

# ***The Buzzard***

**Shropshire  
Ornithological Society's  
Quarterly Magazine**



**No 252**

**Summer 2018**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Society Officers and Officials</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Welcome to New Members</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>General Data Protection Regulations 2018</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chair's Report 2017/18</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SOS opposes the Hen Harrier Brood Management Plan</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Swift call to action</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Corncrake in Shrewsbury</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Why did the Wren cross the lake?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Shropshire's Eric Hosking</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Colour Ringed What??!</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>SWT/SOS 'Save Our Curlews' campaign &amp; update</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Birds of Prey</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Charles Gawen's <i>Ornithological Field Journal</i> Vol2 The book</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Aberlady Bay, East Lothian</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Field Trips</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Bird Notes</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Indoor Meetings (Church Stretton)</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Indoor Meetings</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Upcoming Field Trips</b>	<b>32</b>

## Welcome to New Members

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

Mr M J	Warrender	Leegomery
Mr D	Chapman	Meole Village
Mr P	King	Leegomery
Mr & Mrs M	Fitzpatrick	Leegomery
Mr K	King	Market Drayton
Mr R G	Gibb	Nr Newport
Mr S	Bygrave	Shrewsbury
Miss S	Kelly	Aberdyfi
Mrs C	Wood	Lydbury North
Mr & Mrs G	Boyle	Sundorne
Mr & Mrs N	Evans-Jones	Oswestry
Mr & Mrs R	Stokes	Radbrook Green
Mr & Mrs G	Tomkinson	Newport
Mrs R M	Muxworthy	Kidderminster
Mr & Mrs D	Price	Cantlop
Mr P R	Walsh	Sutton Farm
Mr R	Rees	Clungunford
Mr D	Harding	Wellington
Mr M	Whitfield	Wellington
Mr & Mrs R	Brayne	Cross Houses
Mr D	Jones	Heath Farm
Mr D & Rev D	Loughran	Wrockwardine Wood
Mr & Mrs J	Munro-Derry	Bucknell
Mr P	Allen	Bayston Hill
Mr M C	Bell	Shrewsbury
Mr N	O'Neill	Stirchley Park

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

# General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR)

I am sure that it cannot have escaped members' attention that they have received numbers of requests from all kinds of bodies with which they are associated and that a change in the Data Protection regime came into effect on 25 May 2018. Prior to that date SOS/SOS2005 was able to rely on implied (deemed) consent to retain members personal details (Name(s), Addresses, Telephone Nos, Email Addresses, Gift Aid Information, Bank Standing Order Information etc) on computer. Following the change, that information can now only be retained if there is expressed (i.e. written) consent.

A Consent Form was sent out with the Spring Buzzard to all members (either by email or hard-copy). It was presumed that those receiving the e-Buzzard would respond by e-mail and most have already done so. Those receiving the hard-copy form were advised that they could either complete that form and return it by post or go to the website to respond or download the form and return it by email.

There has, to date, been a better than anticipated response and we have had 50% of the forms returned. All of those who have not responded will find a hard-copy of the Consent Form with this mailing.

### Please note:

Unless a completed form is received within the next 3 months this will be the last communication that you will receive from SOS / SOS 2005.

We shall be obliged to delete your name from the membership database.

## Chair's Report 2017/18

The Society has continued to flourish over the year since our last AGM and I would like to take this opportunity both to draw your attention to its achievements and to thank those responsible for them.

First, let me thank Pete Deans for agreeing to serve as our President, following on from the late Frank Gribble. We trust that his length of service in this position will match his previous reign as our Chairman!

Membership in the Society has grown modestly over the year and now stands near 800. Thanks are due to Annie Andrews for dealing with membership issues.

SOS Finances remain healthy and I would like to express my appreciation to Jean Rickard for a very effective and efficient first year in the role of Treasurer.

Our programme of Indoor Meetings with guest speakers continue to attract audiences in both Shrewsbury and Church Stretton. My thanks go to everyone who helps to make these evenings such successful events, particularly the organisers, those who prepare refreshments, and those who set up and clear the hall for the meetings. Many thanks, particularly, to Jean Rickard in her previous incarnation as Indoor Programme Co-ordinator (whose speakers we are still enjoying) and to Steve Dawes who has succeeded her. Our meetings typically attract between 40 and 60 members and guests in Bayston Hill and an average of about 30 at Church Stretton.

A full programme of Field Trips took place during the year, organised by the Development and Publicity Sub-committee, and led by several different members. Coach trips have usually proved popular with members. Thank you to Sue Brealey, now ably assisted by Brian Lyon, for organising the Society's field trips, and to all the field trip leaders.

A major achievement of the last year has been the progress in reducing the backlog in the publication of The Shropshire Bird Report and for this we must applaud the enthusiasm and efficiency of Geoff Holmes who bravely took on the editorship. The 2012 volume is now out and 2013 and 2014 are close behind. Our sincere thanks go out to Geoff for his dedication, as well as to the compilers and the editorial team. Starting with the 2015 edition, we welcome Gerry Thomas as the new editor of SBR.

A notable improvement at Venus Pool has been the hide extensions, which it is hoped will relieve some of the pressure on their use. This work has been funded in part by a legacy from Jack Sankey. Also included in the works carried out has been the relocation of the Sand Martin wall to a position where it is hoped it will be more successful.

Day-to-day management at the reserve continues, 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 and winter, the programme of scrub removal continued, to open up the area around the pool; because the work was beyond the scope of our volunteers, contractors undertook the work.

The hay fields at Venus Pool were finally cut and baled in early autumn, after a wet and unsettled summer, and then grazed by the neighbour's cattle later in the autumn. As usual, the arable field was planted with bird-friendly crops and good numbers of finches and buntings spent the winter feeding there. The Hebridean sheep continued to graze areas of the reserve where the vegetation needs to be controlled, particularly the fen and marshy areas. No organised work parties took place this year, but numerous small jobs continued to be undertaken on a regular basis.

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 its work, 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. Most of those on the sub-committee are involved in a practical way with many aspects of bird conservation, such as providing management advice, involvement with community groups, research and liaison with other conservation bodies. So, thank you to Graham Walker and his Sub-committee for their efforts.

