in records?

- From the list 23 of I randomly selected records from two observers, ten times. The earliest date of 1 April occurred in four of the ten samples and the average of the other six was day 96.0, 6 April – five days later than the actual first.
- Randomly selecting five records from the 23, again ten times. The earliest date of 1 April again occurred in four of the ten samples and the average of the other six was day 94.2, 4 April – still three days later than the actual first.
- Selecting ten observers, ten times again. The earliest date of 1 April occurred in nine of the ten samples and the remaining sample was on day 96, 6 April.

So from these it appears, for Swallow this year and with relatively few observers, that on average the more observers who contributed then the closer the apparently recorded first date was to the actual recorded first.

# Histo', or The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire

John Tucker, along with his brother, Peter, has produced the amazing, increasingly comprehensive and genuinely invaluable – but free – Historical Ornithology of Shropshire as a one stop resource for information on the county's birdlife.

If you haven't yet discovered the joys of browsing through Forrest's *The Fauna of Shropshire* (1899) or looking at old records for, say, Turtle Dove or Corncrake in Shropshire, you need to visit the site, invest just a couple of minutes to learn how the catalogue system works, and then dive in!

The website is linked from the home page of the SOS website, or type **[www.lanius.org.uk/sos/](http://www.lanius.org.uk/sos/)** into your browser.

Historical documents or records are still being sought out and added. A PDF of all new issues of *The Buzzard* is sent to John shortly after publication, for instance. John would like to appeal to people to submit items such as the following one for Nightingale, into *The Buzzard*, so that they get added into the historical record and become part of the searchable history of the county's avifauna. As John says, there could be some useful little snippets worth putting on paper before they die with their owners.

Please send any such historical records of note directly to Martin George (details on inside front cover) for inclusion in future issue of the magazine.

## **Nightingale record near Bucknell, one date in the 1950s.**

John Tucker for Histo. 20150806

One Saturday evening in the 1950s many people from Bucknell walked south down to Oilmill Lane, a little track heading east towards Buckton, beneath the woodlands of Coxall Knoll, to listen to a Nightingale sing. It was an unusual one-off event which Trevor John Turner, now of The Bungalow, Mill Street in Aston on Clun and aged 75, remembers well, and one which he reported to me recently.

# Cuan Wildlife Rescue



Cuan Wildlife is a wildlife rescue centre in Much Wenlock, where we take in sick, injured and orphaned wild animals and birds, with the aim of nursing them back to health and returning them back to the wild.

Founded in 1990 by Megan Morris-Jones, the centre has grown in both admissions and size. Last year we admitted 1790 wild animals and birds; some were close to death on arrival but of those who survived the first 48 hours approximately 80% were able to be returned to the wild. Each year we have to raise approximately £70,000 which covers our running costs and enables us to continue our work in rehabilitating injured wildlife.



The idea that Megan had about rescuing and nursing back to health injured animals and birds didn't start in Shropshire, it started in fact on the small Scottish island of Luing off the west coast of Scotland. This is a brief story told by Megan of how it all began...

"In 1982 my husband and I took up residence in a former slate quarry-master's house on the island of Luing, with its acre of land ending at the high tide mark on the western shore. My husband, John, had not been without reservations about our somewhat impulsive decision to buy this derelict property, reservations that were not unfounded, for, as we drove up on that wet, blustery March day to take up residence, the sheep were staring at us forlornly from the upstairs window! It was a tough two years that followed.



As the house itself was situated barely more than two hundred yards from the rocky shore of the Atlantic Ocean, it was constantly battered by gales ferocious in nature – twice during our time there, they reached hurricane force. With the nearest builders and plumbers 16 miles and a ferry crossing away, we were often forced to rely on our own resources, adapting, patching and muddling through with whatever tools

and materials came to hand – frequently we resorted to scouring the beaches for just the right size piece of driftwood.

If it hadn't been for my husband's DIY skills and extremely practical nature, it is questionable whether we, the house or our marriage would have survived –

and “Cuan House” would never have been born. But survive we did, and the following year, our daughter, Anna, was born. I took in B&B guests and John started a small but successful mussel farm. In addition, that first winter, and every year we were up there, we carried out beached bird surveys for the RSPB; this entailed walking the whole of the southern half of the island, looking for, and recording, dead, washed-up seabirds, and we had to do this once a month for four months each winter.

