

The Buzzard

**Shropshire
Ornithological Society's
Quarterly Magazine**



No. 249

Autumn 2017

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Welcome to New Members

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

| | | |
|------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Roberts | Mr. M. J. | Shrewsbury |
| Allan | Dr. P.M. | Yockleton |
| Hunt | Mr G | Ketley Bank |
| Hutchins | Mr. J. | Stoke-On Trent |
| Bedford | Mr.& Mrs. R. | Oldbury |
| Hughes | Mr. R. M. | Cleobury Mortimer |
| Vine | Mrs. J. M. | Craven Arms |
| Trifonoff | Mr & Mrs A | Leebotwood |
| Griffiths | S. | Ludlow |

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

Night Heron



The Shrewsbury Dingle / Venus Pool Night Heron

This story starts on the afternoon of Friday, 7 April and a chance conversation in the car park at Venus Pool. Having just visited the reserve and checked the hides, local member Bernard Roberts was about to get into his car. He engaged in conversation with a visitor who enquired "Did you see the Night Heron by the feeder station?" "What?" replied Bernard, putting the car keys back in his pocket! He retraced his steps and sure enough (not visible from the hide) a Black-crowned Night Heron was sitting amongst the vegetation to the left of the small pool in front of Lena's Hide. He kindly phoned yours truly and after tweeting news out, it was a nervous drive down to the reserve, wondering if it would still be showing? I only had an hour or so to see it before I had to travel north to give a talk...

Luckily it was still there and with the news airwaves buzzing, all the keen local birders were quickly on site. It was only visible from the hide boardwalk or from the access path, viewed through a gap in the hedge. Resolutely half asleep, it didn't really do much apart from a turn of the head or tantalising view of that gorgeous red eye. With a careful selection of vantage point, the upper half of the Heron was clearly visible. A good number of very happy birders were soon celebrating a first twitchable Night Heron for Shropshire. The lessons learnt from the Pine Bunting twitch were about to be implemented too, as another very crowded day at Venus Pool was looming!

Black-crowned Night Heron, Venus Pool 7 April 2017

Saturday, 8 April witnessed the expected very busy day at Venus Pool with a steady stream of about 300 birders visiting during the day to attempt to see the Heron. Most were local or from the West Midlands but quite a few had travelled long distances! The Heron remained in the same area as the previous evening but had

retreated further into the undergrowth and, whilst everyone saw the bird, the views were confined to head and shoulder glimpses. There were no further sightings over the next few days and everyone presumed it had moved on. Given the skulking behaviour of this species, however, it was not surprising that it could elude discovery elsewhere on the reserve and it was eventually relocated in bushes at the south east end of the pool on 14 April. It was photographed again but remained elusive and apart from additional sightings on 18 April at the south east end, it was not seen again at the reserve.

The story took an unlikely turn on 22 April when a lady sent an excellent photograph to Martyn Owen (County Recorder) of what she described as a 'Black-crowned Heron, usually found in North America'. Incredibly, the Heron, which appeared to be the Venus Pool bird, had been photographed out in the open during daylight in the unlikely setting of 'The Dingle' in Shrewsbury Quarry Park. The park was closed by the time this news was circulated, but the following morning, local birders confirmed that it was still there, and showing well! During the next few days and throughout May, it was seen and photographed by hundreds of birders, many travelling from afar to see it. The Heron remained enigmatic regarding its habits, a curious mix of 'skulking / difficult to see versus outrageous behaviour when it would either perch on a bankside bush or prowl the decking area literally a few feet from onlookers.

Black-crowned Night Heron, The Dingle, 23rd April 2017

Not surprisingly, the possibility of it being an escaped bird had to be considered? There was however, no evidence of a ring, or mark where a ring may have been. Black-crowned Night Heron can be extremely confiding in nature and being so widely distributed, web based

articles from around the world sometimes comment how showy it can be. Whether this is typical or learned behaviour when presented with a safe,

protected habitat is subject to debate. My personal view is that there is no 'evidence' that is an escaped bird.

So, if the Heron is from the wild, where has it come from? We shall never know this of course, but by the beginning of June, the bird news services had begun to classify the Shropshire bird as a member of the North American race (*hoactli*). It is unclear who first proposed this, but examination of images shows this to be the likely origin of the bird, and not Europe as might have been expected. There are very few papers available to help in identifying specific races and field guides do not elaborate on the subject. An article published in British Birds on 'identification pitfalls and assessment problems' by Peter Lansdown during the mid-1980s is all I can find. The article highlights **the only field character** by which it is possible to separate the European race *nycticorax* from the American race *hoactli*. That character being the extent of white on the forehead and above the eye. It is usual for *hoactli* to have a greater depth of white on the forehead than does *nycticorax* but a thinner and less conspicuous spur of white extending over the eye.

To support the consensus that the Shrewsbury Black-crowned Night Heron is of the American race *hoactli*, the composite image (left) shows quite nicely these critical differences. The Dingle bird does indeed have a conspicuous broad white band on the forehead with minimal flecks of white above the eye. Comparison with an adult wild vagrant of the European race which I photographed by a Cheltenham town centre pond, (Pittville Park), in 2014, shows this to have a narrower white band on the forehead plus a clearly



demarcated white spur over and around the eye. It is intriguing that both Herons should choose such public places to settle into.

