

The Buzzard

**Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
Quarterly Magazine**



No. 248

Summer 2017

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Welcome to New Members

Phillips	Mr.& Mrs.M.	Church Stretton	Dawes	Mr S	Dawley
Bonds	Mr & Mrs P	Carding Mill Valley	Cartwright	Mr & Mrs.A	Market Drayton
Perry	Mr A	Diddlebury	Baugh	Mrs U	Shrewsbury
Jones	Mr G	Bayston Hill	Daniels	Mrs C	Liverpool
Lewis	Mr S	Baschurch	Logan	Mr P	Chelmarsh
Masterson	Mr & Mrs M	Yockleton	Luke	Mr B	Wellington
Carter	Mr C	Shrewsbury	Clinton	Mrs T	Chorley
Bamford	Mr M	Baschurch	Jones	Mr C	Wellington

A very warm welcome to the following new members of the Society:
Please note that names and addresses are held on computer and anyone who objects should contact the Membership Secretary.

A Sensational Start to 2016

It was a gloomy start to New Year's Day with heavy rainfall all morning but that didn't deter local birder Simon Davies from leaving the shelter of the hides to check out the arable field at Venus Pool. Numerous finches, buntings, including four Corn Buntings encouraged him to do a full circuit and, soaked through, within 50m of return to the car park, he found a large pale bunting in the roadside hedge. He was able to observe it down to 5m, allowing him to savour all the critical features of what could only be... a female Pine Bunting! After dashing to retrieve his camera, on return, the bird had disappeared and as Simon was leaving on a trip to Australia the following day, so did he! The news was put out, however, and more locals soon arrived to try and relocate the bunting. At 2.45 pm, it reappeared in the hedge between the car park and oak tree and soon the small crowd of birders were witnessing a new Shropshire bird!



Organisational Nightmare

An organisational nightmare loomed, so a few members of the SOS committee plus volunteers

hastily got together to plan for the following day. Pine Bunting is a major national rarity and was bound to attract a very large crowd! Even before first light, cars were arriving and for the first hour or so of daylight, we managed to get some 40 cars parked safely within the reserve. After that, it was find a space... anywhere ... and the nearby lanes became somewhat congested with abandoned cars. Eventually the only place to park a car was in Cross Houses! The pine bunting showed well until mid-morning and an estimated 500 birders turned up during the day, virtually all of them managing to get a view of the bird. The section of hedge it was favouring had been roped off to prevent it being flushed and this strategy was employed for the rest of the week. It became more and more elusive as the week progressed with just very occasional views for the lucky few who connected with it.

Charities Benefit

Two local charities (Severn Hospice and Cuan House Wildlife Rescue) were the beneficiaries of the donations from visiting birders. It was a tiring but enjoyable few days for all the volunteers who helped 'steward' the event and huge thanks to everyone concerned! Thanks to the Pine Bunting too, which for the first two days anyway, showed quite nicely. The perfect way to open a new birding year...

Jim Almond

Plovers' Eggs and Fortnum & Mason, the Ratlinghope Connection

"At the farm at the Bridges ... Plovers always nested on the drier spots ... using mole hills for their scrapes. If the hen had started to sit, the eggs would all be in a circle, pointing in, they were no use for eating and were left to hatch. The eggs we would collect one day would be on sale in London the next ... as with oysters, eaten raw. Our reputation at Fortnum & Mason relied on the freshness, a definite must. Daily on our way home from school we could run up and down ... and not miss an egg, sometimes filling a wicker shopping basket lined with hay."

Tuer 2004

This extract from the late Bill Tuer's book of 2004, 'A Prince among Poachers', explains how, at Easter time, Fortnum & Mason would, from Piccadilly, dispatch specially made boxes to Ratlinghope; each box was designed to take 36 Lapwing eggs. They were sent to Bill's father, Ted, who was keeper then at Ratlinghope on the western flank of The Long Mynd. According to Bill, his father started work there in 1929, so this reminiscence relates to 1930 or thereabouts. It is a striking example of how common Lapwings once were, one that I have cited on many occasions when talking or writing about the wildlife of the area.

How drastic the subsequent decline in Lapwing numbers has been, was demonstrated by the long-standing efforts of the Upper Onny Wildlife Group, whose members, in 2016, again scoured 120 square kilometres of ground in the area, including Ratlinghope, and found just 14 pairs. Leo Smith, a leading member of the Group, and editor of the forthcoming avifauna, 'The Birds of

Shropshire' was keen to use Bill Tuer's story as an illustration of the decline, and he asked me to provide the relevant details.