Our first live casualty was a Manx Shearwater that had become grounded in our garden, and, after a few days of feeding it up on whitebait, we released it in the little bay down the road. Not long afterwards, one of the islanders brought me a weakened, emaciated fulmar; it was with a combined sense of helplessness, frustration and sadness that the next day I watched it die. At about this time, quite by chance, I spotted a newspaper article about a couple in Ayrshire, three hours away, who were doing precisely this – wildlife rescue, a concept I hadn’t heard of 30 years ago. Intrigued, I wrote to them asking if I could come down for a couple of days. Whilst there at Hessilhead Wildlife Rescue, I was amazed by their knowledge and their compassion and care for the patients they had in (they have since been awarded the MBE). I also realised that, alongside them, I knew nothing about wildlife care. Nevertheless, I was hooked! A letter from myself to the RSPCA in Shropshire and a delightful hand-written letter back from one of the Inspectors told me that there were no facilities for injured Wildlife in Shropshire and that, in his opinion, there clearly was a need.

Happy though we had been on this idyllic island, we had nevertheless been contemplating leaving for personal reasons, and this new dream tipped the balance. Seven years after we had first arrived on the island, we left with mixed feelings to come to Much Wenlock – John to return to the little cottage where he had lived for five years when he had come out of the Navy, and myself and Anna to come to live here for the first time.



Once settled, a small trickle of creatures began to flow through the door, a family of six baby hedgehogs that I surprised myself by being able to rear and later return to the farmer who had brought them, cat-injured garden birds that, because of my lack of

experience and knowledge, mostly died, the odd duck with wing or leg injuries, a heron and so on. It soon became obvious that if I was going to continue and develop what I had started, we were going to have to move, and so we bought our property in Barrow Street. We gave it the Gaelic name "Cuan House" after Cuan Ferry that used to transport us to the island, crossing the stretch of water known as Cuan Sound.

"Cuan House" grew over the years to fill an increasingly evident need and we took in annually anything up to 1,400 casualties. The year 2006-2007 was a difficult one with the illness and subsequent death of my husband who had done so much to help and encourage me with the work. He had been the Charity's Treasurer and had helped me with much of the general administration. He had also, virtually single-handedly, built most of our facilities, aviaries, fox and badger pens, boxes for the 'tinies', our two First Aid Units and so on. However, with the help and support of loyal friends and supporters "Cuan House" carried on treating sick, injured and orphaned wild animals and birds.

Megan Morris-Jones – Founder

Growing up with the wildlife was a very interesting and fun experience, it was "normal" for me, Anna, to help Mum feed the baby hedgehogs after school or going with her to release some badgers. I have always had a love of animals, especially horses and after years of riding other people's horses, when I was 15 my parents bought me my own horse, Robbi. This led to me working with horses when I left school, a job I enjoyed intensely.



In 2005 I decided I needed a new venture and I applied to join the Fire Brigade at Much Wenlock fire station which is run by retained fire fighters who respond from home to a pager in their spare time. I enjoyed all aspects of the job, it was such a different world to work in and one I wanted to continue. I applied to join the whole time (full time job) at Shropshire Fire brigade in 2006 and was successfully posted to Blue Watch Shrewsbury which is where I work now. I met Sean (my husband) through the fire service, he was retained at Ludlow. We got engaged and were married in 2010. I moved down to Ludlow to live with him, moving my 3 horses with me!

In 2011 we sadly lost one of our horses during foaling. This was a turning point for me. Wildlife has always held a certain part in my heart and I always wondered what Mum would do when the time came that she couldn't do it anymore. With my beloved horse dying, it made me realise that I wanted to

help, make a difference and continue Mum's work with the wildlife. Luckily for me, Sean agreed and we sold our house in Ludlow and moved back to Much Wenlock.

Initially we moved into "Cuan House" with my step son Sam, so we could all learn about the day to day workings of the charity. There is a lot which goes on behind the scenes, paper work and lots more. It was all this that we were unfamiliar with so it provided valuable time to get to grips with it all.