The SOS has recently partially funded and joined with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust to launch the "Save Our Curlews" campaign and appeal. This project is overseen by the Shropshire Curlews Group, consisting of the Community Wildlife Groups, Natural England, the National Trust, the RSPB as well as SOS and SWT.

Members were involved in Bird Recording during the year, contributing to national surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey, the Wetland Bird Survey and Garden BirdWatch. Many are also involved in bird ringing. Additionally, SOS members submit their own records to County Bird Recorder, or, better yet, to BirdTrack. The latter is now the preferred method of submitting sightings – Shropshire records submitted to BirdTrack are returned to the County Recorder for use in SOS publications and projects. Thank you to all those who have contributed in any way to bird recording in Shropshire during the year.

While on this subject, Ian Grant has now succeeded Martyn Owen as County Bird Recorder and, with the new SBR editor Gerry Thomas, they now sit on the Conservation Sub-committee.

Work continues apace on the Shropshire Avifauna. It is planned to get all components of the work submitted to the book designer by the end of this month and it is still hoped that it will be available before Christmas 2018.

The Society's website has now been revamped and now boasts a cleaner, more stylish theme. It gets between 250 and 400 hits per day with the most popular pages being "Recent Bird Reports" and "Venus Pool Nature Reserve". Thanks are due to Yvonne Chadwick for maintaining our social media presence that is also carried on the website.

Thanks to editor Tim Devanney, our magazine "The Buzzard", appears quarterly, on time and packed with fascinating reading and now colour illustrations. Members are now also offered the option of accessing "The Buzzard" online and a simple form is available on the SOS website to permit you to switch to this option, which saves paper, postage and volunteer effort. On this topic, thanks also to the team which gets together four times a year to prepare the magazine packages for posting to members and to Jim Almond for his Bird Notes contribution each quarter.

I would like to conclude by expressing my thanks and appreciation for the work of the Board of Directors, the Sub-committees and the Church Stretton branch committee during another busy year, and to all those people who contribute in any way to the smooth operation of the Society.

***John Arnfield***  
***Chair, Shropshire Ornithological Society***  
***4 April 2018***

## **SOS opposes the Hen Harrier Brood Management Plan**

Natural England has granted a licence to allow the trial of a brood management scheme for hen harriers, allowing the removal of hen harrier eggs or chicks for rearing in captivity if two pairs nest within 10 kilometres of each other, known as the Hen Harrier Brood Management Plan. RSPB and Mark Avery have applied to the High Court for a judicial review, to declare the licence illegal.

On the recommendation of the Conservation Sub-committee, the SOS Board at its meeting on Wednesday, 25 April 2018 agreed that:

SOS objects strongly to the proposal by Natural England (NE) for Hen Harrier Brood Management.



SOS believes that this policy is misguided and has been developed to avoid dealing with the major threats to breeding hen harriers in England, i.e. illegal raptor persecution and environmentally damaging grouse-moor management.

SOS is concerned that should the brood management plan go ahead, then a precedent could have been set for the persecution of other protected species, in the future.

SOS supports RSPB, as well as Mark Avery's crowdfunded project, in seeking judicial review (which has now been granted). Should the judicial review be successful, i.e. if the High Court find that Natural England has acted illegally in issuing the licence, then further action by SOS may not be necessary. However, we will need to wait for the outcome of the judicial review before considering whether any further action by SOS is required.

It is estimated that there is sufficient suitable habitat for up to 300 pairs of hen harrier to be breeding in England (JNCC 441, 2011), with, potentially, up to 10 pairs breeding in Shropshire; however, due to persecution elsewhere there are no pairs breeding in the county.

(Graham Walker declared an interest and was not present for either discussion).

## For more information see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/licence-to-disturb-and-take-hen-harriers>

<http://bit.ly/2nUOiJa>

<https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/justice-for-hen-harriers/>

<http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/martinharper/archive/2018/03/09/update-on-the-brood-management-of-hen-harriers.aspx>

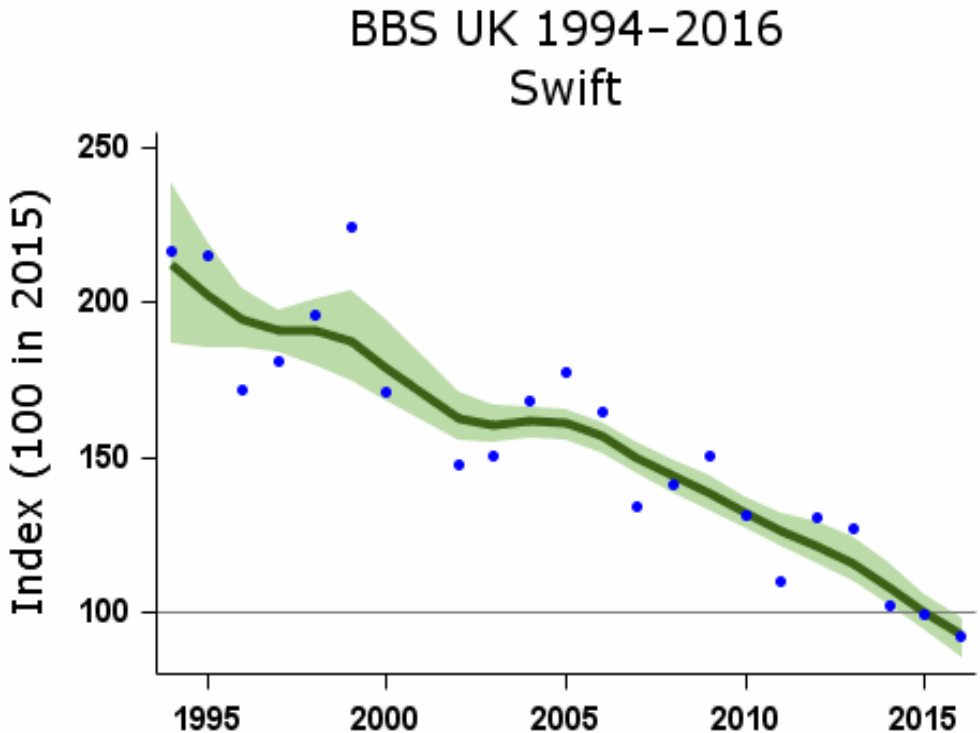
<http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/martinharper/archive/2018/04/17/an-update-on-the-rspb-39-s-response-to-hen-harrier-brood-management.aspx#YhqHTHe1gdem814x.99>

Joint Nature Conservation Committee Report 441 February 2011

*A conservation framework for Hen Harriers in the United Kingdom* (JNCC Peterborough)

## Swift call to action

The BTO's Breeding Bird survey for 2017 has just been released and, in 3 just words, the news on Swifts can be summarised as – “the decline continues”.