Lapwing Act 1926

I duly did, but pointed out to Leo that the story had a flaw; the sale of Lapwing eggs for human consumption had been made illegal by the Lapwing Act, passed, according to most authorities, in 1926. Leo's researches, aided by the BTO's ever-helpful librarian, Carole Showell, established that in fact it was the end of March 1928 before the Protection of Lapwings Act received Royal Assent, but this was still prior to Bill's harvesting of the eggs. So perhaps Bill, a mere 10 or so years old at the time, and into his 80s before he wrote his book, had got confused about the year when his father moved down from Levens Hall in Westmoreland to Ratlinghope. However, various enquiries established that it was indeed 1929 before the Tuer family reached Ratlinghope.

Parliamentary Question

In the meantime, Leo had dug up a parliamentary question of May 1933 posed by Captain Alec Stratford Cunningham-Reid (a First World War flying ace) to Sir John Gilmour, Home Secretary, about enforcement of the Protection of Lapwings Act, which indicated that the law was not being rigorously applied. But would a prestigious and respectable London retailer really be flouting an Act of Parliament?

Keen to resolve the issue I contacted Dr Andrea Tanner, Fortnum & Mason's Archivist. She could find nothing on Plovers' eggs, or the Tuer family, but pointed out that this was not surprising as much archive material had been destroyed by a bomb in the Second World War, and some more thereafter by her predecessors. But she did explain that at that time 'shop assistants effectively ran their own individual customer lists', and she did not rule out the possibility that there might have been 'a below-the-counter trade in Plovers' eggs for special customers'. On the strength of this, and the convincing detail in Bill Tuer's account, I am pretty sure that the Ratlinghope Plovers will figure in 'The Birds of Shropshire'.

More to follow

There is another twist to the tale of Lapwing eggs and Fortnum & Mason, and should the editor be willing to indulge me, I will tell you more in the next edition of 'The Buzzard'.

Tom Wall

Remembering Dudley Chambers



I had known Dudley for many decades as a family friend and we shared many things in common, including Adams' Grammar School in Newport and people connected with it, an interest in rugby football, a penchant for the obscure art of mullet fishing, a love of Fowey in Cornwall, and a passion for birds. Yet, in truth our meetings were irregular until I retired and took to visiting him in his home. So, he must have been eighty five years old when we first came up with the idea of a visit to Venus Pool. As a birder since a tender age, he had a wealth of experience that put me to shame and his list of sightings over many decades and many locations was hugely impressive. But more than all this, he was a dear person who it was a privilege to know.

Venus Pool

He will be familiar to many of the visitors to Venus Pool, as for the past couple of years or so we had scheduled a visit every month and Dud was used to sitting in a corner of the hide and engaging with and entertaining anybody who ventured in with tales of golden orioles and pallid harriers that he had seen in his bird-watching prime.

Our arrangement followed much the same pattern. I would pick him up in the car and we would drive to Venus Pool and park in the disabled car park. Mobility was a problem for Dud but the rail at the side of the ramp to the hide was a blessing and so we could make it. Dud always provided the flask of

coffee and as an indulgence to me he also provided the fig rolls. As a consequence of those trips, I can now identify a Little Ringed Plover, whistle like a Wigeon and hopefully distinguish between a Green Sandpiper and a Wood Sandpiper. But more memorable than these things was the delight for me of watching the whirl and call of Lapwings, the frenetic feeding of Godwits and the brilliance of the Kingfisher who performed pike dives, just for our diversion, and to indulge the camera clicking paparazzi in the hide. A maximum stay might be up to two hours after which Dud would become uncomfortable and so we would head to The Wickets pub in Wellington for lunch where they so kindly welcomed us and made a fuss of Dud.

Our last planned trip was scheduled for December, but Dud died on the very morning we planned to go. Of course, I miss him, as I know so many do, but my personal sense of loss is more than I can articulate or really understand. Those monthly trips were part of the changing seasons of the english landscape, marked by the seasonal rotation of the different birds: the first arrival of the Swallows, the summer geese with their chicks and the swirl on the water of the carp, followed by the autumn and winter waterfowl at their best.

Thank you

I wanted to write to thank all those who made Venus Pool possible and who are so diligent in its upkeep. We were both members of SOS (Dud for many decades and me for just a couple of years) just so that we could be counted and contribute in a small way to a truly worthy cause. But in writing, I also felt that I wanted to draw some record of the man himself. It rather reminds me of when I was a child and drew a clumsy picture of a Green Woodpecker in the hope that it would enable me to identify future sighting better but also to appreciate more fully something remarkable and special.

Richard Jopling

Information Wanted, please

Kestrel The local population is disappearing in large parts of the County. The Raptor Group has agreed that locating Kestrels is now a priority, and wants to find as many as possible, so we can extend current nest box schemes and monitoring. If you see kestrels regularly, please let us know, especially if you know of a nest site.

Hobby, Merlin, Red Kite. and Goshawk

These species are also being monitored by the Raptor Group. If you know of a nest site of any of them, or find one in future, or suspect the presence of a nest, we would be grateful for details, in the strictest confidence, please.