During our time there it soon became apparent that "Cuan House" had outgrown its current premises. We were taking in more and more creatures each year and needed new and different ways to raise much needed funds. Someone must have been looking down on us as a property on the outskirts of Much Wenlock with land came up for sale and we were lucky enough to acquire it.

Having 15 acres of land, we can build larger pens, aviaries and hold fundraising events and have more space to be able to care for the wildlife that comes into our care and more importantly build a purpose built wildlife hospital.

We designed and built the wildlife hospital with a lot of help from our local vet, other wildlife centres and other experts. In July 2014 we moved the wildlife centre to where we are today and renamed it Cuan Wildlife Rescue. This enabled Megan to sell "Cuan House" and buy a lovely little cottage in Much Wenlock. Strangely enough it is the same cottage which my father bought when he came out of the Navy, and where we lived when we moved from Scotland.

Also in 2014, Megan was awarded the **Lifetime Achievement Award** by the **International Fund for Animal Welfare**. The ceremony was held in the House of Lords and presented to her by Bill Oddie and Baroness Gale. After over 25 years of dedication and commitment to wildlife care it is a very well deserved award. It was a very proud moment for all of us when she was awarded it and we were all over the moon for her.





Having a purpose- built wildlife hospital is a dream come true, we were able to move some aviaries and pens over from our old site, but we still need to build more and also some different ones which are designed for different species. For this we are fundraising throughout the year to enable us to have the funds to build them. We also have plans in place (and passed by planning) for an education centre to be

built where we can hold courses, talks, events and days for schools, children, adults and other community groups to come along and learn about wildlife and wildlife conservation.

As well as treating the wildlife, we believe that education and community involvement is very important for the future of wildlife and their habitat. We run a school programme where we visit and with the use of a model garden, we can interact with the children to teach them how to make their garden safe for wildlife and also how to attract wildlife into their garden. We then talk about hedgehogs and their behaviour and habitat before showing the children a real hedgehog which goes down very well! We don't just visit schools, we have been to local scout, beaver, brownie and guide groups as well as holding days at our wildlife centre for children to come along and learn about wildlife.

We take college and university students on work placements from Walford College, Harper Adams, Rodbaston and further afield. The students work directly with the wildlife in our care and from the feedback that has been received it has benefited them greatly on their courses. This year we also have 3 trainee veterinary surgeons, who are doing five-week placements working with us as part of their course to become a vet.

We work in the local community by supporting local wildlife groups, giving talks about the work we do and how people can make small changes in their garden to help the wildlife. Some of the nature reserves around the county have asked for us to release some wildlife there, and if the area is suitable for a certain species to be released there, they have overseen the aftercare once the animal has been released, by putting food and water out for them.

We have a great volunteer and supporter base which has grown county wide; we rely on volunteers to help us with the day to day running of the centre, organising and helping at fundraising events throughout the year, picking up animals and birds if the finder is unable to bring them to us and also by helping at our charity shop in Much Wenlock.

I would like to share with you a couple of stories of some animals we have had in our care...

**Robin** – This beautiful robin was brought to us after being caught by a cat. The owner managed to get it from the cat quite quickly but it still had a nasty head wound, one of the punctures was just above its eye. They brought it straight to us so we were able to administer antibiotics and clean the wound before infection started. As cats’



saliva contains bacteria which is usually fatal to birds, unless it is given appropriate antibiotics as soon as possible after the



injury, usually the bird does not survive. We also treat cat bites with homoeopathic remedies, the bite is bathed in a tincture and the bird is given oral drops.

We have found this has helped considerably in the survival rates. Luckily for this robin he recovered well from his injuries and was released back to his territory by the finder. Hopefully he has learnt his lesson and will stay away from cats from now on!

**Barn Owl with broken wing** – Two days before Christmas we received a call saying there was an owl on the side of the road unable to fly not far from the centre. Sophie and Stevie went out to investigate and found this barn owl lying



on the verge. On examination it was found that she had a broken wing. The break hadn't broken the skin and as it seemed a clean break and also not too near a joint we decided to strap her wing which immobilises it giving the bones a better



chance of healing in the correct position. When the bones heal they form a callous, if this is too near the joint then it can fix the joint preventing it from moving and thus the bird would be unable to fly. She was given pain relief and also a homoeopathic remedy from a plant with an old folk name of “bone knit” which helps in the healing process. After 10 days or so, we removed the strapping, the bones had healed

together correctly and hadn't affected the joint. We were all so pleased! She was flown on jesses each day for a few weeks so she could regain strength in