*Chart courtesy of BTO*

Action for Swifts have summarised the results in the report and in the 21 years between 1995 and 2016, Swifts declined by 53% equivalent to an average annual decline of 3.5%. In the 10 years between 2006 and 2016, Swifts declined by 39% equivalent to an average annual decline of 4.8%. So it looks like things are getting worse, not better.

The one glimmer of hope is that between 2016 and 2017, Swifts increased by a non-significant 1%.

The situation in England is similar to the rest of the UK. Looking at trends for 1995-2016 we can see that in 6 out of 9 English regions losses are more than

50% with the North West declining by 61% and the North East by a staggering 66%.

In Wales the data are 1995-2016 -61% and 2006-2016 -44%. Similarly in Scotland, 1995-2016 -59% and 2006-2016 -42%. Whilst both regions showed an increase of 12% for 2016-17 it is too early to say if this is significant.

**Even with these figures Swift is still 'only' an amber-listed species.**

So, as for many species, there is much that we need to do for these birds and putting up Swift nest boxes is a pretty simple step that we can all take. Many of us happily put up boxes for resident birds that are not in trouble omitting to provide for the birds that really do need more nesting sites. We can also be far more careful with timing of building work. How many Swifts are denied the chance to breed each year due to scaffolding being erected over nest entrances? Or worse, nest sites lost without suitable mitigation due to building work destroying nest sites?

## What can I do?



**UK Swift  
Awareness  
Week**

Don't forget Swift Awareness Week 16 to 23 June. The wide range of events can be seen at:-

<http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/2018/01/2018-uk-swift-awareness-week-16-23-june.html> but it's not too late for YOU to arrange something and help prevent the decline of this fantastic summer visitor.

## **ACTION please contact:**

[shropshireswifts@gmail.com](mailto:shropshireswifts@gmail.com) for advice on anything Swift or Swift Week related.

**Peta Sams  
Shropshire Swift Group**

## Corncrake in Shrewsbury

In the last issue of *Buzzard* (251:21-22) I wrote of the birds recorded in the Quarry in Shrewsbury. Just to hand, in time for this issue, comes this from the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* kindly sent to me by Dr Andrew Pattison adding some details. The piece was published on 15 May 1868 on the strength of the evidence of Mr John Shaw, brother of Henry Shaw; they were both then taxidermists in the town and known for their knowledge of birds.

After a paragraph waxing lyrical on the joys of May the piece continues adding some detail to the lists of birds of the quarry and nearby:

*“Our attention has been called by our townsman, Mr. John Shaw, to the various members of the feathered tribe that may be heard at the present time, filling the air with their “piping sounds,” in the Quarry and its immediate neighbourhood. The cuckoo may be heard in the Dingle; the nightingale and back-cap warbler in the Quarry ; and in the plantation on the opposite side of the river may be discerned the wood warbler, chiff-chaff, garden warbler, whitethroat, redstart (in quantity), grasshopper warbler, golden-created regulus, and a number of others ; whilst on the Severn about the sandpipers, and in the meadow on the side of the Quarry the landrail (or corncrake) may be heard. The hirondi, too, have made their appearance fully a week earlier than is their wont.”*

**John Tucker**

## Why did the Wren cross the lake?

Twenty or even ten years ago only a few birders submitted their records to the SOS via computer – now most do. Today *BirdTrack*, the BTO’s national system (soon to be ours too), receives most bird records. They are then available to the BTO for national research and they are automatically passed to County Recorders, in our case to Ian Grant

*BirdTrack* works wonderfully well for the BTO, the SOS and for individual recorders, but spare a thought for the volunteers who have to write species summaries for the annual Shropshire Bird Reports (SBR), a problem which is worse for common species. I am one of those volunteers and I understand that others have the same problem.

Having to write something ‘interesting’ about Feral Pigeon, Wren Robin or House Sparrow for example with only *BirdTrack* records to hand can be taxing. For each there may be over 1,000 records with the date, place, count and the observer’s name but beyond that, often nothing ‘interesting’ to be said

unless the observer happens to see - and report on *BirdTrack* - something unusual for me to seize upon to enliven the account.

So *BirdTrack* records for the SBR show where the common species were reported from and how many, both of which can be different from where the birds are because recorders only report from where they go not all the places where the birds actually *are*. That is another interesting issue which John Arnfield and I will address in an article for a future SBR.

As the species account author for Wren in 2015, I was left with nothing interesting to say to liven up the account; except for three words from E J Wilson on 25 February reporting from Priorslee Lake in Telford “*crossing the lake*”. Quite why that little bird undertook such a journey that winter’s day will remain a mystery but it did add two lines to an otherwise dull SBR account that year.

So if you see something out of the ordinary please tell *BirdTrack* about it; the SBR account writer and its readers will be delighted to hear from you.

**John Tucker**

## Shropshire’s Eric Hosking

Older birders will remember Eric Hosking’s ground-breaking use of hides for bird photography and in later years electronic flash ‘freezing’ wing-beats; they were stunning photographs in their day. Today’s photo-birders are familiar with for example, Jim Almond’s images (we seem not to call them photographs these days) made using digital kit with high ‘film’ speeds and extraordinarily long (and expensive) lenses. To Eric Hosking and his contemporaries today’s images would have been unimaginable.

In Eric Hosking’s early days, the 1930s and 40s (he died in 1991), there were few bird photographers, so I was fascinated recently when shown a small collection of black and white prints of photographs taken in 1949-50 by Miss Francis Pitt (1888-1964). Miss Pitt lived at The Albynes (SJ694974) two miles to the east of Shirlett, around 4 miles NW of Bridgnorth. The prints are the property of Mrs Michele Pugh of Craven Arms.

