

The Buzzard



**Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
quarterly magazine**

No. 244

Summer 2016

Society Officers and Officials

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Vice Presidents:	Hugh Blofield, Peter Deans and Chris Whittles.
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Management	Society Officers, Graham Walker and Sue Brealey.
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Committee:	John Tucker, Allan Dawes, Geoff Holmes, Geoff Smith, Simon Twigger, Leo Smith and Helen Griffiths, Mike Shurmer, Linda Munday and Martyn Owen.
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Field Trip Leaders:	Various Society members as appointed by the Management Committee. See the annual programme.
County Bird Recorder:	Martyn Owen, 34 Peacock Hill, Alveley, Shropshire, WV15 6JX. 01746 780336 & 07736 286675 <i>soscountyrecorder@gmail.com</i>
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www.shropshirebirds.com

Editorial

After three years as editor of *The Buzzard* it's time for me to move on. A big thank you to everyone who has helped me over that time, whether by writing articles, producing essential content such as the bird notes and event programmes, identifying suitable people to help with obituaries, being part of the unseen team who collect, pack and address the magazines, or helping in half a dozen other ways, including simply voicing your support when we've met. Although it's been my name on this page, each issue has been a collaborative effort involving lots of people, and I'm very grateful to all of you.

I'm delighted to announce that your new editor is Tim Devanney, who will be familiar to many SOS and South Shropshire RSPB Group members. Tim is a great choice for the role and I hope you will join me in giving him your full support.

Along with a new editor we also have a new chairman in John Arnfield, who has replaced Peter Deans after 37 years in the job, and we also have impending vacancies for treasurer and membership secretary as Brian and Annie Andrews are stepping down after many years of loyal service to the Society.

A growing body of research suggests that volunteering is good for us, particularly for mental health, with associated benefits such as increased feelings of wellbeing and an increase in concentration. The SOS and other conservation groups will always have a need for volunteers and the benefits can go both ways, so please consider helping in some way if you can.

I wish the SOS and in particular John, our new chairman, and Tim, our new editor, every success in the future.

Martin

Copy deadline for the autumn 2015 issue is 1st August.

Please send contributions or suggestions to:

buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk

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:

Mr G J Shardlow, Church Stretton; Mr & Mrs K Holloway, Church Stretton; Mr P Wilcox, Shrewsbury; Mr A Berkeley, Ironbridge; Mr & Mrs G Pagett, Telford; Mr J Wilkinson, Market Drayton; Mr & Mrs K Moreton-Jones, Admaston; Mr & Mrs G Taylor, Church Stretton; Mr M Wilson, Sarn; Mr S Fourie, Benthall; Mr & Mrs R Fairweather, Bishops Castle; Mr PnN Bell, Shifnal; Mr & Mrs J W Burgess, Shrewsbury.

Please note that names and addresses are held on computer and anyone who objects should contact the Membership Secretary.

Urgent appeals

Do you have book-keeping or accounting skills?

Brian Andrews has announced that he is retiring as Treasurer at 31st December 2016. He will produce the 2016 Accounts early in the New Year but will hand over responsibility for the day to day financial affairs from 1st January 2017. If you have basic book-keeping or better still accounting knowledge and are able to take over this important role, in whole or in part, then please contact Brian (details on inside cover).

Are you familiar with Microsoft Access? Or at least able to cope with a computer?

You will also be aware that Annie Andrews acts as Membership Secretary and it makes sense to associate the 2 functions of banking subscriptions (including receipts by bankers' order) with the maintenance of the membership records and mailing list. Annie also is retiring at 31st December 2016 (but would be available to help with the major task of updating the records for the bankers' order receipts at the beginning of January 2017). For further information please contact Annie (details as before).

Ideally we are looking for a couple who would be able to act in tandem. We have some 560 membership records of which nearly 200 relate to Joint Memberships (some 400 members). That still leaves over 300 individual members, two of whom with a bit of organisation could surely work out a sensible system of communication. Members will appreciate the absolute need to fill both of these posts.

Please, if you are able to help in any way, give the matter your URGENT consideration as it is essential that both posts are filled in order to secure the future of the Society.

SOS Chairman's Report 2016

The Society has had another successful year, celebrating its 60th Anniversary in November with a dinner and talk, an enjoyable event which was well attended by members.

During the year, **President's Awards** were made to Doug Hampson and to Vera Roberts in recognition of all their hard work and regular attendance at Venus Pool work parties; we think they have attended every work party for about the last 25 years. The awards, in the form of lead-crystal glassware, were presented to Doug and Vera at a small ceremony at Venus Pool.

The Society's **Finances** remain in a healthy state, with 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 and Church Stretton. 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 80 people attend the meetings and have enjoyed a varied programme.

A full programme of **Field Trips** took place during the year, organised by the Development and Publicity Sub-committee, and led by a number of different members. Coach trips, in conjunction with the local RSPB group, have usually proved popular with members. Thank you to Sue Brealey for organising the Society's field trips, and to all field trip leaders. Thank you, too, to Sue for all the hard work she has done to arrange for two replacement noticeboards to be installed at Venus Pool; they are now almost ready to be put up, one in the main car park and one at the Cound Stank entrance.

Day-to-day management continues at **Venus Pool**, ensuring that the site remains one of the finest bird reserves in the County and attracts a wide variety of birds throughout the year.

During the autumn, the programme of willow scrub removal continued; the area had become very overgrown and because the work was beyond the scope of our volunteers, contractors undertook the work. Further work is planned over the next couple of years.

The hay fields at **Venus Pool** were cut and baled during the summer and then grazed by the neighbour's cattle during the autumn. As usual, the arable field was planted with bird-friendly crops and a large flock of finches, including up to 50 bramblings, spent the winter feeding there. 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 strimmed 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; also to Chris Whittles for planning the planting regime for the arable field, and for organising the ploughing and sowing.

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. Most of those on the sub-committee are 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, BTO 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 ongoing Breeding Bird Survey, and the Wetland Bird Survey, undertaking bird ringing, and submitting their own records to the County Recorder or to Birdtrack. 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 2016. Thank you to all those who have contributed in any way to bird recording in Shropshire during the year. Special thanks should go to Allan Dawes who has recently retired after over 25 years as BTO rep for Shropshire, and best wishes to Jonathan Groom who has recently taken on the role.