Curlew Monitoring by the Community Wildlife Groups shows that the population is declining rapidly, and it has already disappeared from places where it was found during fieldwork for the Bird Atlas 2008-13. Shropshire Wildlife Trust, with the “in-principle” active support of SOS, is about to launch a County-wide Curlew Conservation initiative, and planning meetings are underway.

We need to know where the Curlew territories are, so if you know of any, please let us know

**Please send all information to Leo Smith (01694 720296)
leo@leosmith.org.uk.**

**Everything received will be passed on to the County Bird Recorder,
in confidence if necessary.**

Get Involved

The February *Buzzard* included opportunities for SOS members to get involved in the eight Community Wildlife Groups, and the Shropshire Raptor Group.

2017 Surveys

The former are running bird surveys during 2017, mostly concentrating on monitoring Lapwing, Curlew and a number of other threatened species. The results are used to promote local conservation. SOS members can make an important contribution to the conservation of these birds, while enjoying their hobby in superb countryside. All welcome.

For further information, see the website www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

Membership of the latter is restricted to people who will go out and actively look for birds of prey, particularly Hobby, Merlin, Red Kite and Goshawk. We co-operate with, but do not duplicate, the work of the Peregrine and Barn Owl Groups.

For further information see the Raptor Group section of the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com

BTO Surveys

The Breeding Bird Survey is up and running now and already results are coming in. There is still time to sign up if you think you can help.

I have been busy with the Nest Record Scheme and already have collected over 100 records with my small group of ‘nesters’. Highlights so far include a Grey Wagtail in a window box at my new work place and two Willow Tit nests in a local woodland.

House Martin Survey

A survey which may be of more general interest that is continuing to run this year is the House Martin survey. It's quite

straightforward and involves keeping an eye on a local House Martin colony and collecting information on how many nests are in use and what happens through the course of the season. You don't have to actually inspect the nest contents, you can just observe from the ground. This charming species is in decline across the UK so this survey should hopefully help us to reverse this trend.

You can find more details here: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/house-martin-survey>. There is still time to sign up and get involved before they start nesting.

Jonathan Groom

Curlew Conservation, thank you!!!

Thank you very much to the people who contributed to the Upper Onny Wildlife Group Curlew appeal included in the last issue of *The Buzzard*. So far donations from SOS members and other individuals are over £1,000, and the total in the Appeal fund is over £4,000.

While this is an excellent start, it falls well short of the money needed to pay for a year's nest monitoring. National conservation organisations are raising money for their own projects and priorities, but none of this money will be spent on saving Shropshire's Curlews. As well as SOS, the appeal is being supported by The National Trust (Carding Mill Valley and the Long Mynd), and Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Further information about the Appeal can be found on the UOWG section of the Community Wildlife Groups website, www.shropscwgs.org.uk/?page_id=3373

If you do donate, please make sure you notify the UOWG Treasurer, Janet Poynton, jan.56poynton@outlook.com so that we can keep you informed of progress and action.

Please give generously to support long term action to reverse the decline of one of our most iconic local breeding species.

**Please make cheques payable to Upper Onny Wildlife Group Curlew Appeal and send to:
Janet Poynton, Pennerley House, Pennerley,
Shrewsbury SY5 0NF,
or donate by bank transfer (sort code 20-53-22, account no. 43194485).**

Why have you bothered?

The UK has an estimated 28% of the European breeding population, more in winter, and an estimated 19-27% of the world population. Curlew was added to the *Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern* a year ago because of a decline of 62% since the 1960s.

2016 Disastrous Breeding

Here in Shropshire, the population has declined by an estimated 77% in only 20 years, from around 700 pairs in 1990 to around 160 pairs in the recent Atlas period. Monitoring carried out by Community Wildlife Groups shows that numbers are still going down. Nest monitoring by the Stiperstones-Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) in the county hotspot, with a quarter of the breeding pairs, found another disastrous breeding season in 2016.

Immediate conservation action is vital if the evocative bubbling song of the Curlew is not to be lost from the county forever. This must start with working with landowners, finding and protecting nests and monitoring the behaviour of chicks through radio-tagging. Expert help must be bought in to do most of this, and make maximum benefit of volunteers' time. The LPS finishes after the current breeding season, so we need to establish a means of carrying on with this important work.

Help with Curlew Monitoring

If anyone wants to help with Curlew monitoring work by the various Community Wildlife Groups, or locating nest sites, or has any ideas about who we can approach for funding or how we can raise more money for Curlew conservation, please let me know.

SOS members can make an important contribution to the conservation of these birds, while enjoying their hobby in superb countryside. All welcome.

For further information, see the website www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

77% decline in 20 years

Leo Smith

01694 720296

(leo@leosmith.org.uk)

Chairman's Report 2016-17

Notable Events

There have been several notable events within the Society during the year, beginning with the retirement of Peter Deans after 37 years as Chairman. Peter was elected a Vice-President at last year's AGM and continues his involvement with SOS. The new Chairman (John Arnfield) has been in post for a year and is busy getting involved with many aspect of the Society's work, including the upgrade of the website. Martin George retired as editor of "The Buzzard" in the autumn, and Tim Devaney agreed to take on the role.