Miss Pitt cared for nature and wrote many books sometimes about the wild animals she found and cared for including “*Tommy White-Tag, the fox*”, balancing that with being a Master of Fox Hounds. She was also a nature photographer and in 1954 some of her photographs were apparently used by Brooke Bond for a series of illustrated cards in their Edglets brand of tea [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances\\_Pitt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Pitt).

Miss Pitt has contributions in *Histo*; a pied Redwing seen near Bridgnorth 1918 and her article *Water Fowl at Walcot Hall* published, presumably using

her own photographs, in *Country Life* magazine on 20 June 1936. The Nightjar photographs are labelled Shirlett, June 1950 and signed by Miss Pitt. She also now has a Histo entry at 1952. Of the 13 prints in the possession of Mrs Pugh two are shown here – with her kind permission.



**John Tucker**

## Colour Ringed What??!

Articles on colour ringing schemes feature regularly in The Buzzard but this one is a little different. It is about Canada geese. Colour ringing schemes aim to obtain tracking data on birds without the need for re-capturing them, as the rings can be read in the field and reported. The data collected can yield information on migration and dispersal, habitat use and survival amongst other things and is generally used to inform conservation initiatives. So why would anyone want to colour ring Canada geese; those non-native denizens of parks and ponds, a marauding scourge of nature reserves managed for our own wild birds? Good question.

“Canada geese are one of a small proportion of the non-native bird species recorded in the UK which have been shown to have negative impacts on our native wild...”

The answer is the same as it is for most other species; to inform conservation initiatives. However, unlike most species subject to colour ringing schemes conservation of Canada geese themselves is not the focus in this case, but, rather that of our own habitats and those of our native wildlife. Canada geese are one of a small proportion of the non-native bird species recorded in the UK which have been shown to have negative impacts on our native wildlife and habitats and on people, through pollution, eutrophication, overgrazing and the spread of disease. Perhaps because of their ubiquity and the fact that they are not native, some birders may be less inclined to report non-native species. Consequently, the data we have on them are often poor or incomplete and, as a result, there are some surprising gaps in our knowledge.

The RSPCA have been colour ringing Canada geese at Windermere in Cumbria since 2013. The project aims to investigate the movements of moulting and breeding Canada geese to and from the lake where they occur in large numbers. There are a number of Canada goose ringing schemes in the UK but this one in particular has resulted in a number of re-sightings from Shropshire. Many of these have come from Polemore and Venus Pool as might be expected, given the numbers of Canada geese which visit those sites and the fact that they are watched regularly. However, colour ringed birds have been recorded at a number of locations across the county from Whitchurch to the Long Mynd and east to Telford. Although some of these are Shropshire regulars new birds continue to be found.

The scheme is revealing that these seemingly rather sedentary birds make surprisingly lengthy migrations. Other birds from Windermere have been recorded at locations as far apart as Wales and Aberdeen! In addition, some Canada geese have been shown to move between several sites; Shropshire birds have also been observed at Frodsham Marsh in Cheshire and at other

sites in Cumbria and Lancashire. All of these data help to improve our understanding of the UK's Canada goose population and can help to make our environment a better place both for people and wildlife.

So, the next time you see a Canada goose don't just pass it off as an unimportant introduced bird. Take a closer look and you might find that it is sporting some colourful leg-wear. If you do spot one of these birds please submit your sighting to [kevin.leighton@rspca.org.uk](mailto:kevin.leighton@rspca.org.uk) with the leg (left or right) ring colour and alphanumeric code. Your data may prove important for our native wildlife.

**James Grundy**

## SWT/SOS 'Save Our Curlews' campaign & update

A joint appeal was launched last November to fund the campaign. The Appeal letter was enclosed in previous issues of *The Buzzard*. The Appeal has been successful and raised enough to fund a full nest finding and protection project in 2018 in both the Upper Clun and Clee Hill areas. Thanks a lot, to all SOS members who contributed.

The work needs to be carried out over many years if it is to make a difference and reverse the decline. So, the appeal will continue and SOS members will be asked to donate again in future years. 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.

### Nest Finding and Protection Projects in Upper Clun and Clee Hill

Almost all the landowners with Curlews on their land last year have been contacted and briefed. Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs) have identified the territories and the nest-finder started work at the end of April.

By mid-May, three nests had been found and protected in each of the two areas. All three nests in the Upper Clun had four eggs, all of which were still present a week after finding. The nests in Clee Hill were found a bit later, with clutches of five, four and one. The latter may be an incomplete clutch. Landowners at all nest sites in both areas have been very supportive and helpful.

### New Community Wildlife Groups

Two new CWGs have been established covering the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence and Tanat to Perry (which covers the area to the south of Oswestry. The former was launched at a meeting (on a bitterly cold evening in February just before the snow). It was



attended by almost 20 people and the launch of the latter was attended by over 60 people. Both Groups are able to cover all the tetrads in their survey area, 29 and 45 respectively, and several pairs of Curlew have been located and excellent progress has been made.

The new groups are holding feedback meetings to consider the results of survey work carried out in April and May:

Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence CWG

*7:30pm on Tuesday 5 June at Alberbury Village Hall*

Tanat to Perry (Oswestry South) CWG

*7:30pm on Wednesday 6 June at Morda Social Club*

Thanks a lot to Michael Wallace and Claire Backshall respectively for helping set up these groups and get them going. For more information they can be contacted:

[michaelwallace47@gmail.com](mailto:michaelwallace47@gmail.com) 01743 369035

[c\\_backshall@hotmail.com](mailto:c_backshall@hotmail.com) 01691 830691

The other CWG in north-west Shropshire which started last year and covers the Three Parishes of Weston Rhyn, St Martin's and Gobowen extending eastwards to Ellesmere is holding a feedback meeting at 7:30pm on Thursday 7 March at Weston Rhyn Village Hall (opposite the church).

Thanks also go to Polly Smith, chair of the group for organising this one.