There has been some progress on the production of **Annual Reports** during the year; and the editor, Martyn Owen, is currently working with the Conservation Sub-committee on the outstanding Annual Reports, so we are catching up slowly.

However, a number of people who write for the Annual Reports are also involved in the production of the Avifauna, which is taking priority at present.

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. It was, however, in need of updating and John Arnfield has been busy creating a new website which will be up and running very soon. Thank you to Yvonne Chadwick who has been responsible for the website for the last few years and for producing the quarterly Bird Notes for The Buzzard.

Thanks are also due to Martin George who produces our quarterly magazine, **The Buzzard**, and to the team who get together four times a year to prepare the bulletin packages for posting to members.

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. Thanks are also due to **CJ Wildbird Foods** for their continued support.

Having served as Chairman for 37 years, I would like to say that I found it a pleasure and an honour. During those years, we have lost many members and friends too many to mention, who all helped in lots of ways to make the SOS what it is today. I am sure that if they saw it today with our Venus Pool Reserve and the forthcoming publication of The Birds of Shropshire they would think that all their work and effort was worthwhile.

Finally, I would like to thank all officers, committee members and the membership for all their support over the years, and wish our Society all the best for its future.

P G Deans, Chairman

Help! Rarities without descriptions

On the SOS website's homepage there is a list of rarities from 2015 that lack descriptions. If you are the finder of any of these birds, or you saw any of them and are able to provide a description please forward to the county recorder (Martyn Owen; soscountyrecorder@gmail.com), to ensure that these important records enter the SOS database and the official record.

Peter Deans retires after 37 years

Peter Deans, who has served as Chairman of the SOS for well over half of the Society's history, retired at the AGM in March. His special blend of qualities and experience have been an asset to the SOS throughout this time, but particularly when making some of the momentous decisions of the last four decades. Many people made a special trip to wish Peter well, and he received loud and sustained applause at the event.

Peter was presented with an engraved whisky decanter by Vice President Chris Whittles, and was also made a Vice President after a unanimous vote, so all of that experience will still be available should the Society need it!



Peter Deans (left) hands over the Chairman's baton to John Arnfield

Peter is a very hard act to follow, but his successor John Arnfield is probably the best qualified person in the county to do so, although he has ruled out trying to beat Pete's record of 37 years in office! John was a very popular choice for the position, bringing with him considerable experience of birdwatching at both the grass roots and academic level.

We wish our new Vice President and our new Chairman every success for the future.

President's Awards

From time to time, the SOS gives President's Awards to individuals who are felt to have made a particularly notable contribution to the Society. Earlier this year, we were delighted to make two awards, one to Doug Hampson and one to Vera Roberts, who, as far as anyone can remember, have attended every single work party at Venus Pool for about the last 25 years! They have made a huge contribution to the management of the site with their expertise and dedication, and these awards, engraved crystal glassware, are a small thank you to them in recognition of all their hard work over the years.

The awards were presented at a small ceremony at Venus Pool in February, prior to a short work party. Unfortunately, our President Frank Gribble was not able to attend, but the awards were presented to Doug and to Vera by our Chairman, Peter Deans, with members of the Management and Conservation Committees present.

Helen J Griffiths





Photos: Helen J Griffiths

Allscott Sugar Factory (ASF) Site of Special Scientific Interest

A number of members have asked what if any action the Society has taken regarding ASF because of its decline (Natural England's last assessment was that the site was in 'Unfavourable and Declining Condition') since the change of ownership from British Sugar.

From before the time that the factory ceased sugar production we have maintained contact with Natural England over the condition of the site and have suggested possible options for its sustainable management into the future. We do know that Natural England continues to work with the new owners to try and agree a management regime that will restore the SSSI to 'Favourable Condition' but, unfortunately this seems to be taking a very long time.

However, it must be remembered that this is a complex site that was sustained by an industrial process which has now ceased and it was always going to be difficult to maintain the site without a radical re-think of how it operates. It is also subject to the provisions of the Reservoirs Act which have significant influence on how the site is managed.

Nevertheless, the Society does not believe that these problems are insurmountable and will continue to push Natural England to achieve the required outcome. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean that the site will become accessible because, as with all private land, that remains within the gift of the landowner.

Graham Walker
Chairman, Conservation Sub-committee

In Swift decline...

A quintessential sign of summer, in the UK for only 4 months of the year, a charismatic, enigmatic migrant and an aerial acrobat to boot - we are of course talking about the common swift. Or 'not-so-common' anymore it seems.



Photo by Steve Blain

Following on from the article in the last edition of 'The Buzzard' by Peta Sams of Shropshire Swift Group, where Peta eloquently described the dramatic decline of swifts and the likely factors behind this, the RSPB is grateful for the opportunity to share with Shropshire Ornithological Society the launch of a new RSPB national project, entitled 'Swift Cities' to address the plight of swifts.

As described in the previous edition, swifts are in trouble: breeding numbers have plummeted by 38% in the past 15 years. Why? The RSPB believes loss of nest sites is at least partly responsible. These migrants are nest site faithful, returning from their wintering grounds in Africa to the same spot each year to breed - usually in buildings, in gaps under roof tiles, eaves and in gable ends. As we renovate, re-roof and demolish buildings, nest sites are being destroyed or access blocked.

The objective of the RSPB's new national 'Swift Cities' project is to address the decline of this increasingly urban species, by replicating the success of swift conservation work in cities like Belfast, Exeter and Oxford conducted by the RSPB and partners through sharing of best practice, plus to create new Swift Cities around the UK. This will be via a multi-faceted partnership approach of educating the public about the plight of swifts and inspiring people to protect them; coordinating swift surveys through citizen science; working in partnership with planners, developers, local authorities and businesses to protect and provide swift nest sites in new builds and renovations.