Black-crowned Night Heron Top - presumed American race *hoactli*, Shrewsbury Dingle 23 April 2017
Bottom - European race *nycticorax* Pittville Park 23 July 2014

In conclusion, I believe the evidence to be compelling that the Venus Pool / Shrewsbury Dingle Black-crowned Night Heron is of the North American race and see no evidence to dispute its status as a wild bird. Given the rarity of the race *hoactli* in the UK, it will fall to the BBRC to decide the outcome.

Footnote

A final unanswered question is the identity of the 'finder' of this Heron? If you are reading this, were you the person who spoke with Bernard in the car park at Venus Pool, or were you the mystery person who first saw the Night Heron there? Did anyone out there see the bird or, even better, photograph it on the 7 April or prior to that date? Please contact me on shropshirebirder@gmail.com



Jim Almond (Inc. photo)

Winston Churchill and Lapwing Eggs

In the last edition of 'The Buzzard' I wrote about the collection of Lapwing eggs at Ratlinghope by the Tuer family for sale at Fortnum & Mason, possibly through a 'below-the-counter' arrangement in defiance of the Protection of Lapwings Act of 1928. A twist to the tale comes from 'Dinner with Churchill. Policy making at the dinner table' by Cita Stelzer (2011).

Churchill loved 'Plovers' eggs', and this was well known amongst his friends who did their best to keep him supplied during the taxing years of the War. It

was a collection for sale, rather than for consumption, that had been outlawed, so this was not illegal. On one occasion, he shared his treasured eggs with General Eisenhower. It was the General's first taste, but he loved them too.

It was a time of rationing, and whilst the consumption of food from the wild was accepted, indeed encouraged, Churchill was both aware of the ban on the sale of Lapwing eggs and anxious that violations of regulations might generate 'class feeling'. Informed 'on good authority' that Plovers' eggs were on sale by Messrs Fortnum & Mason, he commissioned 'a special report'. A plain-clothes officer from the Metropolitan Police investigated, undercover, and established that eggs were indeed on sale, but by reference to the Natural History Museum, he was able to establish that they were not those of the Lapwing but of the Black-headed Gull, and as such, their sale was legitimate.

Tom Wall

Red Kite Nest North of Shrewsbury

The Raptor Group & the Welsh Kite

Trusts have been monitoring the rapid increase of Red Kites since the first successful modern nest in the County in 2006 near Knighton, after a gap of 130 years.



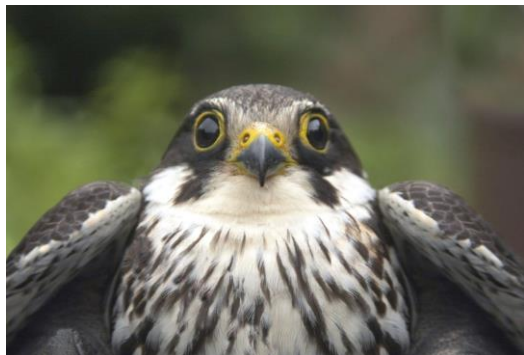
In recent years over 20 nests per year have been found, and several others suspected, but they have all been south or west of the River Severn. However, in 2017 a nest several kilometres north of Shrewsbury was reported. One chick was tagged T0 in the nest (see photo) and it fledged successfully. Several reports were received of individual Kites north and east of the Severn, so there are probably others.

A report on the 2017 breeding season will be in the next Buzzard.

If you know of other Kite nests, or suspect one, anywhere in the County, don't assume we know about it. Please tell Leo Smith, in the strictest confidence

Shropshire Raptor Study Group

The Group was set up in 2010, with the active support of SOS. Membership is restricted to people who will go out and actively look for birds of prey. We are looking particularly for Hobby, Merlin, Red Kite and Goshawk. It is likely that we will also start work on a nest-box scheme for Kestrels next year, in support of the Shropshire Ringing Group project, so reports of Kestrel nests (or pairs) will be particularly welcome.



If you are interested in joining the Raptor Group, or know of a 2017 nest site of any of these raptors, please contact Leo Smith

Leo Smith (Inc. photo)
01694 720296
[\(leo@leosmith.org.uk\)](mailto:leo@leosmith.org.uk)

Curlew Conservation

2017 Breeding Season

The fencing of nests by the Stiperstones-Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) has been partially successful. 22 nests were found, and the fencing enabled several clutches to hatch. Several young fledged, a better result than in previous years. A detailed report is awaited. The two new Community Wildlife Group (CWG) surveys, in the Stretton's area and the three parishes of Weston Rhyn, St Martin's and Gobowen, both found several pairs of breeding Curlews.

In addition to them, and the three CWGs in the LPS area, Upper Clun and Clee Hill CWGs have also been counting Curlews. The various CWG reports will be published over the winter.

Several reports have been received of Curlew territories elsewhere in the County. If you know of one, but haven't reported it yet, please tell Leo Smith (contact details below)

Stepping Stones Project: bid to Heritage Lottery Fund

The National Trust (Shropshire Hills) and Natural England staff at Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, together with partners including the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Partnership, and the Upper Onny Wildlife Group (UOWG), have been pulling together a large-scale bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). We hope to fund projects to achieve our 50-year vision for the natural habitats in this ecological heartland of the Shropshire Hills to be restored, healthy and connected'. The aims of 'Stepping Stones' include 'Aim 4. Vibrant wildlife: To increase populations of the special wildlife species of the Shropshire Hills'.