[pollyjsmith@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pollyjsmith@hotmail.co.uk) 01691 239087

**It's not too late to get involved in any of these groups and all would welcome the involvement of more SOS members**

The older CWGs and Strettons Area which also started last year are not having such meetings but further information about their survey work and results and last year's annual reports can be found on the CWGs website <http://www.shropscwgs.org.uk/>. Annual reports will be produced at the end of the season. Again, it's not too late to get involved in any of these groups and all would welcome the involvement of more SOS members.

## **Breeding Curlew records wanted please**

Whilst most conservation effort will be invested in areas being monitored by CWGs, there are many other Curlews in the county we will need to try and protect these too, so any records of breeding Curlews should be sent to Leo Smith please.

## South of England Curlew Forum

The forum exists to promote Curlew conservation and exchange information between projects to promote good practice. See [www.curlewcall.org](http://www.curlewcall.org).

## Curlew monitoring in Shropshire

A detailed account of Curlew monitoring has been submitted to and distributed by the South of England Curlew Forum. This detail the results of the SOS Bird Atlas projects in 1985-90 and 2008-13 and change over that period as well as the results of CWG monitoring since 2004

The CWGs including the two new ones set up this year are monitoring well over half of the breeding population. Results since 2010 suggest that the population estimate of 160 breeding pairs in 2010 has declined by a further 20% to 130 pairs in 2017.

This account can be found on the SOS website (see below).

## Shropshire Curlew Group

There has been one further meeting largely to consider the project work in Upper Clun and Clee Hill areas.

# How SOS Members can help

Curlews need all the help they can get and there are several ways members and others can contribute:-

- 1. Help look for Curlews through a CWG survey (see above)**
2. If you know of a Curlew territory but haven't reported it yet or find one in 2018 please tell Leo Smith (contact details below)
3. Nest finding and protection costs money and members are asked to support the Appeal Details can be found on the website
4. Ideas about who we can approach for funding or how we can raise more money for Curlew conservation
5. Other suggestions or offers would be most welcome.

## Curlew Country

The Stiperstones-Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) ended in March 2018. The Curlew Recovery Project is continuing under the name “Curlew Country” under the auspices of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and will continue with the nest monitoring and protection and other activities carried out up until 2017. It does not wish to participate in the Shropshire Curlew Group and we get no information about its plans and activities. It has a website.

## SOS Website

The Shropshire Curlew Group (SCG) oversees the decisions of the SOS Management Committee. Details of their work such as: -

- the campaign Strategy,
- terms of reference,
- a summary of Curlew monitoring in the county,
- areas where Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs) are looking for breeding Curlew *(to identify nesting areas and then work with the landowners and farmers to find and protect the nest and assess the outcomes)*

All can be found on the SOS website.

<http://www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/>

If you would like additional information please contact Leo Smith the SOS representative on SCG

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

## Birds of Prey

The Raptor Group is looking for Hobby, Merlin, Red Kite, Goshawk and Kestrel. If you know of a nest site of any of the target species, or should you find one in future or evidence of breeding, please contact us with the details. This valuable information will be treated in the strictest confidence and greatly appreciated.

We are also working with the Shropshire Ringing group on a Kestrel Nest Box scheme, so records of all Kestrels, not necessarily nest sites are needed too, please.

For further information see the website [www.shropshirebirds.com](http://www.shropshirebirds.com), or contact the Convenor:

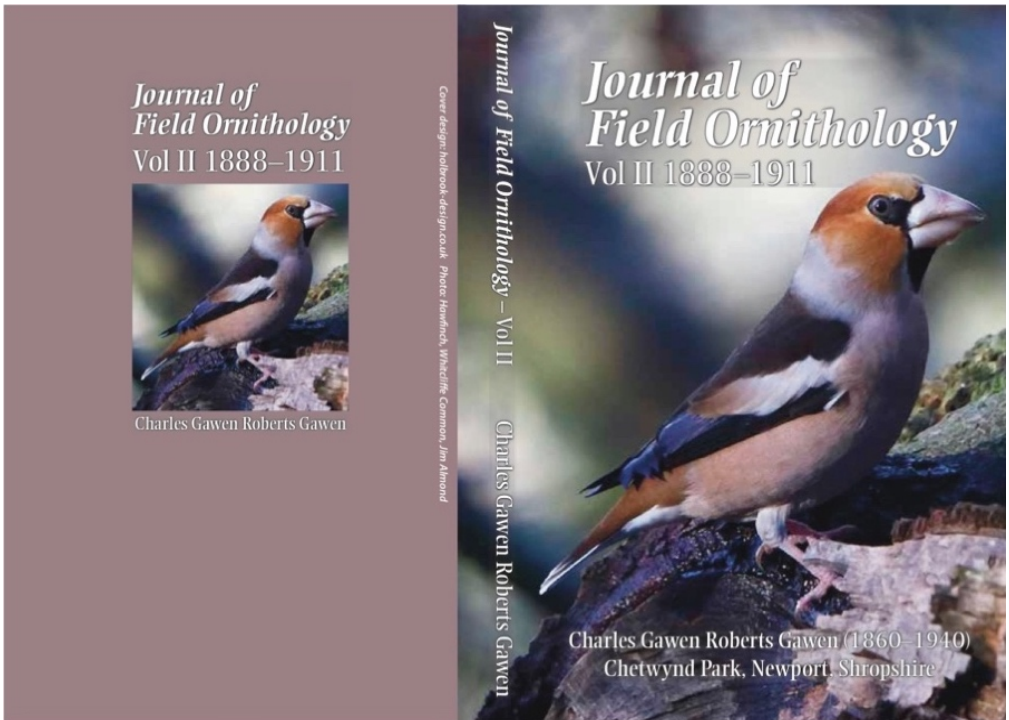
Leo Smith (01694 720296, [leo@leosmith.org.uk](mailto:leo@leosmith.org.uk)).

## Charles Gawen's *Ornithological Field Journal* Vol2 The book

The hand-written *Journal of Field Ornithology* (Vol 2 1888-1911) of Charles Gawen was described briefly in *Buzzard* (Distractions 248:13-14) a year ago when it first came to light. Gawen spent most of that time at Chetwynd Park and his notes are about the birds of the estate and the surrounding area.