There are a number of ways of supporting the Swift Cities project locally. The RSPB is appealing for swift records to be submitted to the RSPB's swift survey at [rspb.org.uk/swift survey](https://www.rspb.org.uk/swift-survey) This data helps identify swift hotspots to enable local authority planners, developers and their consultant architects and ecologists to better inform targeted protection and enhancement of colonies through mitigation during development.

The RSPB is also seeking volunteers to conduct monitoring of active swift nests in their local area. Finally, volunteers are greatly needed to write letters to their local authority, to encourage them to protect and provide nest sites for swifts in new developments and renovations by installing integrated 'swift bricks'. Resources and training can be provided for all the above roles and those interested can devote as little or as much time as they wish.



Photo by Tricia Gibson

If you are interested in being involved with the RSPB 'Swift Cities' project, please contact Rebecca Pitman, Project Officer on 01767 693682 or email rebecca.pitman@rspb.org.uk

British Birds magazine

Some members may already be subscribers to British Birds magazine or may have taken up one of several trial offers available recently. Whether you subscribe or not, however, you may like to join the list of those who receive a free e-newsletter every month. This offers a nice flavour of what has been published recently and what is in the pipeline in areas such as book of the month, news and comment, the rarities section and further special offers.

This is a new initiative from what we believe to be Britain's' leading birding publication. It covers the UK and Western Palearctic and has been the birdwatchers' journal of record since 1907. It is read and recommended by many well-known amateur and professional ornithologists, writers and photographers with Simon King stating that "British Birds is the gold standard of ornithological literature in the UK".

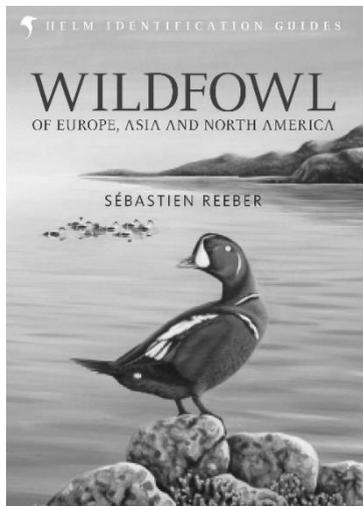
To receive the newsletters, you merely have to log on to www.britishbirds.co.uk and complete the sign up form at the bottom of the page. Give it a try!

NEW Digital Edition

British Birds has recently launched a digital edition of the magazine.

This does not replace the printed journal, but is proving a popular alternative to many readers who prefer the portability, live links and search facility.

More developments are planned, so readers of the digital edition will soon be able to see and hear videos, sound clips and image galleries that are not possible in the printed version.



Special Offer

There is a super offer from British Birds at the moment. New subscribers get a free copy of Sébastien Reeber's Wildfowl of Europe, Asia and North America worth £35, and you can choose from a print, digital or combined subscription.

Or, if you want to try out British Birds to make sure it's for you, then you can take out a trial 6-month subscription for only £9. Go to www.britishbirds.co.uk/ss16offers or call 01424 755155.

British Birds magazine has recently published an article promoting the SOS and we are glad to reciprocate with the above feature.

The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire

Tucker, JJ & Tucker, PG (2012)



Latest developments...

Coupled with work on BoS (*The Birds of Shropshire*, the forthcoming avifauna being published by the SOS) in the last year, advances on the Historical Ornithology of Shropshire website, or Histo, have been considerable though most of the progress achieved has, until now, remained unseen to website users. Species account authors for BoS have been using Histo for their core research, in many cases finding it to all they need. Many new works have been unearthed by some authors and only now placed online on Histo. In all cases relevant material was sent to species account authors, for the book.

The update of Histo in June 2016 brings the numbers of items to over 1,000, of pages over 7,000 and entries in the Species Index to more than 13,000. The new items, around 170 of them, are identified by red cells in the extreme right hand side column in the Citations file.

I select just four items for mention here, ones that I'm perhaps most pleased with. First is at 2012 and by Ralph Collingwood: *Noyfull Fowles and Vermin, The Statutory Control of Wildlife in Shropshire: 1532–1861*. In it he analyses all the available Shropshire parish accounts of payments for the destruction of wild mammals and birds, between – a stunning piece of work on a source which, without his efforts, might never have been analysed.

Three items have been located only recently, describing bird bones found during the excavations at Roman Wroxeter. Relatively few species are involved but they put Histo's first records back to about the 5th century.

From 1803 is Archdeacon Plymley writing about Waste Land in his *General Review of the Agriculture of Shropshire*, all worth a read.

On page 223 he writes that “about 20 years ago there were large tracts of lands (Baggymoor, and other moors from near Boreatton to St. Martins) in the winter usually covered with water, but which now, in consequence of enclosures and drainage, at no great expense, rendered of considerable value. Hither wild-fowl of all sorts usually resorted, and *astonishing quantities* [my italics] were annually taken at the decoy near Whittington, the property of Mr. LLOYD, of Aston, but which, from the above improvement, has been deserted by the ducks, &c. and has been suffered to go out of repair, never again, probably, to be appropriated to its former use.” By ‘astonishing numbers’ did he mean hundreds, or even thousands of waterfowl, from an environment akin to the Carmargue in France or the Kafue Flats in Zambia? In any event it remains on of very few reference to duck decoys in the county.

Do have a look at 1738, an Estate Map of Burlington Pool, then Pickmore Pool, Sheriffhales district, perhaps about that date and many thanks to Andrew Pattison for telling us about it. We can accept the Mute Swan on the pool but have to discount the two White Storks, surely the imagination of the artist/draftsman. And that thing bottom left; surely a trap of some kind.

I must also thank the SOS for covering the occasional costs of Inter-Library loan searches for some of the more obscure material and for purchasing the files used to accommodate the 21-volume paper copy, which will in time revert to the SOS’s library.

[*Editor’s note:* The Histo web address is www.lanius.org.uk/sos/ or click the link on the SOS homepage.]

John Tucker

Upper Onny WG Curlew Appeal

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group’s Curlew Appeal has raised over £2,200 so far, a big thank you to all who have contributed, but there is still time to donate. It’s too early to provide results from nest monitoring this year, but early indications are that it looks like another disaster, so it’s essential that the monitoring continues next year, to get as complete a picture as possible.