Frank Gribble

We were all saddened to hear of the death of our President, Frank Gribble, in September. Frank had had a long involvement with Shropshire and had been SOS President for 21 years. Several members attended Frank's funeral in Stafford, and a detailed obituary for him was published in the winter 2016 edition of "The Buzzard".

Finances

The Society's finances remain in a healthy state, with a number of new members joining during the year. Special thanks to Brian Andrews who retires as Treasurer this year, and best wishes to Jean Rickard to has agreed to take on the role – Brian will continue his involvement with the Society and will continue to provide training and support to Jean in her new role. Thank you, also, to the Membership Secretary, Annie Andrews who deals with all membership matters.

Indoor Meetings

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.

Field Trips

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.

Venus Pool

Day-to-day management continues at Venus Pool, ensuring that the site remains one of the finest bird reserves in the county, attracting a wide variety of birds throughout the year. During the autumn, the programme of scrub removal continued; the area around the pool had become very overgrown and because the work was beyond the scope of our volunteers, contractors undertook the work.

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 and buntings, 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.

Conservation Sub-committee

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.

Records and Reports

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 Martyn Owen, the County Bird Recorder, or to Birdtrack. Fieldwork for the Shropshire Avifauna was completed during 2013, and preparation of the book is now well underway. Thank you to all those who have contributed in any way to bird recording in Shropshire during the year. There has been some progress on the production of Annual Reports during the year; and catching-up is a priority, with work currently underway on reports for 2011-2014. However, a number of people

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

Publications

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. Development of the website is on-going. Thank you to Yvonne Chadwick who has prepared the Bird Notes for "The Buzzard" for several years and to Jim Almond who has now taken on the job. Yvonne will continue her contribution to the maintenance of the website by keeping the Twitter and Facebook elements up-to-date with the latest available information.

Thanks are also due to Martin George who has now retired as editor of our quarterly magazine "The Buzzard", and best wishes to Tim Devaney who has recently taken on the job of editor. Thank you too 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.

John Arnfield, Chairman, April 2017

Distractions

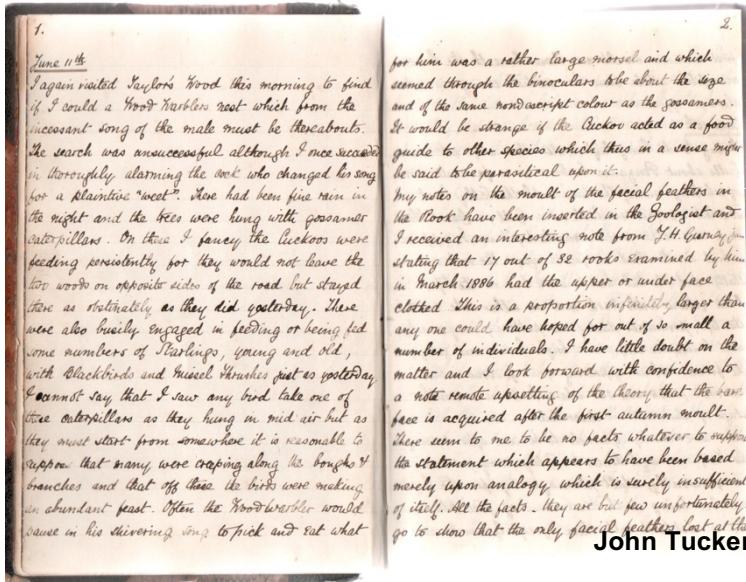
Trying to stay on course working on the Beckwith book, in March I was seriously distracted by two Histo items. The first is accounted for in this edition by "The first Shropshire ring recovery."

The second, on 7 March, was the surprise gift to the SOS of the '*Journal of Field Ornithology*' of a man living on the Chetwynd Park estate, close to the border with Staffordshire, north of Newport. Charles Gawen Roberts-Gawen (1860-1940), the diarist, writes in a beautiful and clear hand (see the sample pages) 327 pages of what he labels Volume 2, starting on 11 June 1888.

We have to thank Nigel McEwen for passing the diary to the SOS. Apparently, his mother purchased it at some stage, it passed to Nigel and he recently determined to find a good home for it, and he has succeeded. The diary was written between 1888 and 1911 and I know that until about 1892 Gawen was corresponding with Beckwith, then starting work on his *Birds of Shropshire*. The diary will of course appear in full on Histo, though preparing it

will take some time. It does beg the question, where in the World is Volume 1?

A flier and pre-publication price offer for the book which my brother Peter and I are currently working on, “**Wiliam E. Beckwith's nineteenth century Birds of Shropshire, with notes from surrounding districts**” is being circulated with this issue of *The Buzzard*.