The Stepping Stones area is about 200 sq.km, and extends from the Stretton Hills to the Welsh border. It is different from the LPS area, which does not include most of the Long Mynd, or the Stretton Hills, and it is primarily concerned with safeguarding and improving biodiversity. HLF funding, if approved, is likely to last for 6-7 years.

The LPS is a five-year programme, and finishes next March (i.e. its final fieldwork season is now over). UOWG, which originally proposed that the Curlew Recovery Project be included in the LPS, have proposed a project to extend the nest monitoring and protection through Stepping Stones. It needs refining with partners, but is likely to be included in the bid.

The Stepping Stones bid is likely to be submitted before Christmas, but approval is not guaranteed, and may take some time. It is possible, but perhaps not likely, for funding to be available for the Curlew project next year.

SWT/SOS 'Save Our Curlews' Initiative.

SWT is planning to launch a County-wide 'Save Our Curlews' initiative, and SOS Management Board has agreed to be a partner, and actively support it. SWT convened a multi-agency meeting in April, and a series of action points were agreed to prepare for a further meeting in September. Subject to discussion at this meeting, it is likely that the SWT/SOS initiative will be launched in the autumn.

The initiative will be based on extending the strategy developed by the Upper Onny Wildlife Group through the LPS and 'roll out' the lessons, i.e. develop CWGs to survey areas that hold breeding Curlew to identify nesting areas, and then work with the landowners and farmers to find and protect the nest. It will support and complement, and not duplicate, the Stepping Stones project. The Curlew breeding distribution map from the recent Atlas project has been used to identify the areas where new CWGs are needed, basically the Oswestry uplands to the south of Oswestry, and the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence. The initiative will work in cooperation with, and support, the existing CWGs as well as promote the two new ones.

Writing in his Director's Overview at the start of the SWT magazine, Shropshire Wildlife, Colin Preston has prepared the ground: "Numbers of this bird (Curlew) have fallen all across the UK. Over the next year the Trust will be working with other organisations and landowners to develop a long-term approach to try and reverse this trend. Your help will be needed."

The SOS Conservation Sub-Committee and Management Board will need a full discussion of the issues involved at the October meeting, when the outcome of the multi-agency meeting, and the Stepping Stones project, should be clearer. Members will be kept informed through The Buzzard.

How SOS Members can help

SOS members would be very welcome in any CWG, and a big asset. Basically, you take on a survey square (a 'tetrad', a 2x2 kilometre square on the OS national grid – same survey unit as the Bird Atlas), and walk round it three times to suit you, around 1 April, 1 May and 15 June, for around 3 hours each visit. Helpers would be especially welcome in the 2 new areas to be launched next year, the Oswestry uplands to the south of Oswestry, and the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence, particularly if you would help with the organisation and help recruit new members.

Continuing the work in the Stiperstones-Corndon area after the LPS finishes next March (2017 was the last LPS fieldwork season) will cost money, and members are asked to support the UOWG Appeal.

Upper Onny Wildlife Group Curlew appeal

Thank you very much to the people who contributed to the UOWG Curlew appeal included in the spring and summer issues of The Buzzard. So far donations from SOS members and other individuals are over £1,000, and the total in the Appeal fund is close to £4,500.

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. The fate of the local population is in the hands of Shropshire's people, especially SOS members.

It's not too late to donate to the appeal, which will continue for many years. 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).

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 we can keep you informed of progress and action.

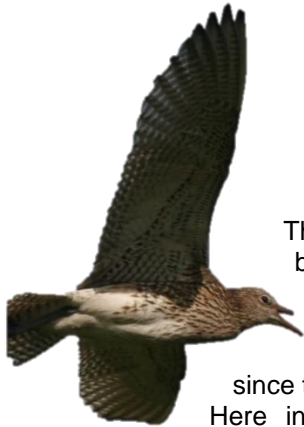
Please give generously to support long term action to reverse the decline of one of our most iconic local breeding species.

If anyone wants to help with Curlew monitoring work by the various Community Wildlife Groups, or locating nest sites, or setting up new CWGs early next year, 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.

Leo Smith (Inc. photo)

01694 720296

(leo@leosmith.org.uk)



P.S. Why Bother?

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.

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.

Hirundines of Hopesay Parish in 2015.

My thanks to everyone who helped the survey by sending me their survey forms (62) or when I visited you to enquire. Between us we produced the information needed to count and map all the known nests this year – 261 of them.

Below are some highlights of the results and overleaf are the maps for the three species; one each for Swallow and House Martin. The Swift nests, at one address, are on the Swallow map, in the Aston detail.

In all there were 99 Swallow nests, 160 House Martin nests and just two Swift nests: House Martin nests outnumbered Swallow nests by 1.6 to 1.

House Martins favoured nesting in the villages, though the highest of their numbers – colonies of 10 or more nests - were at farmsteads or isolated houses. In contrast, most **Swallows** nested away from the villages - see the maps overleaf. There may have been more than the two **Swift** nests and a closer search will be made for them next year.

As a group, the birds tended to nest together in clusters around certain favoured places – for reasons I don't currently understand.