For more information on the appeal, please visit www.shropscwgs.org.uk or call 01694 751 491

Housing Martins

On 5 June 1782, Gilbert White, author of 'The Natural History of Selborne' recorded the following in his Journal:

My Brother, Thomas White, nailed-up several large scallop shells under the eaves of his house at South Lambeth, to see if the house-martins would build in them. These conveniences had not been fixed half an hour, before several pairs settled upon them; and, expressing great complacency, began to build immediately.

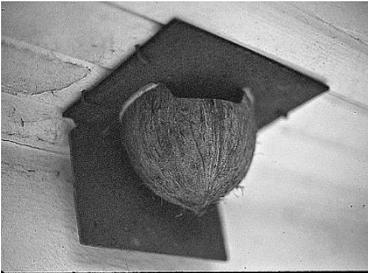


Some years ago I followed Thomas White's example and put up three scallop shells under the eaves of our home at Kempton in south Shropshire. The House Martins, which were already nesting a foot or two away, showed little interest until a couple of years later, as shown in the photo.

This is just one example of the fun and education I have had over many years in my attempts to encourage House Martins to use unusual nest sites. It all started more than 50 years ago when my father purchased a House Martin nest-box made from 'woodcrete' (a cement-sawdust composition) for our home in Hertfordshire; it was soon in use. However, to refer to these as nest-boxes is perhaps a misnomer. In erecting a typical nest-box we are providing an artificial nest site within which the bird builds a nest, but for the House Martin we are, in effect, providing an artificial nest.

Woodcrete is not the only material I have used. Half coconuts were once hung up as standard fare at bird-feeding stations, and years ago I wondered

whether I could cut a coconut shell in such a way as to fashion a nest for House Martins. The endeavour was successful, but it taught me an important and salutary lesson about the architecture of martin nests and how this affects nest hygiene.



For the first four or more days after the eggs hatch, the parents keep the nest clean by carrying away the faecal sacs produced by the chicks, but thereafter, much to the annoyance of some house-holders, the young start defecating out of the nest entrance. In seeking to maximise the size of my coconut nests I had made this feat impossible – the gradient up which the

chicks had to back before defecating was too steep and the defecations fell back into the nest which became soiled, with fatal consequences.

This unfortunate trial was carried out at the house in Cheshire where my wife and I then lived, a house on which I already had a small colony occupying both artificial and natural nests. My next endeavour was to see whether I could observe the nesting behaviour of the martins.

I decided to place a battery of woodcrete nests onto a window, as shown in the photo, having first cut out the backs of the nests so that the birds could be observed from inside the house. This meant blacking-out the windows and keeping the room (our bedroom) in total darkness, so that no light shined in through the observation slot for fear of disturbing the birds.



One of the nests was eventually occupied, but I made poor use of the observational opportunities I had given myself, learning nothing new about martin nesting habits, though I did establish that life within the nest was so crowded that it was actually difficult to see what was going on (see photo on following page).



View into the occupied nest showing two well-grown juveniles. The entrance hole is directly behind them

I resolved to do better the following year, and furthermore, I got in touch with staff at the BBC Natural History Unit. They were keen to take advantage of the opportunity to film the birds and with this in mind I adapted the set-up to facilitate viewing and photography. Sadly the martins did not return to my observation nests, although in the intervening winter a Blue Tit roosted nightly in one of them, as shown in the photo.



Successful though they are, woodcrete nests bear little visual resemblance to the real thing; not so the beautiful nests made at one time by Helen Cavanagh of Woodbridge in Suffolk. These are of papier mâché covered with a cement wash. Plastic nests, which are available commercially, can also look remarkably like the real thing (the photo shows a papier mâché nest framed by two plastic ones; these are on our garage). Other materials have been tried too: my wife made a nest of clay which was simply left to dry, but I have seen ones made of fired clay and also of iron.



And my efforts to encourage martins are on-going. Nearly twenty years ago I saw a design for a 'house martin cote'; I found it irresistible. I had one made and erected it in our garden; wasps have adopted it, but not the martins. I wondered whether the artificial nests I had used as 'bait' were set too high beneath the 'eaves' of the cote, so, last year I moved them down to make them more visible (as shown in the photo), but still they were shunned.

I am writing this on 1 May. Our martins have yet to show up and I'll fret until I see them.



Their nests are ready, and if they do share their summer with us they will contribute unwittingly to the BTO's 2016 House Martin Nest Monitoring Study – I look forward to recording their nesting attempts.

Tom Wall

Rook pie for the ravenous

What (other than humans) do nesting Rooks fear the most? A passing Goshawk? A marauding Kite? Well, currently in South Shropshire, it is a ravenous Raven.

On 14 April, intrigued by a cacophony at the ten Rook nests near our house in Kempton, I witnessed a Raven helping itself to a dish of Rook eggs or young (I couldn't see which). Twenty or thirty adult Rooks were screaming their heads off to no good effect.

Direct assaults (presumably by the occupants of the nest) were more troublesome but were batted away by the Raven without too much difficulty.

That day, and the next, a Raven made several raids, visiting at least three nests; on one such visit it ended up overcoming, killing and eating one of its attackers.

I assumed that the Raven would go systematically through the entire rookery, but, although I didn't keep the site under regular observation, the raids ceased and the business of the rookery resumed.

It was not my first experience of this behaviour. Two years ago I disturbed by chance a Raven visiting a Rook nest at a nearby site, and last year, when I heard a commotion in a rookery in Scots Pines at Bromfield, I knew what was up, and in due course a Raven flew out of the dense foliage pursued by an angry flock.

This behaviour would appear to be unusual, but it has been recorded before. In his definitive study, 'The Raven' (1997), Derek Ratcliffe cites F O Morris's 'A History of British Birds' (1895) in which the author reported on Ravens which built near a rookery taking young Rooks to feed to their own nestlings. And he quotes Desmond Nethersole-Thompson who reported in the 'Oological Record' of 1932 watching a pair of Ravens systematically helping themselves to the eggs of their smaller relatives who hovered overhead in a noisy crowd.