The First Shropshire Ring Recovery?

On or about 22 January

“a man that was rabbit catching on the Halston estate, near Whittington ... came to the skeleton of a large bird, which he supposed to be of a bittern or heron class, and which had no doubt perished during the late severe weather, from having, perhaps, been shot at and wounded. That these were the remains of a partially domesticated wild fowl may be inferred from the fact of there being found clasped found one of the thigh bones a strong plate of copper, in length between three and four inches.”

That was in 1847, according to the *Eddowes Journal* (of Shropshire and North Wales) of 24 February 1847. The article continued:

"whereupon was engraved 'E.C. Newcome, Holdwick Hall, 1844.' It possibly may afford some satisfaction to this gentleman on hearing to what part of the island this once fine bird "did wing its way to die."'"

My thanks go to Alan Brisbourne for sending me the article.

Whatever bird it was that carried the 'ring' from 1844 to 1847, just where was it from and what species was it? I could find no trace of Holdwick Hall on the internet so asked Mark Lawley if he could glean anything from the clues and I thank him for the following. Mark came up with a name, one, Edward Clough Newcome (1809-1871). The website Feltwell.net¹ cites material from the *Shooting Times* under the title "*Squire of Feltwell Hall*" in Norfolk describing a devoted sportsman; for example shooting, fishing and hawking. He was also evidently an ornithologist of some note, being quoted repeatedly in the *Birds of Norfolk* (Stevenson, 1866) and having a vast collection of stuffed and mounted birds, many of them prepared himself. So Newcome was a great eccentric and from the sounds of him the sort of man who would try the ringing experiment.

At this point I contacted the Halston estate; by chance did they still have the 'ring'; needless to say they do not, but I had to ask. I also emailed, Jo Martin, clerk to Feltwell Parish Council, with an early draft of this note and asking if anyone in her parish could help identify Holdwick Hall. I quickly received three responses, from local historian Edmund Lambert and Peter Cooper, secretary of the Feltwell History Society, along with John Secker a local bird ringer. It is clear that the place-name on the original ring would in fact have been Hockwold Hall which, along with the adjoining estate, was owned by Newcome at that time – it has since been demolished.

Next to the BTO and Rob Robinson of the ringing office about the significance of the event and my thanks for Rob's time in replying; he makes several interesting points. First, formal ringing schemes did not commence until 1899 (1909 in Britain). He comments "Before this, however, quite a few of the sporting estates put rings on "their" birds, usually with an address, less frequently with a date. I think this practice can be traced back to the mid-18th century, but was certainly (reasonably) common by Victorian times and the practice continued into the early 20th century." So our record is early but not unprecedented.

Rob adds "In terms of distance it's 241km and a direction of 280deg. As to whether it's a heron or a bittern is hard to say. Heron is certainly more likely, but such a movement wouldn't be impossible for a bittern ... though, unsurprisingly, we have far fewer recoveries of bitterns (26, ever, compared to over 3,000) so we can't really say much about their movements."

¹<http://www.feltwell.net/feltwell2/written/ecnewcome.htm>

Further, if it was a Heron “In terms of the movement, it very much depends on its age when ringed. Assuming it was a young bird (either a chick or a bird of the year), which seems most likely, such a movement would be well within other movements we have seen. Herons are prone to cold weather movements, and the early 1840s was a particularly cold period² so even if it were an adult, such a movement wouldn’t be inconceivable (and probably would have been more frequent than now) and the January finding date would be consistent with that (irrespective of its age).” The time between ‘ringing’ and recovery was around 935 days and we do not know how old the bird was when ringed.

So perhaps Newcome climbed to a heronry and marked one (or more) of the youngsters, or found a nest of bittern in the then extensive fens and marked one of the chicks there. It is also possible that one of his falcons brought down the Heron for him – in those days they were a popular quarry for falconers. If not Heron, then which other species might it have been?

My thanks again to everyone who has helped to piece together this story. I hope it has made interesting reading.

John Tucker

Bird Notes Jan, Feb & Mar 2017

Mute Swan Numerous reports from sites across the county. The largest gathering was in the fields at Coundlane, peaking at 93 on 10 Jan.

Whooper Swan Three were present at Coundlane / Venus Pool from 3-17 Jan. They were joined by another and all four remained in the area until 13 Mar. They also spent time in a field near Condover towards the end of their stay.

Bewick’s Swan Three adults and a juvenile were first seen at Coundlane / Venus Pool on 7 Jan and continued to be seen until 6 Mar. They were also present in the same field as above near Condover between 1 and 11 Mar.

Tundra Bean Goose Six were reported almost daily at Cranmere Bog from 3 Jan-2 Feb. They were also seen at Chelmarsh reservoir late afternoon on 23 Jan.