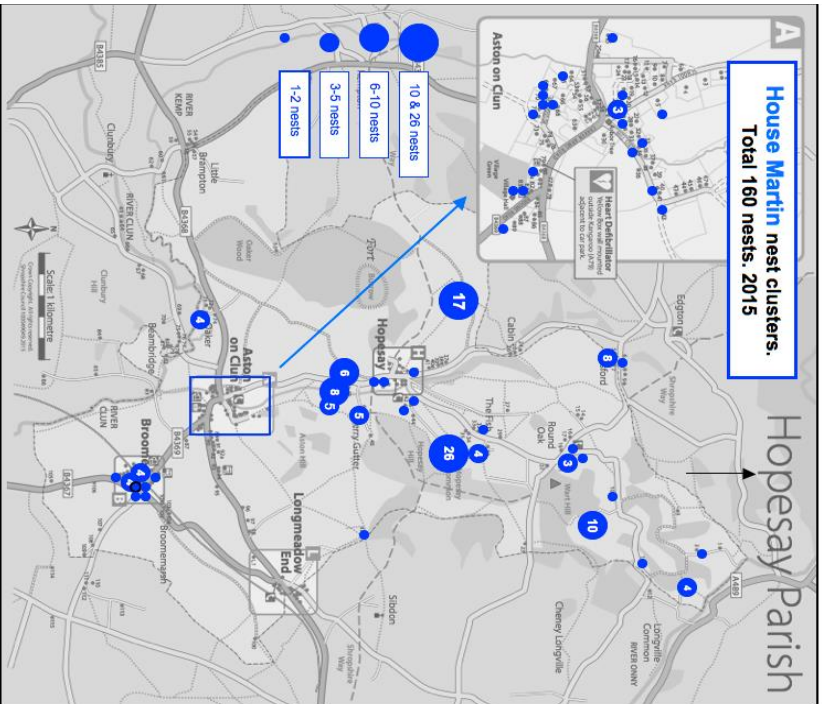
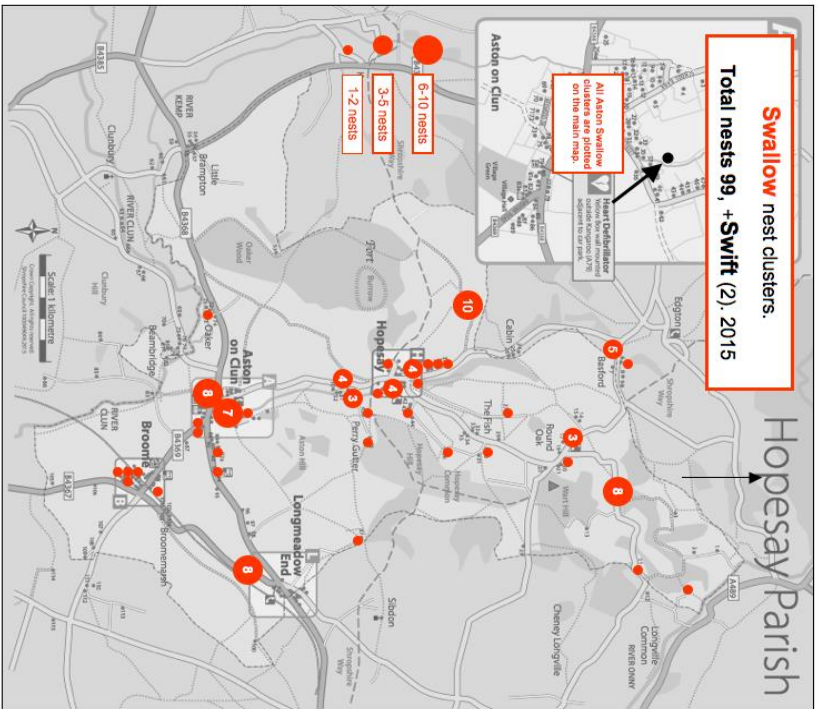
Among the clusters, a mere 26 (of 247) houses, just 11%, together held two thirds (66.8%) of all the nests in the parish.

Of all 247 houses in the parish 176 (71%) had no nests at all of the three species.

There were many reports that nest numbers were down this year compared with the last 1, 5 10 and 20 years – a partial re-survey next year will start to identify any trend in the future.

I will follow up this survey with a repeat in 2020.

John Tucker



Field Trip

Weekend to Pembrokeshire

Thursday, 1 June to Sunday, 4 June 2017

A group of 16 Society members, travelled to south -west Wales for a long weekend of birding in Pembrokeshire, on Thursday, 1 June. The weather forecast looked good, but with some showers.

The group met at Strumble Head, not far from Fishguard. There the group took in the local features from the old gun emplacement not far from the lighthouse. Amongst the birds seen at sea were Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Fulmar, Guillemot, Oystercatcher, Great black backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Herring Gull and Shag. A Peregrine was noted flying across the bay. The headland revealed good views of a pair of Chough which were nesting in a cliff cave. Added to that Dunnock, Jackdaw, Raven and Stonechat were joined the list. The evening brought a good meal at the Lost Coins, the restaurant attached to the Inn and lodgings at the Premier Inn.