Tom Wall

A trip to Extremadura, Spain

On the road to Cáceres

Whatever had we been we thinking about? Here we were setting off in the hire car from Madrid airport, negotiating a series of busy and confusing ring roads, and heading out towards Extremadura, without much real idea of how long the journey to Cáceres would take, or of where exactly we wanted to go birding when we got there. I hadn't even found time to study the guide books properly – definitely not good planning.

However, our hearts lightened as the traffic thinned and the vistas expanded; soon we had the road and the vast landscape almost to ourselves. I had naively imagined that we would be pootling round a cosy little region maybe the size of Shropshire, instead of which we seemed to be in a

Wyoming-sized landscape – simply huge. The only thing that reminded us of Shropshire was the roundabouts, veritable armies of them at every opportunity, in every town and village - Telford is in an amateur roundabout league compared with Cáceres! After much driving hither and thither, circling roundabouts, asking for directions, and cursing futilely, our hotel finally came into view at the top of one of the many hills the town is built on. It was, in fact, right by the last roundabout out of town, with a glorious view across the plains and distant mountains.



White Stork, Cáceres old town

The first birds

Birding started as soon as we got out of the car: a large and endlessly industrious colony of House Martins on the building adjacent to our hotel. We never tired of watching their comings and goings during our stay. Around the hotel, Spotless Starling, Serin, Greenfinch, Barn Swallows, Pallid Swift and Red-rumped Swallows were soon added to the list. I even thought I had spotted my first Bee-eater, in flight, but couldn't be sure. We also started the head-scratching business of trying to identify the many raptors wheeling overhead. Opposite the hotel was another hill, dotted with olive and cork oak trees and bright with spring flowers. Getting there was easy enough over a couple of footbridges and soon we could hear Corn Buntings, Hoopoes and a Cuckoo, see a Sardinian Warbler, a singing Stonechat and hear and see many larks - but which ones?

The lark puzzle

Trying to identify larks became one of my main pastimes throughout our stay. I read the field guide assiduously, searched online, sought advice (on the couple of occasions we spoke to real birders) and still couldn't be sure, since nothing I read or heard was conclusive: if the crest stood right up, then it was sure to be a Crested Lark; if it fanned out slightly then it was a Thekla Lark (I had mentally written off the Wood Lark and Short-toed Lark, but will have most likely seen them too); if the bill seemed fairly long, it was a Crested, if shorter a Thekla; if it tended to be on the ground, a Crested, and so it went on.

As for their songs, they were simply beautiful – the soundtrack to our stay in Extremadura - but I couldn't really tell them apart in the field, nor be sure the crest was up enough, or the bill long, or short, enough...

A day in Monfragüe National Park

We soon realised we would have to spend more time driving than anticipated, because of the distances to cover. So, after a few days of getting used to the wide landscapes, the ever-changing pattern of dehesa and plains, the fabulous flowers and exciting bird spotting, we set off for Monfragüe National Park (say Mon-frag-oo-ay).

The guide book states: "Monfragüe is without doubt the flagship of natural Extremadura. If this is your first visit to Extremadura, it should be your first and prime destination. This National Park and the surrounding land of superb cork and holm oak dehesas set a standard to which the other areas in Extremadura are best compared." The park extends to over 18,000 ha and covers a series of low and rocky hills along the Tajo (Tagus) River, with Mediterranean forest on the north-facing slopes. An extensive area of fabulous dehesa surrounds the park, stretching as far as the eye can see from the viewpoint up on the ruined castle. Monfragüe is well known for its incredible numbers of birds of prey and we very much hoped to see some of them. With the help of a local guide, we would certainly have seen many more species that day, and during the rest of our stay in Extremadura, but it was, in fact, exciting to have to work at identifying first-time species and make our own discoveries.



*The view from
Monfragüe
castle*

The enormous Griffon Vultures – scores of them – wheeling around the cliffs of Monfragüe, darkening the rocks with their shadows as they effortlessly sailed past, were enthralling to watch. But we were just as excited to see an Egyptian Vulture, Crag Martins and Choughs flying around the cliffs, the latter landing only a few feet away from us in a large opening on the castle wall. In the small village of Villareal de San Carlos, a few kilometres further down the road, we were treated to the sight of an estimated 150-200 House Martins, all flying around, chattering and busily collecting mud from the large puddles in front of the café where we were enjoying a coffee.

Extremadura diary selection of highlights

April:

22nd, Cáceres old town: White Stork, Serin, Pallid Swift, Lesser Kestrel

23rd, Embalse (=reservoir) de Guadiloba: Iberian Shrike, Nightingale, Sardinian Warbler, Great Bustard, Black Kite, Booted Eagle

24th, 2km south of Hinaljo, (off Road A66) en route to Talaván: Griffon Vulture, Woodchat Shrike, Booted Eagle;

Arroyo (= ravine or gully) de Talaván: White Stork, Great-crested Grebe, Gadwall, Black Kite

25th, Los Barruecos, Malpartida de Cáceres: Great Reed Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, White Stork, Black-winged Stilt, Azure-winged Magpie, Spoonbill, Common Sandpiper

26th, Monfragüe National Park: Short-toed Treecreeper, Black Kite, Griffon Vulture, Chough, Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Black-eared Wheatear, Black Wheatear, Egyptian Vulture, Peregrine, Serin

27th, Road CC99 to Santa Marta de Magasca: Roller, Crested and Thekla Lark, Corn Bunting, Common Kestrel, Stonechat, Spanish Sparrow, Fan-tailed Warbler (its other name is Zitting Cisticola and it did indeed call “zit zit”), Gadwall, Woodchat Shrike;

Magasca: Calandra Lark, Thekla Lark, Great Bustard, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Black Stork, White Stork, Golden Oriole, Bee-eater, Griffon Vulture, Raven, Iberian Shrike;

Embalse de Guadiloba (5-6.30pm): Nightingale, Great Bustard, Crested and Thekla Lark, Little Egret, Hoopoe, Cuckoo

28th, Alburquerque castle and town: White Stork, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Rock Dove, Lesser Kestrel, House Martin, Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Pallid Swift;

Road EX214 to Villar del Rey: Short-toed Eagle, Hoopoe, Crested and Thekla Lark, Bee-eater, Griffon Vulture

Embalse de Valdesalor (5-6pm): Hoopoe, Cuckoo, Nightingale, Turtle Dove, Black Kite, Common Sandpiper

29th, Cáceres and Portanchito y Santuario de la Montaña: Pallid Swift, Spotless Starling, Crested Lark, Serin, Nightingale, Azure-winged Magpie, Grey Wagtail

We also saw many other species familiar in the UK, but which I have not listed here.