The SOS kindly contributed to the cost of having the entire contents 327 pages copy-typed. Since then, it has been rigorously checked to the original, analysed indexed and designed. It will all go online on Histo as a PDF in the near future.

My brother, Peter, has designed the diary in the format of a book, about the same size as the recent Beckwith book, and a few (15-20) will be printed in softback book form principally for distribution to libraries and institutes. If you would like a copy at cost price of £14 please let me know and I will add your copy to the limited print-run.



**John Tucker**

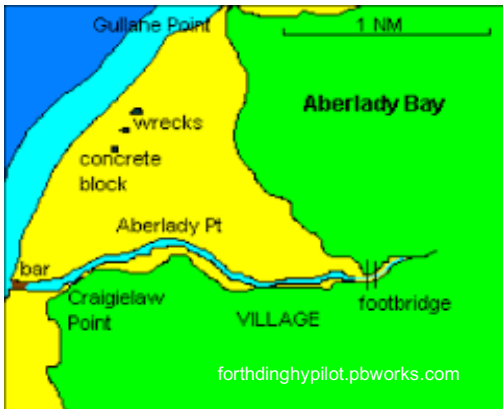
## Aberlady Bay, East Lothian

### Bird watching near Edinburgh, March 2018

#### Aberlady Bay, Britain's first Local Nature Reserve

Not far from Edinburgh along the East Lothian coast is Aberlady Bay, declared a Local Nature Reserve in 1952, the first of its kind.

Access from Edinburgh is by bus (every hour approximately) or car, so you can easily combine a city break with excellent bird watching.



We had the good fortune to stay with friends in the “Athens of the North” for a few days in March this year. We had hoped for a day out birding along the coast – opportunities to improve seabird and wader skills are more than welcome when you live in rural Shropshire – but knew virtually nothing about the destination when we all set off on a dry, but fairly overcast March day. In my field note book I recorded a temperature of 6°C.

Access to the reserve, all 582 hectares of it, is via an attractive wooden footbridge over a creek at the edge of the mudflats. We lingered there, watching a Curlew so close by that we could clearly see every detail of its beautiful plumage and the colours of its long bill. Nearby were around 20 handsome Teal resting on the muddy bank of the creek.



The first part of the circular walk traverses heathland, sea buckthorn and dunes before arriving at the sandy beach. Two thirds of the reserve, in fact, consists of sand, mud flats and salt marsh.

After watching clouds of waders at rather too great a distance on the mud flats, we turned inland again to the heathland and rocky cliffs skirting Gullane Golf Course and walked the coastal path north to Gullane point (we took the bus from Gullane village back to the starting point, which is near Aberlady village). Somewhere along the path, I suddenly noticed that one of our small party of four in front of me was almost hopping up and down in excitement, pointing speechlessly at the sky behind me. I whirled around to see a lone Barn Swallow flying strongly and unmistakably across the heathland. When we entered the records on Bird Track that evening, the Swallow entry was flagged up in red, as being out of season, but the record was accepted nevertheless. We were delighted to see this harbinger of summer, even though it did seem strangely out of place in mid-March on the east coast of Scotland.

I can thoroughly recommend a visit to Aberlady Bay; the birding was excellent, as was the circular walk. However, I think we would take a telescope next time.



### **Species list for 14 March, 11am to 2.30pm, Aberlady Bay Nature Reserve**

In the order the birds were seen.

Numbers in some cases are approximate, particularly the huge raft of Eider Duck:-

12 Curlew, 8 Redshank, 20 Teal, 10 Oystercatcher, 10 Mallard, 20 Shelduck, 50 Carrion Crow, 6 Magpie, 5 Skylark, 2 Pheasant, 1 Woodpigeon, 40 Sanderling, 4 Merganser, 2 Lesser Black Backed Gull, 2 Chaffinch, 2 Meadow Pipits, 12 Greenshank/Bar-Tailed Godwit\*, 20 Wigeon, 2 Great Black Backed Gull, 1 Ringed Plover, 1 Barn Swallow, 500-1000 Eider Duck, 15 Turnstone, 1 Black-headed Gull, 4 Purple Sandpiper, 1 Greenfinch, 20 Starling, 2 Jackdaws, 40 Herring Gull.

\*Without a telescope, we were unable to positively identify the waders.

**Nicola Pacult**

## Field Trips

### **Moore Nature Reserve** **Sunday, 25 March 2018**

A group of eleven members arrived at the car park at Moore. The weather was chilly but clear and all including two new to the usual group looked forward to seeing what was around. For a start a Green Woodpecker was heard.

The group moved up the hill opposite the car park leading to a small clearing and the Sedge Hide. Along the way Blackbird, Woodpigeon, Robin, a small group of Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit & Blue Tit were noted. The view from the hide over Lapwing Lake, initially looked rather quiet, but then Canada Goose was noted, some Coot, a Little Grebe were seen. A Wren was singing vigorously in the open in a small birch tree. From the clearing outside Buzzard were seen flying up the thermals, and then a Sparrowhawk flew past going rather fast. A Great Spotted Woodpecker flew past as well. The group walked through the clearing towards the Raptor Watch Platform. However, there were no birds seen from this point, but on the next section walking to the main walk through the reserve, a Goldcrest was seen, and then a Song Thrush was noted on the ground, and appeared to be gathering nesting material. Chiffchaff were heard singing and then one was seen at the top of a tree. After these sights, the group gathered at the Forestry Commission Hide, in fact a screen, overlooking a rather scrubby area. A jay flew by and a few Carrion Crows were about. A walk put towards the other side of the Lapwing Lake brought the group up to the Canal Bed Hide/Screen. All was rather quiet. Further progress brought everyone to the Feeding Station. Here Great Tits, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Dunnock, were seen, plus brief views of a Nuthatch and a Brambling. Then we slowly returned to the car park where lunch was eaten.