*her wing. Each day she got stronger until one crisp evening in February, Sophie and I released her back where she was found (in a farmer's field as it was safer than the road!). She flew off beautifully and headed off in the direction of some nearby woods. Prior to her release John, from the Shropshire Barn Owl group came, and ringed her so if she was to be found again we can trace her history.*

Our aim for the future is to be able to increase awareness of what we do so more people may know of us and that this is where they can bring an injured wild animal or bird, or even call us for advice about wildlife in general. We would also like to work more with schools and local groups and invite them to our education centre where the children can learn about wildlife and how to help and support the future of wildlife conservation.

We are a team at Cuan Wildlife; Staff and Volunteers have a real love and passion for wildlife. We are very lucky to be able to carry on this love and passion into the future with the much needed support and help from the people of Shropshire. Together, we can help care for and protect Shropshire's Wildlife.



*Anna Nicholas*

Cuan Wildlife Rescue, Stretton Road, Much Wenlock, TF13 6DD  
01952 728070

**[www.cuanwildliferescue.org.uk](http://www.cuanwildliferescue.org.uk)**

Charity Number – 1096812

If you have a critically injured creature outside the period 9am to 5pm, please ring the EMERGENCY mobile number 07731347998.

Please note this is an EMERGENCY number and is staffed by volunteers.

For non-critically injured creatures, general advice on how to handle them overnight can be found on the website. Please then please ring us in the morning.

# Field trip report: Prees Heath and Whixall Moss, 4 July 2015

Meeting on the track to Prees Heath reserve I was concerned that the windy and partially cloudy conditions might lead to a disappointing day, as this trip was principally to focus on dragonflies and butterflies.

However, as we entered the reserve we could see several people armed with huge camera lenses photographing the Silver-studded Blues, the speciality of the site. There were very good numbers (glad I don't have to do the count) on all areas of bell heather. Other species of note: Small Heath, Small Skipper, Ringlet, Common Blue and Meadow Brown, with Cinnabar and Burnet moths. And, yes, we did have a number of birds, including two delightful families of Mistle Thrush and Pied Wagtail.

Yellowhammer were singing well as there are good numbers on the heath, along with Skylark and Linnet. Eagle eyes picked up a Great-spotted Woodpecker, perched, motionless at the base of a small tree stump, while Whitethroat and Greenfinch were singing near the pool.

Black-tailed Skimmer hunted over the water and Azure Damselflies were mating and egg-laying in the shelter of the bank. Buzzard was the only bird of prey, while Goldfinch, Great and Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Starling, House Sparrow and Robin completed the list.

So, on to Whixall Moss, stopping to view the not-so-flooded fields from the lay-by. Here we recorded Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Gadwall, Mallard, Pied Wagtail and Buzzard. After lunch, we set off up the track, where Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff were still singing in the small wooded area. The tit family was represented by Coal, Blue, Great and Willow, which were joined by a flock of Long-tailed Tit.

Arriving at the open Moss, Curlew, Teal and Shoveler were seen. Here we had the two specialities of the site: White-faced Darter dragonfly and the Large Heath butterfly, which were showing well. In addition, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, Brimstone and Large Skipper were seen, along with Emperor Dragonfly and Blue-tailed Damselfly.

Making our return to the carpark along the canal, Garden Warbler and Whitethroat flew across, with Mute Swan and Coot on the water.

From the towpath overlooking the flooded fields, Andy Latham spotted Ruff, Green Sandpiper and Stock Dove – not easy looking through a latticework of twigs and leaves. I was fortunate to have him along, as he added greatly to the species list!

To cap it all, after all the members had departed, he had a Cuckoo fly over the carpark as he and Jan enjoyed a cup of tea!

*Estelle Hughes*

## **Weekend trip to Scotland – 2016**

It is now several years since the Society visited Scotland for a few days birding, so I have provisionally booked places at the Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown on Spey. This visit will be from Tuesday, 31st May to Sunday, 5th June 2016. The Tuesday and Sunday will be travelling days, giving the party 4 full days birding.