²<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/hadobs/hadcet/>

White-fronted Goose Five spent two days at Cranmere Bog on 27 and 28 Jan. After moving on, they reappeared there on 19 Mar. Two were also seen at Venus Pool on 20 Feb.



Photo: Jim Almond

Egyptian Goose One was present at Cranmere Bog between 21-23 Jan.

Shelduck Up to nineteen seen throughout the quarter at Wood Lane and twelve at Venus Pool.

Mandarin Duck Widespread and reported from twelve sites. A drake was present at The Mere throughout Jan - Feb.

Wigeon Good numbers at the usual sites. Highest site counts were: The Mere, Ellesmere (300) 23 Jan, Wall Farm (200) 21 Feb, Shavington (115) 2 Jan, Polemere (65) 26 Jan and Venus Pool (53) 12 Mar.

Gadwall Most records came from Venus Pool where up to 24 (20 Feb) were present throughout the quarter. Other reports from: The Rea (14) 5 Jan, Priorslee Lake (4) 13 Jan, Howle (3) 15 Jan, and Ellerton (14) 12 Feb.

Green-winged Teal The same bird present during December reappeared 8 Jan for one day only.

Pintail Up to two were seen at Venus Pool between 3 Jan and 26 Feb, others seen at The Mere, Ellesmere, Colemere and Wall Farm.

Shoveler Present throughout the quarter with numbers steadily increasing at Venus Pool until 12 Mar when 71 were present. Other sites with maxima, The Mere, Ellesmere 34 on 2 Feb, Chetwynd Pool 11 on 12 Feb and Trench Pool 8 on 13 Jan.

Pochard Reported from nine locations, notably 19 at Shavington Park on 15 Jan and 11 at Priorslee Lake on 21 Jan.

Scaup Three (adult and two first winter) were present at Colemere between 3 and 25 Jan, one was seen at Chlemarsh Reservoir on 3 Jan plus a female at Chetwynd Park on 15 Jan.

Common Scoter A drake was present at Chelmarsh Reservoir between 16 and 22 Jan.

Long-tailed Duck A male and female (both first winter) were present on White Mere between 3 and 20 Jan. Another was present on Middle Pool, Trench on 8 Jan. One was also seen regularly at Chetwynd Park between 4 and 15 Jan.

Goosander Numerous records from along the River Severn and still waters. The highest count was 65 on Middle Pool, Trench 18 Jan.

Red Grouse Three records from the Long Mynd where five were seen on 19 Feb.

Grey Partridge One present near Ellesmere on 13 Jan and two sightings at Childs Ercall, where two were seen on 28 Feb.

Little Egret Up to two were in the Aston on Clun area between 13 Jan and 13 Feb. Other records came from Wall Farm, Ightfield, Melverley, Wood Lane, Brockton and Gobowen.

Hen Harrier Most reports came from Whixall Moss where a male was seen from 3 Jan until 17 Feb. Singles (sex not specified) seen on the Long Mynd 19 Feb and another near Ludlow on 21 Mar. Two males were reported at Cosford airfield on 13/14 Mar.

Merlin The three records received came from The Stiperstones (9 Jan) Whixall Moss (24 Jan) and Atcham (2 Feb).

Little Ringed Plover First arrivals seen at Venus Pool (1) 25 Mar and Wood Lane (2) 28 Mar.

Golden Plover 300 were present in field of autumn sown wheat at Little Bolas 6 Feb. Other notable counts were at Wall Farm (124) 13 Mar, Mason's Bank (100+) 24 Mar and Berwick Wharf (40) 4 Jan.

Dunlin One record, a single at Wood Lane on 22 Mar.

Jack Snipe One entertained or frustrated observers at Polemere between 4 and 7 Feb, a second on 2 Feb at Venus Pool was flushed on the marsh during work and a third was seen at Prees Heath on 15 Mar.

Woodcock Fifteen seen at Hawkstone, leaving the woods at dusk to feed. Other records from Shavington Park (4), Decker Hill (2), Aston on Clun (1), Bettisfield Moss (1), Wenlock Edge (1) and Newcastle on Clun (1).

Black-tailed Godwit One was reported at Wood Lane on 12, 22 and 27 Mar.

Curlew Most of the records came from Venus Pool. A double figure group (up to 18) were seen daily between 25 Feb – 9 Mar. Also seen at Wall Farm, Whixall Moss, Abdon, Long Mynd, Wood Lane, Harlescott, Berwick, Shavington Park and Catherton Common.

Green Sandpiper Up to two at Wood Lane from 8-28 Mar. One at Venus Pool 18 Feb and then 5-14 Mar. Singles also seen at Choulton 16 Feb, Devils Dingle 5 Mar and Puleston 14 Mar.

Greenshank One was present at Venus Pool on 15 Mar.

Wood Sandpiper One first found at Whixall floods on 18 Mar remained until the end of the quarter.