The following day, proved to be rather grey with rain showers forecast. With optimism, the group drove to Lockley Lodge, for tickets to land on Skomer Island. Fortuitous luck meant that as the boat arrived, the rain showers started to dwindle and by the time the group had started the steep walk up the steps to the island plateau, the skies were brightly blue and the rest of the day proved to be glorious.

Some of us walked towards the centre of the island via the facilities at the farm building, during which various birds were noted including Oystercatcher, Curlew, Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Skylark, and Woodpigeon as well as a Black Rabbit. A Peregrine was also seen flying over the lovely fields full of blossoming Red Campion, looking like huge pink blankets. We decided to walk north from the farm buildings, and it was during this walk, the group had the really amazing views of at least four Short-eared Owls, obviously hunting a great deal to provide for chicks, resting in nests on the ground. These were the best views which even very experienced birders had seen over many years watching these lovely birds, and were, as far as many of the group felt, they definitely one of best birds for the weekend.

After these lovely views, the group went on towards the cliffs ahead. From here there were some Guillemot, Razorbill and a first Puffin. A Shag was also seen preening on a rock.



After lunch, the group decided to return to the farm buildings, and then on further towards the south. Then, over a hill, along an east/west path and further west, to more cliffs and great numbers of Guillemot and Razorbills, together with some Fulmars. But the real bonus was the number of Puffin, walking around the feet of various birders. It was really enjoyable to

see these charming birds so close. Having enjoyed this delectable place, and realising that time was beginning to run out, the walk was taken towards the steep steps down toward the returning boat. In all about 29 birds were viewed over the day and other birds seen included Blackbird, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Jackdaw, Kittiwake, Linnet, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Sedge Warbler, Swallow, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, and Wren together with Herring, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The boat ride back was very pleasant. A further walk was taken at Dale Bay and Lagoon and here Cormorant, Mute Swan, Sedge Warbler, Shelduck, Teal and good views of some Whimbrel were seen. Afterwards, the group convened at the Griffin Inn at Dale, where a really nice meal was had by all. It was concluded that a really good day had been had by all.

On Saturday, 3 June, the group went via Pembroke towards the Stackpole area, but the first stop was at Freshwater West Beach. The landscape was lovely, but there were not many birds. However, Rook and Skylark were noted and then, after some exploring, a Sand Martin nesting bank was found and it was delightful to see some of these lovely birds flying around catching food for their chicks. After this, the group went along the coast road turning off through a military firing range to a car park, for Elegug Rocks. This area proved much better, beginning with a Cuckoo sitting in a tree near the car park. Further exploration showed the rugged coastline with two stacks full of auks, including Guillemot and Razorbill, with Fulmar. A Buzzard flew overhead, together with Great and Lesser Black-backed Gull. There were lovely views of the Green Bridge as well, which could be viewed from a platform. It was here that the group decided to have their picnic lunch. After lunch, the group moved further east and spent the afternoon at Stackpole Quay. Some went for a walk along the cliff edges, but some decided to have a rest in this lovely area. Blackbird, Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Great Tit, House Sparrow, Robin, Swallow and Pied Wagtail were added to the list. Towards evening, the group went towards Pembroke, where a lovely meal was had at the Waterman Arms overlooking the river and Pembroke Castle.

On Sunday, 4 June, the group had breakfast and booked out of the hotel. Then they went their separate ways, some deciding to visit RSPB Ynys Hir

and others Aberglasni Gardens or the National Botanical Garden of Wales, even though the weather had at last caught up with us all.

All in all, approximately 50 odd species were seen. Amongst those that may not have been mentioned were Carrion Crow, Blackbird, Canada Goose, Linnet, Meadow Pipit, Pheasant, Sedge Warbler, Wheatear, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Woodpigeon, and Wren. Other species may well have been recorded by others in the party.

In conclusion, it was felt that the weekend had been a success, and that the area was well worth the visit. As for Wales, well the weather proved to be on our side for a change.

Report and Photo Sue Brealey

Gronant

Sunday 25 June 2017

Three adults and one junior member met at Gronant on the North Wales coast just west of Talacre, which is an area of long sandy beaches and stunning sand dunes, rich in wild flowers. The Natterjack toad breeds here and the area was featured in the recent Springwatch series.

Despite the mizzle, the hedgerows surrounding the car park were quite productive, with Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Blackcap, Dunnock, Swallow, Blackbird, Robin, Starling and Herring Gull recorded. On the short stretch of road leading to the reserve entrance we added Whitethroat, Wren, House Sparrow and Rook. Happily, by this time, the rain had stopped.

We followed the narrow path beside which Bee & Pyramidal orchid and Ladies Bedstraw were among many wild flowers blooming, to a bridge over the water from the pumping station. We had to be careful where we trod, as there were several baby Natterjacks on the path! Here we enjoyed family parties of Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting, with Moorhen, Mallard, Coot, Mallard, Mute Swan and Heron.



Bee Orchid

Continuing along the path to the boardwalk and viewpoint, House Martin and Little Egret flew over the big brackish pool and many Skylark and Meadow Pipit were soaring and singing. We briefly looked out to sea from the viewpoint from where we had our first

close-up views of the Little Terns as they busily fished close to shore, calling noisily.