The number for this trip will be a maximum of 16. The costs involved are £375.00 per person for double and twin rooms, and £475.00 for single rooms. This is a discounted rate for bed, breakfast and evening meal. It works out as £75 per night for the double/twin room and £95 for single rooms. A non-returnable deposit will have to be paid.

This is a popular hotel and to secure our places I need to ensure early booking. This will be on a first come first served basis. Anyone interested should contact me by phone or email. For everyone who wishes to come I would be grateful for the following information – name, telephone number, mobile number, email address, type of room required, if willing to share a twin room, who with. There will be a waiting list, so that if anyone has to cancel, their place can be offered to those on the list.

Once the list is complete, I will inform the hotel, clarify the hotel's requirements and confirm the booking. All participants will be kept informed of progress in this process. Once all this has been arranged, then a programme of where we visit and when will be worked out. Jim Almond has kindly agreed to help lead these trips. He is well known at the hotel, and of course an experienced birder.

Sue Brealey



# Shropshire Wildlife Trust

## Shropshire's pine marten

A verified sighting of a pine marten in south-west Shropshire in July brought great excitement both nationally and locally. The photo was taken by Chris Pearce and provided the conclusive evidence – Stuart Edmunds checked every twig, leaf and lichen in the image against the location! For Stuart, who works for Shropshire Wildlife Trust and is also chair of Shropshire Mammal Group, it was the moment he had dreamed of. For five years he had searched for signs of these rare and elusive creatures and endured some mockery for his efforts, from those who doubted the existence of pine martens in Shropshire. There hadn't been a verified sighting in a century, so this was hardly surprising.



Since then, he has spent all his spare time carrying out fieldwork to find out if there might be more than one of these creatures living in the woods and to try and ascertain its or their provenance.

Camera traps have been set up in the woods where the original sighting occurred and video footage gained which shows at least two different pine martens are present. This exciting development was followed by the discovery of the martens' den, high in a tree.

An appeal has been launched to fund continued research and to work with local landowners to protect and improve pine marten habitat. There is a possibility that our pine martens are a relict population; conversations with local people suggest they may have been present here 25 years ago. If this were the case, it would be particularly interesting as the genetic type that lived in England and Wales was presumed extinct.



Our plan is to use hair traps – sticky tubes which the martens (and no doubt other wildlife) will investigate, leaving a hair or two on the inside. This can then be DNA tested to reveal the origin of the martens.

You can support our appeal at [www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk) or ring 01743 284299. If you have any pine marten sightings please contact Stuart Edmunds [stuarte@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:stuarte@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)



## **Some respite for Britain's Birds**

The latest results from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) for 2014 brought some short-term, positive news for a suite of both migratory and resident species against a backdrop of long-term declines for many, long-distance migrants in particular. The possible reasons for these short-term increases vary between species. There is no evidence that the 2013 breeding season was a particularly good one, and for some species it was a poor season, probably related to the fact it was the UK's coldest spring since 1962.

Lesser Whitethroat (+34%), Whitethroat (+18%), Tree Pipit (+31%), Willow Warbler (+6%) and the familiar Cuckoo (+27%) are among the long-distance species, that travel south of the Sahara for the winter months, to have increased.

The survival of migratory species is thought to be influenced by rainfall levels in the Sahel, just south of the Sahara. This applies for species that spend the winter there, and those that use the region as a stop-over site. Rainfall levels affect the availability of insect prey on which these species rely. Rainfall in the region during the summer of 2013 was just below the long-term average, so this doesn't provide a ready explanation for the respite seen in this year's BBS report, but the three years previous to this included two that were amongst the wettest since the late 1960s, possibly leading to generally better conditions in the area in the winter of 2013/14.

The latest BBS results also have good news for 'partial migrants', species in which some individuals stay in the UK for the winter, while others venture as far south as North Africa. Increases between 2013 and 2014 were found for Chiffchaff (+21%), Blackcap (+14%) and Meadow Pipit (+14%).

There was good news for resident species too, which remain in the UK for the winter. There were short-term increases for Stonechat (+76%), Kingfisher (+50%), Grey Wagtail (+50%) and Wren (+34%). In general, the mild winter of 2013/14 is thought to have helped the survival of resident species. Residents are susceptible to harsh weather conditions when life gets tough, both in terms of finding food and expending extra energy just to keep warm.