Visiting Extremadura

Late April is an excellent time for a birding trip to Extremadura: most, if not all, summer migrants have arrived and the spring flowers are at their best. If you have never seen the *dehesa, plains and mountains of Extremadura before, be prepared for an unforgettable experience!

You can book guided-tour holidays online, but if you go there independently, as we did, you will need a decent hire car, road map, guide books and of course a note book to record your many memorable sightings.

*Dehesa is traditional, flower-rich pasture land, in some ways resembling a never-ending orchard. It is described in our guide book as “the gently rolling, tree-dotted hills and plains of Extremadura”; the trees are predominantly holm oak and cork oak, but there are also some olive groves. The trees are pollarded to create an umbrella shape, to maximise shade in the burning hot summers and so that the crop of acorns is spread out over as wide an area as possible.



Dehesa, Montfragüe NP

Nicola Pacult

Red Kite breeding season records

Some regular Red Kite sites haven't been occupied this year. If anyone knows the location of a 2016 Kite nest, or has evidence suggesting breeding may have taken place, please don't assume we know about it. Please tell Leo Smith: 01694 720296, leo@leosmith.org.uk

A spare pair of binoculars and the 90:10 rule

When I find myself in town with time to kill, sometimes, I'll wander the camera shops and test binoculars: what is available these days, what do they cost, how good are they optically and what is the build quality – I'm talking here of the lower end of the market here, under £200. I've been doing this for probably fifty years and I did again recently, casually seeking another second pair to have always available in my rucksack or in the car when my main pair, Leica 10x42BNs, are at home – I don't like to be out of the house without access to a pair. 'Serious' binoculars will cost anything over £800 in town I carry out a series of simple tests looking for a good pair at a much lower price.

Recently I did find a remarkable pair. They were 10x (which are usually lower in optical quality than 8x) but they scored far higher than I have seen before on both optical performance and apparent build quality. And at only £149 off the shelf they were virtually cheap. I made a note of the name and looked them up on the internet, finding half a dozen glowing reviews - and a supplier offering them at £117 so I ordered a pair. They are now my second pair and every bit as good as I hoped – I have to look hard to see the difference from the performance of my serious pair.

This all goes to verify my 90:10 rule, being that, if you look around carefully, you can get 90% of the performance of a 'serious' (=expensive) pair for 10% of the price, or close to it. As for my recent second pair, they are 10x42 Celestron NatureDX – and I have to declare that I have no pecuniary interest in that company or any subsidiary! And the figures in my case are indeed close to 90:10.

John Tucker

Mary Colwell's Curlew Walk

In mid-May Mary Colwell passed through the Shropshire Hills on her epic Curlew Walk, a 500 mile journey from the west coast of Ireland to the east coast of England, raising awareness of the worrying decline in this iconic bird's numbers.

Over the weekend she took part in art events, did numerous media interviews, gave an inspiring talk and continued her walk eastwards in the company of several SOS members and other well-wishers.

Curlews are in serious trouble, with 50% declines in breeding numbers and extremely low recruitment, and time may be running out. For more information on Mary's campaign please visit www.curlewmedia.com and for the news of the local Ground-nesting Birds Recovery Project in the Shropshire Hills see www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk



Mary Colwell in one of her Curlew Walk jumpers, and Ric Maurice of SWT and Shropshire Mammal Group, better known as 'The Skull Bloke', with two Curlew skulls. Hopefully not an augury.



Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Shropshire's scrapheap challenge

Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales have joined forces for one of the most ambitious conservation challenges yet: turning a heavily polluted, 50 year-old ex-scrapyard back into one of the rarest habitats on earth.

North Shropshire was first hailed as one of Shropshire's ecological gems in 1962 by Charles Sinker, one of the Trust's founders. Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses and Wem Moss, from here on referred to as the Marches Mosses, form the third largest peatbog in Britain and are, arguably, the best example of their kind in Europe.

However, this habitat is rare and dwindling. Over 96% of lowland raised peatbog has been destroyed in the UK, either cut for peat for garden compost or drained for farmland. When you consider that it takes 10,000 years for peat bogs to develop, conserving what we have left becomes especially urgent, especially in the face of climate change.

With this in mind, Shropshire Wildlife Trust jumped at the chance to purchase a package of land crucial to the bog's restoration, which included the Furber's scrapyard. The yard sits on the south west corner of the Marches Mosses complex and is instrumental in controlling the water levels on the site.

Taking on contaminated land is quite a risky business and not a decision to be taken lightly. Guided by thorough debate amongst trustees, specialist contamination surveys by environmental consultants and advice from waste specialists, we decided that the risks were manageable and the benefits considerable.

Some of the land we're in the process of buying is part of the Special Area of Conservation, which is a European designation meaning a site is of high ecological value. This designation applies to the whole of the Marches Mosses, including part of the Furber's site, and essentially means we will own an internationally important scrapyard. Who could ask for more?

Across the Llangollen canal from the scrap yard are the 'flooded fields', which have no designation but are turning into one of the best birding sites in the county. Partially flooded in the winter and damp in the summer, they attract waders and passage migrants including red shank, ruff and most recently a magnificent spoonbill.

With the support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's bridging loan service for charities, the land should be purchased this summer. The bridging loan service gives us two years to raise the funds to secure the future of these important bits of bog jigsaw. In order to manage and restore the land once purchased, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Shropshire Wildlife Trust have put together a funding package that includes European funds, Heritage Lottery funds, Government departments and corporate supporters.

Sarah Gibson

Coach Trip to Bird Fair 2016

The Society is running a Coach Trip to the Bird Fair being held at Rutland Water on Saturday, 20th August 2016, leaving the Shirehall at 7.45am promptly. The cost of the coach will be £15.00

Having been in contact with the organisers of the Bird Fair, I have found out that there will be discounted entry tickets but only if 30 or more people book onto the coach. The normal entry fee will be £15.00 but the discounted fee will be £12.50.