A roped-off path just inland led to the wardens' hut where, as arranged, one of the wardens was waiting to greet us. He gave an informative chat about the colony and we had an excellent overview of the Terns and a few Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover, which took advantage of the protective electric fencing and vigilance of the wardens in keeping Kestrels at bay. Because of a very high tide they had to move several nests further up the shingle. Despite all the problems, the colony has extended in area and is increasing; good news as it is the only surviving one in Wales.

We ended the day with a brief visit to the Burton Wetland Centre where our list was augmented by Avocet, which has increased in number on the site, also Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage, only outclassed by a Ruff, resplendent with its black ruff. Three Spotted Redshank showed well and our eagle-eyed expert, Ian, picked out a Mediterranean Gull amongst the Black-headed Gulls.

En route to the Marsh Covert hide we recorded what is a first for the site – a pair of breeding Cattle Egret among the nesting Little Egret and Heron.

The RSPB had cut a tract in the vegetation to afford visitors views when the Egret raised its head from the nest. Luckily, it did just that as we made a second attempt to see it whilst making our way back to the centre and home.

Our Junior member, Sian Mercer, aged 12, set- to with her camera and produced this excellent shot of **one of the Little Terns**.



***Estelle Hughes
Photos Sian Mercer***

Bird Notes April, May, June 2017

Shelduck A pair successfully hatched eight ducklings at Venus Pool, of which seven survived.

Common Scoter Just one record, a female present at Priorslee Lake on 29 Jun.

Gadwall A success story at Wood Lane, where a pair hatched nine young mid-June. Despite initial predation, six ducklings survived and were seen most days with both parents at the end of June.

Garganey A male was present at Sambrook Mill, near Newport on 11 and 12 Apr.

Red Grouse Recorded from the Long Mynd, where up to four were seen and Stiperstones, where eight were seen on 6 Apr.

Grey Partridge A pair was present near Isombridge on 11 May and singles seen near Ellesmere on 13 Mar and Venus Pool on 16 Jun.

Common Quail The first record came from Showell Grange where one was singing on 21 May. A male was heard at Aldersey on 17 / 18 Jun.

Black-crowned Night Heron One was found near Lena's (feeder station) hide at Venus Pool on 7 Apr, where it continued to be seen until 18 Apr. The presumed same bird relocated to the Dingle, Shrewsbury Quarry Park, from 22 Apr, and was still present at the end of Jun. (see separate article)

Little Egret Three were present at Wood Lane on 11 Apr.

Red Kite Numerous records of one or two birds were received, many from the usual areas in the south but also a good number of sightings from the north and east areas of the County. These included: urban Shrewsbury and Telford, Morda, Hanwood and Tibberton.

Hen Harrier One (unsexed) was reported at Black Hill on 9 Apr and a female was seen at Whixall Moss on 22 Apr and 2 May. Two were reported in flight in the Bridges area on 10 Jun.

Common Buzzard Numerous records,; the highest count (12) was reported at Tibberton on 15 Apr.

Osprey The first sighting was on 6 Apr over Asterton and single birds were also seen at: Venus Pool on 8 Apr, Atcham on 16 Apr, Stiperstones on 20 Apr, then Venus Pool on 1, 15, 30 May, 7 and 8 Jun. The later sightings are undoubtedly the same (blue ring FX0) bird.

Merlin Just one record, a single bird in Batch Valley on 3 Jun.

Hobby The first bird was seen at Northwood on 1 Apr. There were no large counts reported, two were seen at Leighton 7 May and Wall Farm 23 May.

Oystercatcher Breeding success was reported from Chelmarsh Scrape where three chicks were caught and ringed on 21 May. One well-developed chick was seen on the Severn near Leighton on 17 Jun.

Avocet One was present at Wood Lane on 6 May.



Little Ringed Plover The first returning birds were seen at Venus Pool on 25 Mar and Wood Lane on 28 Mar. Up to four were seen at both sites thereafter. Other records came from Devil's Dingle, Whixall Floods, Buildwas, Leighton and Wall Farm.

Ringed Plover Five were seen at Wood Lane on 12 May, One present at Venus Pool on 12/15 May and 2 Jun.

Grey Plover One was briefly present at Wood Lane on 12 May.



Dotterel A single bird was reported in flight at Titterstone Clee on 17 Apr. A pair were present on the Gliding station, Long Mynd on 6 May until early the following morning when they flew north.

Golden Plover Just two records, forty were seen at Pole Cottage, Long Mynd on 20 Apr and twenty at Whixall Moss on 13 May.

Dunlin Venus Pool, Wall Farm and Wood Lane all produced records of two birds during May.

Woodcock Individuals were seen on 8 Mar at Bettisfield Moss, then during May at Bury Ditches, Lower Whitcliffe and Mary Knoll Valley.

Ruff One was present at Whixall Floods on 1 May.

Whimbrel Two were reported at Lyth Hill on 7 May.

Wood Sandpiper A long -staying bird was present at Whixall Floods from 18 Mar to 21 Apr. A single bird was reported at Wood Lane on 9 May.

Common Sandpiper Most records came from the Severn and Venus Pool, with sightings of single birds during April from seven other locations. The latest bird was seen on 9 May at Venus Pool.

Common Redshank Several reports, with one at Venus Pool 15 and 29 Apr, singles at Wall Farm and Whixall Floods on 1 May then one at Wood Lane on 30 Jun.

Sandwich Tern One flew through Priorslee Lake during the evening of 29 Jun.