## **Over 50 BBS plots are surveyed annually by dedicated local volunteers.**

We cannot thank them enough for all their efforts, monitoring our common and widespread birds, their contributions are invaluable.

# Bird Notes      April, May and June 2015

*Yvonne Chadwick*

**Whooper Swan** Four were still at Molverley Hall on 2-5 Apr, with 2 remaining on 13 Apr.

**Mandarin Duck** Reported from seven sites including locations in the Severn Valley, Blake Mere, Cantlop, Venus Pool and Shavington Park.

**Wigeon** Seen at Molverley Hall on 5 Apr, Whixall floods 7-11 Apr (5 present), Polemere on 14 Apr and one at Venus Pool on 5 May.

**Garganey** A pair were at Wall Farm on 16 Apr.

**Quail** Heard at Aldersley, Tibberton and Heathton from 10 May.

**Hen Harrier** A female was hunting over arable fields at Boreton, near Condover on 4 May.

**Osprey** On 6 Apr there were sightings at Craven Arms, Upton Magna and Whixall Moss. Further reports came from the Long Mynd on 16 Apr, Morville on 31 May, Venus Pool on 4 June and Rowton Castle on 14 June.

**Hobby** The first reports were on 27 Apr at Buildwas and Whixall Moss

**Great Grey Shrike** Seen at Clunton on 4 Apr, Black Hill 6 Apr, Brown Clee 7 Apr and the Long Mynd 15-16 Apr.

**Little Stint** One was reported at Wood Lane on 22 May.

**Dotterel** Nine were seen in a sheep field near Pole Cottage, on the Long Mynd, on 2 May.

**Dunlin** Up to 16 were on Whixall floods at the end of Apr. Further reports from here were of two on several dates in May. Four were at Venus Pool on 26 Apr and 6 at Wood Lane on the same date.

**Woodcock** Two were seen at Earnswood Copse in the Wyre Forest on 21 Apr, one at Black Hill on 7 June and one at Wimperhill Wood on 27 June.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Four were at Whixall floods on 27 Apr. Three further reports were of one present 4-11 May.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** One was at Wood Lane from 25 Apr, for four days.

**Ruff** Three were on Whixall floods on 6 Apr. One was also seen here on 14 Apr and 15 May.

**Turnstone** One was seen in flight at The Lawley on 31 May.

**Black-necked Grebe** Two summer plumaged birds were at Venus Pool all day on 2 May.

**Mediterranean Gull** All reports were from Wood Lane, with a pair being present during April, along with a 2nd summer bird. One of the pair had a blue ring which shows it was ringed as a 3rd calendar year bird in 2007 in Belgium, usually breeding in France and wintering in Spain/Portugal.

**Little Gull** A first summer bird was on Whixall floods on 11 May.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** On 6 Apr, one was at Hampton Loade.

**Cuckoo** The earliest of the eighty sightings was on 14 Apr.

**Common Swift** The first seen were on 17 Apr over Venus Pool and West Felton.

**Whimbrel** Single birds were on Whixall floods on 14 Apr and Venus Pool on 29 Apr.

**Greenshank** Two records during the period; one at Whixall floods on 11 Apr and another at Venus Pool on 23 Apr.

**Wood Sandpiper** Two were on floods at Whixall on 26 Apr, with one also seen on 12-13 May. Another was briefly at Venus Pool on 29 Apr before being flushed by the Lapwings.

**Little Egret** The five reports came from Whixall on 7 Apr, Wall Farm, Kynnersley on 16 & 29 Apr, and Priorslee Lake on 25 June.

**Hoopoe** One was watched for an hour near Bettisfield Moss on 14 Apr and one was at Cold Weston on 21 Apr.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** Seen in the Wyre Forest, Haughmond Hill, Baschurch, Telford and Ellesmere, with breeding confirmed at one site.

**Grasshopper Warbler** Heard from 19 Apr at seven locations; Whixall Moss, Whixall Canal, Stiperstones, Edmond, Ellesmere and the Old River Bed at Shrewsbury.

**Marsh Warbler** One was found at Priorslee Lake on 5 June. It remained until at least 12 June. This is the first official record of Marsh Warbler in Shropshire.