Common Redshank Three sightings, the first from Chirbury on 11 Jan and then singles seen at Venus Pool on 25 Jan and 15 Mar.

Black-headed Gull Reported throughout the county with the most impressive counts from the Mere, Ellesmere, peaking at 4,000 on 10 Feb.

Common Gull All reports from the north and east of the county with the highest count, 250 at the Mere, Ellesmere 10 Feb.

Mediterranean Gull One or sometimes two were seen on occasions in the roost at the Mere, Ellesmere. Four fully-hooded adults were present on 3 Mar.

Yellow-legged Gull All reports from the Mere, Ellesmere - up to two birds of various ages seen between 14 Jan and 4 Mar.

Caspian Gull A 4th calendar year bird was seen near Telford Crematorium on 21 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Mostly single figure sightings from various locations. Highest counts from the Mere (216) 10 Feb and Little Cloverley (1200) 6 Feb.

Little Gull A first winter bird was present at the Mere, Ellesmere on 13 Mar.

Kittiwake An adult was present at the Mere, Ellesmere on 23 Feb.

Glaucous Gull A first winter bird was seen occasionally in the Mere, Ellesmere roost between 10 and 21 Jan. Another was seen in the area around Granville Landfill site, Telford between 3 and 21 Feb.

Barn Owl Two present throughout the quarter at Tibberton. Records of single birds came from nine other locations; Fernhill, Eaton, Venus Pool, the Mere, Ellesmere, Tugford, The Rea, Hardwick Pool, Whitleyford Bridge and Cleobury Mortimer.

Little Owl One heard calling at Childs Ercall on two occasions late March.

Short-eared Owl One was present on the Long Mynd 19 Feb.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Singles reported during Feb and Mar, at six sites: Dowles Brook, Norbury, Attingham Park, Bromfield, Beambridge and Dothill.

Shorelark One was present on Titterstone Clee on 13 Mar.

Sand Martin Four were seen at Venus Pool on 11 Mar with numbers increasing thereafter. Three figure counts received from the Mere, Ellesmere (120) on 28 Mar and Venus Pool (120) on 29 Mar.

Swallow The first reported was seen over Acton Burnell (23 Mar). Subsequent reports from Whixall Moss / Shawbury (30 Mar) and Choulton (31 Mar).

Stonechat Reported from 12 locations, highest count, 22 at Catherton Common 9 Mar.



Photo: Jim Almond

Waxwing An exceptional winter for waxwings in Shropshire and they continued to be seen in large numbers throughout the quarter. Most of the major towns hosted large flocks, with residential areas and retail parks the key locations. The largest individual flocks were seen in Oswestry: 82 on 12 Feb and 124 on the 14 Feb. Flocks of 30 or more were seen Shrewsbury, Market Drayton, Ellesmere, Wykey and Hadnall

Black Redstart A first summer male was present at Hawkstone Park Golf Club Centre between 17 Feb and 12 Mar.

Wheatear The first returning bird reported was on Titterstone Clee on 12 Mar and two were present on 14 Mar. Other late March sightings came from Blackford and Overton.

Redwing Highest three figure counts recorded: Wroxeter (900) 6 Feb, Culmington (450) 2 Mar, Childs Ercall (350) 10 Mar, Wall Farm (250) 18 Jan, Whitcott Keysett (200) 28 Jan, Coundlane (200) 12 Feb, Ruyton XI Towns (200) 22 Jan.

Fieldfare Highest three figure counts were recorded in Jan / Feb: Wall Farm (200) 8 Feb, Coundlane (200) 12 Feb, Trefonen (190) 3 Jan, Venus Pool (175) 25 Jan.

Ring Ouzel Three were present at Titterstone Clee on 30 and 31 Mar.

Willow Warbler Just a single report at Venus Pool (31 Mar).

Willow Tit Records of single birds came from: Bringewood (2 Jan), Choulton (21 Jan), Black Hill (1 Mar) and Abdon (14 Mar).

Bearded Tit Seen at two locations during Feb / Mar. There were repeated sightings on a feeder in a riverside garden in Clun, where four were present on 6 Mar and two on 16 Mar. Two were also seen at Wood Lane on 21 Feb and 4 Mar.

Great Grey Shrike One was seen on Black Hill between 17 Feb and 19 Mar. Another was present at Abdon from 24 to 28 Feb and a third record from Anchor on 11 Mar.

Tree Sparrow Reported from five locations, with up to nine seen at Choulton and five at Hilley Farm, Pentre. Single birds seen at Venus Pool, Marton Pool and Lightmoor.

Common Crossbill Reports came from Cefn Coch, Black Hill, Llanyblodwel, Rednal and Sowdley Wood. The highest count was from Black Hill (20) on 19 Feb.

Pine Bunting A female was found in the arable field at Venus Pool on 1 Jan and was seen until 4 Jan attracting large crowds of birders from across the UK (see separate article).