This trip is open to anyone interested in going whether they be a Society member or not. It is a matter of ensuring the coach is paid for without incurring losses to the Society.

Could anyone interested in going on this trip, please book a seat by contacting Sue Brealey: **publicity@shropshirebirds.co.uk** or 01939 262450.

Field Trip Report to The North Wales Coast, Sunday, 14th February 2016

Organised by Sue Brealey

A group of 5 members braved the weather to meet at the seafront in Llanfairfechan to start this field trip. The weather in fact proved good with blue skies, a few clouds, no rain, excellent light but with a brisk cold wind, certainly from the Arctic direction! The tide was on its way in, but sea watching proved difficult due to the very choppy seas. On the sandbanks though lots of Oystercatcher & Curlew were noted, plus the usual gulls ie Black-headed, Herring & Great Black-backed. At one point a Peregrine flew over, but was only seen by a couple of the group. On the boating pool Mallard & Mute Swan were noted. When using scopes to see further out a Cormorant was seen flying past as well as a group of Pintail, which were difficult to identify at first due to the distance involved. After about an hour it was decided to move to the next port of call.

The group drove round to the small car park near a sewerage works at Morfa Madryn. The group down to the works in the hope of wagtails but to no avail. However in the field opposite Blackbird, Mistle and Song Thrush were noted. There were several Robins about in the woods going towards the railway line. Within the woods several birds were seen including Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Chaffinch and Wren. Having negotiated the railway, very busy with trains passing, the group walked around to the first of the three hides located in the area. While having lunch the group enjoyed flocks of Dunlin flying around, a Little Egret landing then disappearing up a channel, more Oystercatcher, and some Shelduck. From the other hides, a pair of Greenshank were seen trying not to be associated with small flocks of Redshank, with a smart pair of Pintail & Shoveler, a Moorhen, some Canada & Greylag Geese, and finally a pair of Little Grebe feeding vigorously around the pools. There was also a considerable flock of at least 300 Wigeon feeding on the backs of the pools.

A further short drive moved the group to Aber Ogwen (The Spinnies), situated just under the imposing Penrhyn Castle. With the cars parked just by the sea shore, the group watched the incoming tide, including a small flock of Common Scoter, as it reached its height before walking down the lane towards the 2 hides situated within the reserve. At the first, Great & Blue Tits were feeding at some feeders with Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Robin, and Nuthatch. Across the water a small flock of Redshank were seen as well as about 4 Little Egret starting to roost in the tresses. A Grey Heron was seen to one side, and the group stayed for some time in the hope of seeing a Kingfisher but again to

no avail. On returning to the road a very large flock of Curlew were noted in the field across from the reserve, which considering its red status was gratifying although they were probably winter visitors only. Another short walk brought the group to the main hide for the reserve. On the inland side on a spit of land going into the lake, Greenshank were noted besides, Redshank, Little Egret & Grey Heron. Nearer to the hide at a feeding station, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Blue Tit, and House Sparrow were seen as well a very tidy looking pair of Bullfinch. A Great Spotted Woodpecker flew through without stopping, and Little Grebe were seen as well. On the seaward side, Mallard & Teal were seen as well as quite a few Goldeneye. A small flock of Dunlin flew past. After seeing such good birds, the group walked back to the car park along the beach being careful as the tide although turned was still quite high up the beach.

The group then drove to RSPB Conwy in the hope of getting a well-earned hot drink. Before getting onto the A55, everyone noted a Buzzard flying over, only the second raptor of the day. Once at Conwy a quick drink was had just before closure but Coot and Tufted Duck were added to the list. Having had a break the group broke up to start the drive back home. In conclusion it was felt to be a very good day (not wet!!), and the list came to about 48, which was really quite good.

Sue Brealey

Field Trip Report to RSPB Dearne Valley Sunday, 6th March 2016

Organised by Sue Brealey

This coach trip was cancelled as it was felt to be financially not viable as only 17 people booked a place, and it would have caused a large loss to the Society. This money could be better spent on any of the relevant and important surveys being carried out throughout the county.

Sue Brealey

Bird Notes

January, February & March 2015

Yvonne Chadwick

Whooper Swan Up to 38 were counted on floods in the areas of Edgerley Cae Howell and Meverley, with 9 juveniles noted. Two were also at Cross Houses on a few dates in late Feb through to mid March.

Egyptian Goose One seen at Chetwynd Park on 18 Jan and another at Preston Montford Field Centre on 5 Mar.

Mandarin Duck Six males and five females were on the River Severn at Leighton on 17 Jan. Others were at Breakneck Bank (3), Ellesmere, Aston on Clun (2), Buildwas, Blakemere and Dowles Brook (2).

Pintail The twenty eight sightings came from four locations. Highest site counts were 20 at Hillely Farm, Pentre on 23 Mar, 16 at Whixall floods on 30 Jan, 5 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 22 Jan and 8 at Venus Pool.

Scaup A 1w drake was present at Whitemere during Jan. An adult drake was on The Mere on 16 Jan and 2 drakes on Colemere on 5 Mar.

Common Scoter A drake was found at Colemere on 19 Jan. It was last seen on 22 Jan.

Goldeneye Up to three birds continued to be seen at Venus Pool until at least 24 Mar. Highest counts elsewhere were of 21 at The Mere, Ellesmere, 7 at Colemere at 2 at Chelmarsh.

Grey Partridge One was seen at Camp Farm on 14 Feb.

Glossy Ibis One flew in to Venus Pool during the afternoon on 19 Mar, roosting on the middle island that night. Also seen the following day.

Little Egret Seen at Overton on 15 Mar and Whixall Moss on 25 Mar.

Osprey One circled over Venus Pool on 19 Mar. Other sightings were at Picklescott on 24 Mar and flying north up the River Severn at Bridgnorth on 29 Mar.

Hen Harrier Most reports were from Whixall Moss, where a male continued to be seen throughout the period. Ringtails were seen at Upton near Shifnal on 21 Jan and at Eaton Mascott in early March.