**Ring Ouzel** Seen at Titterstone Clee, Brown Clee, Long Mynd and Llanfari Waterdine from 5 Apr.

**Turtle Dove** One was seen at Lower Frankton 30 May.

**Reed Warbler** The first arrivals were noted on 16 Apr at Whixall Moss and 17 Apr at Venus Pool.

**Lesser Whitethroat** The earliest were heard at Wall Farm, Venus Pool and Tibberton on 21 Apr.

**Whitethroat** The first bird was reported on 7 Apr at Moelydd, followed by sightings from numerous locations from 17 Apr.

**Willow Tit** Recorded at Catherton Common, Whixall Moss, Little Drayton and Bringewood.

**Wood Warbler** Seen at Clunton Coppice, Wrekin, Bucknell Wood, Cleobury Coppice, Llawnt, Whitcliffe, Wyre Forest, Wimperhill Wood and Catherton Marshes from 14 Apr.

**Whinchat** First noted in Batch Valley, Long Mynd on 19 Apr.

**Spotted Flycatcher** Earliest found were on 10 May at the Wrekin and Bridges, with birds then seen at thirteen other locations during May and June.

**Tree Sparrow** Up to 4 were at Hillely Farm, Pentre during Apr. Also seen at Lydham Heath, Fletcher's Coppice and Puleston.

**Corn Bunting** Seen at Kingslow, Shifnal, Venus Pool, Tibberton Moor, High Ercall, Puleston, Whittington. Kynnersley and Childs Ercall Airfield with a maximum of 8 counted.

**Hawfinch** One was seen in a Church Stretton garden on 21-22 Apr, eating sunflower seeds for an hour. Elsewhere in South Shrops, one died when it flew into a window on 8 Jun.

Also recorded: Ruddy Shelduck, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Cackling Goose, Barnacle Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pochard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Goosander, Red-legged Partridge, Pheasant, Golden Pheasant, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Red Kite, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Honey Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine, Nightjar, 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, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Water Rail, 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.

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

**Records for the next Bird Notes by 4 October please.**

## **Indoor meetings, Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, 7:15pm**

7 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.

4 November                      John Hawkins

### **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.

2 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.

For details of field meetings please see the SOS website. The winter issue of *The Buzzard* will include the full 2016 programme of indoor and outdoor meetings.

## **2016 Indoor meetings, Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, 7.15pm.**

### **6th January Nick Martin : The stories of our British Mammals**

It is 5 years since Nick, an amateur photographer, last visited SOS. He starts the year for us with a talk on some of our great and small fascinating mammals

### **3rd February Dee Doody : An evening with Dee Doody, Wildlife cameraman, artist and TV Presenter**

Born in South Africa, Dee developed an early love of wildlife and was heavily involved with the reintroduction of the red kite into Wales and Scotland. He was suddenly taken ill when last due to visit, but I am sure the wait will be worthwhile

### **2nd March Dawn Balmer : Monitorings and Migration**

Many of you will know, or have heard of Dawn, who is Head of Surveys & National Survey Coordinator for the BTO plus many other roles. As a local person, her wealth of knowledge should present an interesting evening.

### **6th April Ashley Grove : Lammergeiers of the Spanish Pyrenees**

After a humorous and entertaining talk last time, Ashley returns to speak about the life history of the Bearded Vulture. Knowing the quality of his photography, this promises to be a great evening about a bird most of us know little about.

### **5th October John Robinson : The Natural History of the Wyre Forest**

John was Senior Warden at Wyre Forest Nature Reserve before retiring in 1999. His passion for nature and photography skills won him the BBC Photographer of the Year title in 1981.

### **2nd November Andy Warren : From Palm Trees to Pack Ice - winter birding in Japan**

An ex RSPB warden, countryside officer and conservationist with Thames Water, Andy has a birdlist of over 3000 in 47 countries since 1973. Now an Ecological Consultant, his travels to Japan will be interesting to hear.

### **7th December Ian Butler : Walking in the Malvern Hills in search of Wildlife**

An RSPB volunteer, Ian also works with conservation bodies and ecological consultancies. Although widely travelled, his talk tonight centres on somewhere closer to home and perhaps will provide an incentive to visit.

Shropshire Ornithological Society is supported by CJ Wildlife

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