After lunch the group started off to wander the other side of the reserve. The walk took us to the Grebe Hide looking over the Birchwood Pool. Here Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Mallard, Gadwall were seen together with Great Crested Grebe. Cormorant were seen as well. Then some Linnets were seen flying in the trees behind the hide. A walk brought the group round to the Birch Strip Hide, and a quick look added some Goldeneye, who were showing display behaviour, a Grey Heron with Greylag geese flying over. A further walk was taken to the Fox Hide, where a Lapwing was seen plus a group of Black-headed Gull & Common Gull, a Moorhen, some Teal, and Wigeon. Some of the party went up to the Eastern Reedbed, but nothing else of any note was seen.

Having returned to the car park, everyone agreed that the day had been good with about 42 birds having been seen.

**Sue Brealey**



## ***Bury Ditches***

### ***Sunday, 8 April 2018***

On a cold day, a group of about eleven people arrived at Bury Ditches for a half day walk at this South Shropshire site, being led, with thanks, by Dave Pearce.

A walk up to the hill to the Hill Fort, found the group hearing a number of birds singing away. Amongst those heard were Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Crossbill, Marsh Tit, and Yellowhammer. With patience some good if distant views were seen of Crossbill, which looked in really good condition. Further up the hill, the group were able to see several Yellowhammer, flying between trees. Blackbird and Bullfinch were seen. Once we arrived at the top of the fort, the views were spectacular. A bird landed in a tree and was identified as a Meadow Pipit. Then another bird started to sing and it was realised to be a Tree Pipit, which then took flight before parachuting down to ground. A scan started over the surrounding countryside, mainly for Goshawk. Some Buzzards, Raven and Crows were noted. Then over towards the forests by Clunton Coppice, a very far sighting was made of a Goshawk, but it was through a scope, and difficult to identify. While scanning continued over some fields, more Buzzards were seen on the ground, with a Pheasant as well. But then one of the Buzzards flew up and it proved to be a Red Kite. This flew around which was enjoyed by all. After further scanning, the group slowly walked down following the Druid's Walk. Along the way a Coal Tit was noted and a Goldcrest heard, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker flew past. A Mistle Thrush was noted but difficult to see due to the habitat.

Having seen or heard such a wide variety of birds, the walk back to the car park was enjoyed by all. Approximately 27 birds were seen.

***Sue Brealey***

## **Bird Notes**

### **Jan, Feb and Mar 2018**

**Mute Swan** Numerous reports from sites across the county. The largest gathering reported was at Smythemoor where 34 were seen on 21 Feb.

**Whooper Swan** A maximum count of eighteen were seen on flooded farmland near Melverley during late Jan / early Feb. Up to four were seen at Venus Pool between 1 - 14 Jan.

**Pink-footed Goose** A big movement through the county was noted on 6 Jan when 613 were seen over Llynclys and 70 over Newport. Three were also present at Tittenley Pool on 31 Jan.



**Egyptian Goose** Five were seen near Melverley on 8 Feb.

**Shelduck** Widely reported throughout the county. The highest count was at Hales Pools East, Coal Brook, where 29 were present on 25 Mar.

**Wigeon** Good numbers at most of the usual sites. Highest counts were: The Mere, Ellesmere. 195 on 21 Jan, Whixall floods, (67) on 30 Jan, Venus Pool, (65) on 15 Jan, Shavington, (63) on 5 Mar and Wall Farm, (59) on 22 Mar.

**Gadwall** Most records came from Venus Pool throughout the quarter with a maximum count of 20 on 5 Feb. Other maxima came from: Hales Pools East, Coal Brook (26) on 25 Feb, Sambrook Mill Pond (12) on 25 Feb and Priorslee Lake (8) on 11 Feb.

**Common Teal** The largest counts came early in the quarter from: Whixall floods (219) and Wall Farm (200) both on 30 Jan. Other maxima: Hales Pools West, Coal Brook (80) on 11 Mar, Polemere (69) on 17 Mar and Venus Pool (60) on 13 Jan.

**Pintail** 85 were present on The Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Feb and there was a maximum count of 30 at Whixall floods on 30 Jan. Up to three were occasionally present at Venus Pool.

**Garganey** A drake was reported at Madeley Court on 25 Mar.

**Shoveler** Present throughout the quarter with an impressive 100 at Chetwynd Pool on 14 Jan, Whixall floods produced 73 on 30 Jan. Numbers steadily increased at Venus Pool until 17 Mar when 50 were present.

**Pochard** Reported from eight locations, notably 23 at Venus Pool on 12 Mar.

**Goldeneye** Up to fifteen were present at The Mere, Ellesmere throughout the period. Other records came from Colemere and Priorslee Lake where a pair were present on 21 Mar.

**Goosander** Numerous records from along the Severn and still waters. The highest count was 35 at the Mere, Ellesmere on 18 Jan. Leighton produced 24 on 14 Jan.

**Red Grouse** Just one record received, two on the Long Mynd on 17 Feb.

**Grey Partridge** Ten were seen at Dodecote on 9 Jan.

**Little Egret** Records of one or two throughout the period from all quarters of the county including Hales Pools East, the Aston on Clun area, Trefonen and Chetwynd Pool.

**Great White Egret** One was seen and photographed at Crosemere between 5 – 17 Feb. Another report came from fields near All Stretton on 24 Mar.

**Hen Harrier** A female was seen at Whixall Moss on 13 Jan and a male was at the same location on 19 Mar. A single (sex not specified) was reported on the Long Mynd on 1 Feb.

**Merlin** An adult female was seen perched on roadside wires at Ercall Heath for 10 minutes on 24 Mar.

**Avocet** One was present for most of the day at Venus Pool on 12 Mar.



**Little Ringed Plover** The first arrival and the only record, was seen at Wood Lane on 14 Mar.

**Golden Plover** 650 were present at Smythemoor, Longford on 1 Feb. Other large counts came from Cherrington Moor (230) on 12 Jan, Shawbury (200) on 26 Jan and Codsall Wood (200) on 18 Feb.

**Dunlin** One record, a single at Venus Pool on 12 Mar.

**Jack Snipe** Three were present at Wolverley on 14 Jan and one bird was caught and ringed. Singles were reported from Wood Lane on 21 Feb, Mason's Bank UC Wetland on 26 Mar and Mount Pleasant, Shrewsbury on 30 Mar.

**Woodcock** Five were counted at Wolverley on 14 Jan using thermal imaging and three at Shavington Park on 2 Feb. Additional records of singles came from nine other locations.