Merlin The four records came from Upton Magna, The Long Mynd, Black Hill and Whixall Moss.

Great Grey Shrike One continued to be seen at Black Hill throughout the period. Another was on Whixall Moss on 25 Mar.

Little Ringed Plover One was reported at Whixall floods on 20 Mar and 25 Mar.

Golden Plover Records from four sites. Top counts were up to 300 at Wall Farm, Kynnersley during February. Also recorded at Newport (100) on 15 Jan and 13 at Crudgington Moor on 14 Feb.

Dunlin One was at Whixall floods on 20 Mar.

Jack Snipe Four were noted at Shavington Park on 9 Jan and one at Whixall floods on 29 Feb.

Common Snipe Counted at fifteen locations, with the highest counts coming from Venus Pool with up to 35 present during January, 19 at Polemere on 11 Mar, 14 at Cranmere Bog on 20 Jan and 15 at Shavington Park on 9 Jan.

Woodcock Seven reports came from Forton Heath, Hensott Pool, Cefn Coch, Condoover, Wyre Forest and a dead one on St Lawrence's Church in Ludlow; a peregrine kill.

Curlew Seen at eleven locations with the largest counts being 47 at Edgerley on 10 Jan and 15 at Whixall floods on 28 Feb.

Whimbrel Heard flying over Cantlop, near Condoover on 10 Mar. This was the first UK record for 2016, apart from wintering birds.

Common Redshank One or two birds were seen at Venus Pool and Whixall floods from 12 Mar to the end of the month.

Common Sandpiper Single birds were seen at Leighton on 20 Jan and Meverley on 26 Feb.

Green Sandpiper Two were at Whixall floods from mid February. Single birds were at Devil's Dingle, Longford Moors and Whitleyford Bridge.

Mediterranean Gull Up to two adults roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere from 24 Jan.

Little Gull One was present at The Mere on 19 Feb.

Common Gull The highest counts were of 75 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 22 Jan and 12 at Granville Country Park on 13 Mar. Single birds also seen at Colemere, Chelmarsh, Venus Pool, Wood Lane and Oerley Reservoir.

Yellow-legged Gull An adult and two first winters were at Telford Crematorium on 2 Jan. Two were also at The Mere, Ellesmere on 16 Jan, an adult at Chelmarsh on 19 Feb and 3 at The Mere on 7 Mar.

Caspian Gull Seen at three locations, a 3w at Priorslee Lake on 1 Jan, a 4w at Telford Crematorium on 2 Jan and one at The Mere, Ellesmere on 5 Mar.

Kittiwake An adult was seen at Priorslee Lake on 7-8 March.

Ring-necked Parakeet The Bridgnorth bird continued to be seen in the river side area until 10 Feb.

Barn Owl Eighteen sightings came from fifteen locations, mainly of single birds. Three were of dead birds found on roads.

Little Owl Just four reports, these came from Pentre, Condover, Shrewsbury and Child's Ercall.

Short-eared Owl Up to three birds continued to be seen at Whixall Moss throughout the quarter. Single birds were also at Henley Common on 5-6 Jan and Boiling Well on The Long Mynd on 21 Mar.

Long-eared Owl One was on a roadside hedge at Wroxeter on 15 Jan.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Seen at three locations; Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest, Colemere and Telford.

Sand Martin Two over the River Severn at Monkmoor on 20 Mar were the earliest. Then at Venus Pool on 22 Mar (3), The Mere (12) and Holmer Lake (3) on 24 Mar. The first large count was of 250 over Whitemere on 29 Mar.

Swallow The first sightings were of single birds at Venus Pool on 24 Mar and 26 Mar. Further reports came from Decker Hill on 27 Mar, Pen-y-Llan on 28 Mar, Whitemere on 9 Mar, Whixall on 30 Mar and The Lawley on 31 Mar.

Wheatear The first report was of two at Pen-y-Llan on 28 Mar, followed by one on Titterstone Clee on 5 on The Long Mynd on 31 Mar.

Ring Ouzel Singles were seen on Caer Caradoc on 29 Mar, Brown Clee on 30 Mar and The Long Mynd on 31 Mar.

Water Pipit One was found on Whixall floods on 14 Feb, with a second bird spotted on 20 Feb. Both were regularly reported until the end of Mar, by then developing summer plumage.

Black Redstart A female was on the roof tops of buildings in Cartway near the Town Centre of Bridgnorth on 7 Feb.

Cetti's Warbler One continued to be heard at Priorslee Lake during the period.

Willow Warbler The first record received was from 28 Mar in Church Stretton.

Willow Tit Seen at Black Hill, Callow Hill, Haughmond Hill, Betton Moss, The Mere and Clunton Coppice.

Tree Sparrow Just the one report received; 4 in Shrewsbury on 31 Mar.

Brambling Over one hundred sightings were received. At Cefn Coch at least 100-150 were amongst a finch flock of over 6000 birds feeding in an area of pasture, clear fell and an old beet field during Feb and Mar. Other high counts came from Edgmond (130) on 15 Feb Longford Moors (90) on 18 Feb, and Venus Pool (55) on 20 Feb.

Hawfinch Two present at Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest during February.

Corn Bunting Up to 36 birds were in a stubble field between Tibberton and Cherrington, with the highest counts in mid-March. Twenty were also at Wall Farm Kynnersley on 7 Feb and one at Venus Pool on 11 Jan.

Records: 10,211 Species: 136

Forthcoming field trips

See the website or 2016 programme booklet for details of all of this year's field trips.

There will be no Field Trip in July or September

Saturday 20th August Rutland Water – For the Bird Fair

Organiser: Sue Brealey By Coach

Full Day – Meet at the Shirehall Car Park to leave promptly at 7.45am

Cost will be £15.00 per person for the coach, plus entry fee to the fair. This could be discounted depending on numbers going. Booking from February 2016

Leaders' and/or organisers' telephone numbers

Sue Brealey 01939 262450 // 07713 164463

Estelle Hughes 07817 243693 // 01948 840902

2016 Indoor meetings, Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, 7.15pm

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