Black Tern Two were present at Colemere for most of the day on 30 Apr and a single bird passed through Venus Pool 1 May.



Common Tern One flew through Colemere on 30 Apr and another was present most of the day at Venus Pool on 15 Jun. Up to three were also seen at Priorslee Lake during June.

Arctic Tern A single was present at White Mere on 1 May.

Cuckoo Earliest birds were at Whixall Moss and Tibberton on 16 Apr. Reports steadily increased into May and the highest count was five at Stiperstones on 26 May.

Barn Owl Records of single birds came from nine locations: Eaton, Cleobury Mortimer, Chipnall, Church Stretton, Stanwardine in the Field, Norbroom, Ellesmere, Abdon and Rednal airfield. A pair was seen in flight together near Tibberton.

Little Owl Reported from three sites: Childs Ercall, Bolas Heath and Marton Pool.

Short-eared Owl One was reported on the Long Mynd between 3 Apr and 2 May

Nightjar One was heard churring and seen at Haughmond Hill on 9 Jun.

Common Swift The first seen was on 25 Apr at Venus Pool, followed by birds at Queens Head 29 Apr and Ludlow 1 May. Highest count was of 40 at Venus Pool on 4 Jun.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Reported from seven locations: Bromfield, Attingham Park, Haughmond Hill, Dowles Brook, Fenemere, Wimperhill Wood and Aston on Clun. An adult male was photographed feeding a juvenile male, at Venus Pool on 9 Jun.

Horned Lark An intriguing report of one near the summit of TitterstoneClee was posted on the Bird News services on 13 Mar. It was seen again and photographed on 2 Apr, and then from 8 Apr to 7 May was seen almost daily.

Sand Martin The earliest record was four at Venus Pool on 11 Apr. Three -figure counts received, included 150 at Priorslee Lake on 25 Apr, and 120 at Buildwas on 23 Apr.

Swallow The first was seen over Acton Burnell on 23 Mar, followed by sightings at Shawbury Airfield, Whixall Moss and Trefonen on 30 Mar. Largest count was of 150 birds at Market Drayton in a tightly grouped flock on 7 May.

House Martin A single was reported at Ford on 6 Apr followed by two at Venus Pool on 10 Apr. Highest counts were: 40 at Nipstone Rock on 10 Jun and 30 at Venus Pool on 12 May.

Tree Pipit Records came from nine sites, with the first at TitterstoneClee on 9 Apr. The highest count was six at both Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest on 15 Jun and Wrekin on 24 Jun.

Yellow Wagtail The first record came from Bolas Heath on 11 Apr, followed by Venus Pool on 17 Apr. The highest count was at Hinstock where 10 were present on 19 Jun.

Channel Wagtail One was present interacting with a female Yellow Wagtail off Aldersey Lane on 19 Jun.

White Wagtail Two were seen on Titterstone Clee on 28 Apr, and one at Whixall Floods on 1 May.

Common Redstart The first reported bird was in Batch Valley, Long Mynd on 7 Apr. Highest count was at Moelydd where 12 were seen on 28 May.

Wheatear The highest counts were 32 on Titterstone Cleve on 28 Apr and at Pound Lane, Broseley, 30 were seen on 15 Apr.

Whinchat Records from the Church Stretton / Long Mynd area predominated. Seven were reported in Batch Valley 3 Jun. Singles were seen at Polemere 23 Apr and Wall Farm on 13 May.

Stonechat Records came from the Church Stretton / Long Mynd area. Seven were reported in Batch Valley 3 Jun.

Ring Ouzel Multiple records came from Titterstone Cleve in late April where 10 were reported on 29 Apr. Other sightings came from Long Mynd (max 3) plus single birds Carding Mill Valley, Batch Valley and Stiperstones.

Fieldfare The latest record was 14 at Cae Howell on 16 Apr.

Grasshopper Warbler Three sightings came from Haughmond Hill on 23 Apr, Sundorne on 10 May and Whixall Moss on 19 May.

Cetti's Warbler A singing male was found on 5 Apr near Newport. It continued to be heard and seen until 16 May.

Sedge Warbler One was singing at Venus Pool on 22 Apr. The only other Apr record (on 29th) came from Whixall Moss. The highest count was seven at Beckjay, near Clungunford on 7 May.

Reed Warbler The earliest reports came from Priorslee Lake on the 17 Apr and Venus Pool on 18 Apr. The best counts (both nine) came from Hodnet on 18 May and Shavington Big Pool on 22 May.

Garden Warbler Shavington Big Pool produced the earliest record (9 Apr) and joint best count (seven on 22 May). There were several other April records, followed by numerous sightings throughout the county in May and Jun.

Lesser Whitethroat Well recorded from over 20 locations. The earliest were at Trefonen on 12 Apr, Oswestry on 13 Apr, Cae Howell on 16 Apr and Nedge Hill on 18 Apr.

Common Whitethroat The first returning birds were reported on 13 Apr at Tibberton, followed by Cae Howell and Granville Country Park on 16 Apr.

Wood Warbler A single singing male at Wimperhill Wood on 17 Apr was the first record and at least two were seen here throughout May. The best count came from Clunton Coppice on 2 May, where at least six were singing. Up to three were present on the Wrekin and others were recorded at Plowden Woods, Hoar Edge, Whitcliffe, Mary Knoll Valley, Sowdley Wood, Brown Cleve and Ercall Wood.