Corn Bunting The vast majority of records were from Venus Pool. The count (15) peaked on 21 Jan with occasional birds seen until 24 Feb. Thirteen were seen at Childs Ercall on 7 Mar.

Jim Almond



Shropshire
Wildlife Trust



NHS
Shropshire
Clinical Commissioning Group

Feed the Birds

Volunteer Training Day

We are looking for volunteers to help us tackle social isolation in Shropshire by visiting someone in need once a week to feed the birds.



Shropshire Wildlife Trust,
The Cut, Abbey
Foregate, Shrewsbury

Saturday 17th June 2017

9.15am to 4.15pm

**Places limited and must
be booked**



Please contact Diane Monether Volunteer Coordinator at Shropshire Wildlife Trust for more information

Dianem@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk or 01743284280

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity number 212744

Upcoming Field Trips

Sunday, 21 May

ELAN VALLEY

Leader: Helen J Griffiths

Full Day – Meet at Visitor Centre Car Park at 10am Grid Ref: SN 928646

Directions: From Rhayader follow the B4518 west out of the town. The left turn for the Visitor Centre is signposted after three miles. Do not cross over the iron bridge, instead, turn right over a cattle grid and the Visitor Centre is ahead of you.

See www.elanvalley.org.uk

Thursday 1 to Sunday 4 June TRIP TO PEMBROKESHIRE

Please see Sue Brealey for details. Maximum number – 14

Sunday, 25 June

GRONANT DUNES (for Little Terns)

Leader: Estelle Hughes

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 9.30am

Take A483 towards Chester, then take A55 towards North Wales. At Junction 33 take A5119 to Flint. Turn left in Flint onto A548 towards Prestatyn. At Talacre (Point of Ayr) carry straight on at round-about towards Prestatyn. After 1½ miles turn right for Lower Gronant. Use car park on left before railway bridge.

There will be no Field Trip in July

Saturday, 19 August

UPTON WARREN

Organiser: Helen J Griffiths Leader: Warden from Reserve

Full Day – Meet at the Flashes Car Park at Post Code: B61 7ET

Grid Ref: SO 936 677

Take A38 north towards Bromsgrove from junction 5 of M5. Go past Webbs Garden Centre and turn in the Flashes car park on the right after about 1 mile. This lane is not tarmacked. There will be a charge from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust unless a member. Details to follow.

See <https://goo.gl/QB06Rh>

Sunday, 10 September WIRRAL: LEASOWES, HOYLAKE, BURTONMERE

Organiser: Sue Brealey Car

Full Day – Meet at the Leasowes Car Park at 10am Grid Ref: SD S353205

Directions: - Travel towards The Wirral and go onto M53. Come off at J1 onto A554 going north. At the 'T' junction turn onto A551. Just as the road turns left go straight ahead onto rough road towards the lighthouse. The Car park is on the left

Sunday, 29 October

LUNT MEADOWS

Leader: Estelle Hughes Car

Full Day - Meet at Car Park for 10.30am Post Code: L29 7WL

PLEASE REMEMBER THE CLOCKS GO BACK THIS WEEKEND

Directions: Take A55 west & join M56. Turn onto Weston Expressway (A557) then M57. At end of M57 continue on Brickwall Lane (B5422). Go to Sefton village & turn left onto Lunt Road. Follow this through village, and turn right onto the reserve, a little after leaving Lunt.

See: www.lancswt.org.uk/reserves/lunt-meadows

Indoor Meetings

4 October

ALASKA TO ARGENTINA

Speaker: Mark Sissons

Mark's presentation was so good when he came in Oct 2016 I booked a speedy return. He is local, from Newport, writes in the Shropshire Magazine and runs photography workshops, hence the quality of his presentation. One to look forward to.

Improvements at Venus Pool

There will be some changes to two of the hides at Venus Pool later in the year, when three-bay extensions will be added to the Main and Memorial hides. We also plan to re-locate the Sand Martin wall. When the work to the hides is completed, the Memorial hide will be for the use of SOS Members only and the Main hide will be open to all. There are no plans to alter the current Members' hide (the North hide), Lena's hide or the Fen hide. We hope this will alleviate some of the recent problems we have been having with congestion in the hides.

There will, inevitably, be some disruption whilst the work is underway, but the reserve will not be closed and we hope you will continue to enjoy the site during this period. Notices will be posted on site when dates are confirmed. Please keep a safe distance from any contractors and construction during the course of the works.

Notes for Contributors

We welcome contributions to the Buzzard. Please send contributions or suggestions to: Tim Devaney buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk

Copy deadline for the Autumn 2017 issue is:

1 August 2017

It helps if you:

- Keep formatting to a minimum
- include photographs
- only send original work
- keep your word count to a maximum of 1500 words
- start your email subject line with "Buzzard Contribution"

Do contact me if you have any questions at all.

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.