Iberian Chiffchaff A singing male was present at Granville Country Park from 2-7 Apr.

Yellow-browed Warbler One was found in a garden at Shawbirch, Telford on 1 Apr and was still showing there the following morning. It then relocated to a copse across the nearby B5063, where it remained, often showing well, until the 9 Apr.

Willow Warbler The first report was from Venus Pool on 31 Mar with more sightings at Granville Country Park, Trefonen and Newport Canal on 1 Apr. The highest count was 20 at Stiperstones on 29 Apr.

Firecrest One was reported at Church Stretton 25 Apr.

Spotted Flycatcher The earliest arrivals were at Bridges, where four were present on 14 May. Other records were received from eight locations.

Pied Flycatcher The first record was on 8 Apr at Craig Sychtyn. Reports followed from numerous locations with highest count being 17 at Upper Pentiken near Clun.

Willow Tit Records came from six sites with evidence of breeding at Mary Knoll Valley and Haughmond Hill. Also seen at Trefonen, Priorslee Lake, Clunton Hill, and Abdon.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Three were present near Clungunford on 7 Jun.

Lesser Redpoll The largest count came from the Mary Knoll Valley where 15 were seen on 19 Apr.

Common Crossbill Reports came from Wenlock Edge, Haughmond Hill, Black Hill, Wart Hill near Craven Arms, Sowdley Wood and Wimperhill Wood where six were seen on 22 May.

Corn Bunting Reported from 12 locations throughout the quarter. 12 were seen near Isombridge on 11 May.

Some sightings are subject to acceptance by the Records Committee.

Compiled & Photos by Jim Almond

Get Your Buzzard Online

The SOS is joining many similar organisations in moving to electronic delivery of its quarterly magazine, The Buzzard. Most members now have access to the Web and will be able to download and save the “e-Buzzard” on their own desktop or laptop computers, tablets or even smartphones. Electronic delivery will be introduced over a short transition period, with the first participants testing the new system (and receiving printed versions as well, in case of problems). Over what is hoped will be a few months, delivery via the Web will be phased in and mailed paper copies will be mostly phased out.

Online delivery of the SOS magazine saves time, effort, money and paper now that is better spent on bird and bird habitat conservation and surveys. You will receive your magazine more quickly and in a format that renders the colour images in a more vibrant form than when printed on paper.

The traditional printed magazine will be retained for those unable to access the online version as the electronic version becomes the standard format.

Shifting from paper to electronic delivery will be easy:

- *Go to the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/ and scroll to the "Breaking News" section. Follow the link to an online version of this article and an easy-to-use form to submit your email address.*
- *Your email address will be added to our membership list*
- *When the next issue of "The Buzzard" is published, you will receive an email with a link to download and save it to your own device.*

This issue will be in PDF format, a standard document format for this type of publication. If you do not have the software to display a PDF, it is available online at no cost and you will be provided with instructions on how to get it when you access the current issue.

If you have any concerns or questions about this change, please feel free to contact John Arnfield at arnfield.2@osu.edu or (01694) 724170.

We are enthusiastic about this new method of getting The Buzzard to you and I am sure that the transition can be made in an efficient and stress-free manner over the next few months.

John Arnfield
Chair & Website Manager, SOS
Tim Devanney
Editor, The Buzzard

Upcoming Field Trips

Sunday, 10 September WIRRAL: LEASOWES, HOYLAKE, BURTON MERE
Organiser: Sue Brealey Car

Full Day – Meet at the Leasowes Car Park at 10am Grid Ref: SD 353205
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

Sunday, 12 November

TREGARON BOG (CORS CARON*)

Organiser: Sue Brealey Car

Full Day – Meet at Car Park at 10.30am Grid Ref: SN 695630

Directions: From Llangurig take A44 towards Aberystwyth, then turn left onto A4120 for Devil's Bridge. Take B4343 for Tregaron & and park in Reserve Car Park.

See <http://www.naturalresources.wales/out-and-about/places-to-go/mid-wales/cors-caron-national-nature-reserve/?lang=en>

* Cors Caron National Nature Reserve, near Tregaron

Sunday, 3 December

WWT MARTIN MERE

Organiser: Sue Brealey Coach

Full Day – Meet at the Shirehall Car Park at 8am

Cost will be £15 per person for the coach, plus entry to the reserve for non-members.

More details at a later date. Please book with Sue Brealey from September 2017.

See www.wwt.org.uk/martinmere

Indoor Meetings

Wednesday, 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.

Wednesday, 1 November

A NATURALIST'S YEAR

Speaker: Jeff Clarke

This talk will take us through Jeff's calendar year, the highs and lows, the mishaps, the madness and the sheer beauty of the natural world.

Wed, 6 December

DISCOVERING SCOTLAND'S NORTHERN & WESTERN ISLES

Speaker: Nick Martin

Including Skye, the Outer Hebrides and the Shetlands, this talk has images of landscapes and wildlife - everything from eagles to orchids and skuas to otters. Otters. A must for lovers of Scotland.

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.

Please send contributions or suggestions to: **Tim Devanney buzzard@shropshirebirds.co.uk**

Copy deadline for the Winter 2017 issue is:

1 November 2017