**Common Snipe** Sixty were counted at Wolverley using thermal imaging on 14 Jan and another sixty were flushed at Wood Lane during a work party on 21 Feb. The maximum count at Venus Pool was 30 on 12 Mar.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Two were present at Wood Lane on 9 Mar.

**Curlew** Double figure counts of seven and ten came from Hales Pools East, Coal Brook, during late February. Singles and small groups were reported from twelve other locations.

**Common Sandpiper** A single was reported at Venus Pool on 12 Mar.

**Green Sandpiper** One was seen at Wood Lane on 1 Jan, then up to two reported during Feb. One was seen at Venus Pool on 2 Feb.

**Common Redshank** Hales Pools East, Coal Brook produced a single on 22 and 25 Feb, three were present there on 25 Mar. Two were present at Shawbury on 15 Mar.

**Kittiwake** An adult was seen at the Mere, Ellesmere on 10 Feb and 24 Mar. Records also came from Priorslee lake on 13 and 16 Mar. (photo)



**Black-headed Gull** Reported throughout the county with the most impressive counts from the Mere, Ellesmere, peaking at 2,800 on 2 Mar.

**Mediterranean Gull** Up to five were seen on occasions in the roost at the Mere, Ellesmere during Feb and Mar.

**Common Gull** All reports came from the north of the county. The highest count was 170 at the Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Mar.

**Ring-billed Gull** A second-winter bird was present in the roost at the Mere, Ellesmere on 21 - 22 Feb.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** Reported throughout the period. Highest count from the Mere where 815 were in the roost on 2 Mar.

**Herring Gull** 450 were in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 2 Mar.

**Yellow-legged Gull** All reports from the Mere, Ellesmere. Up to five birds of various ages seen between 3 Jan - 16 Mar.

**Iceland Gull** One was in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 13 Feb.

**Glaucous Gull** A first-winter bird was seen at The Mere, Ellesmere roost between 26-28 Feb.

**Short-eared Owl** One was present at Bury Ditches on 14 Jan and another was flushed on 5 Mar from the arable field at Venus Pool, where it spent the rest of the afternoon on a fence post at the north side of the marsh. (photo)



**Barn Owl** Reported at 12 locations with up to two seen at Tibberton. Records of single birds came from: Battlefield, Springfield, Whitcott Keysett, Venus Pool, Wolverley, Forton, Shawbury, Bishops Castle, Anchor, Lillywood, and More.

**Little Owl** Singles were reported at Wrockwardine on 23 Jan, Edgebolton on 2 Feb, Wolverley on 4 Feb and Newport cemetery on 20 Mar.

**Sand Martin** Two were seen at Venus Pool on 12 Mar followed by other reports at Edgebolton on 16 Mar and Chirbury on 27 Mar. There were no large counts, the highest was 18 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 28 Mar.

**Stonechat** Reported from six locations with up to three seen during the period at Mason's Bank UC Wetland.

**Waxwing** Three were reported in Worthen on 18 Mar.

**Black Redstart** One was reported on a roof in Shifnal on 22 Mar.

**Wheatear** Just one record which came from Llanfair Hill, a single on 30 Mar.

**Cetti's Warbler** One was heard singing and seen briefly in flight at Crosemere on 5 Feb.

**Siberian Chiffchaff** One was reported at Choulton on 6 Feb.

**Fieldfare** There were many three figure counts and interesting to note numbers were generally increased compared to 2017! The highest counts were at Rednal (300) on 14 Mar, Wall farm (250) on 13 Mar and Baggy Moor (200) on 19 Feb.(photo)

**Redwing** Numerous reports but numbers were down compared to 2017 with just two three figure counts: 160 at Shavington Park on 12 Mar and 100 at Shakenhurst on 11 Mar.



**Willow Tit** Records of single birds came from: Tilstock (5 Jan), Norbury (17Jan), Burrow Hill Fort (9 Mar) and Bringewood (13 Mar).

**Great Grey Shrike** One was seen in a hedgerow along the road below Radnor Wood on 6 Jan and then again on 13 Jan. Presumably the same bird was seen again in a roadside hedge between Clun and Clunton on 5 Mar.

**Tree Sparrow** Up to twelve were reported daily throughout the period at Oakeley Mynd. Other sightings came from Whitchurch (8) on 6 Jan, Moreton Say (10) on 12 Mar and Clun Mill (5) on 23 Mar.

**Brambling** Reported throughout the quarter with some good counts including: 60+ at Tetchill Moor on 4 Mar and 15 at Venus Pool on 1 Jan.

**Hawfinch** Numerous sightings continued throughout the quarter following the Autumn irruption. Whitcliffe Common continued to hold the most numerous flocks, with 60 counted on 18 Jan. Churchyards with Yew trees (Bucknell, Clun, Fitz, Lydbury North, Meole Brace), Newport cemetery, plus random locations throughout the county also provided great opportunities for observers.

**Linnet** A huge flock of 400 was noted at Wood Lane on weedy banks on 12 Jan. Other notable counts came from Little Bolas (24) on 9 Jan and Wall Farm (150) during Jan.

**Common Crossbill** The highest count was from Bury Ditches (28) on 10 Jan. Other reports came from Cefn Coch (up to 6), High Vinnals (1) and Lower Shortditch (2).

**Siskin** Large flocks were reported from the south of the county at Mardu with 150 on 6 Jan, 100 at Whitcott Keysett on 24 Jan and 100 Mary Knoll on 7 Feb.

**Corn Bunting** The highest count came from Isombridge Lane, where 30 were seen on 31 Jan. Other notable counts came from Kemberton (14) on 10 Mar and Pattingham (11) on 29 Mar.

**Yellowhammer** Highest counts came from the arable field at Venus Pool where 30 were present on 10 Feb.

***Report and Photos  
Jim Almond***

Some sightings are subject to acceptance by the records committee.

## Indoor Meetings (Church Stretton)

The Methodist Church Hall, Watling Street, Church Stretton 7:30 pm

**22 October      Oliver Smart**  
**“A Birding Migration – Birds of Lesvos”**

Lesvos has been well documented for its impressive list of migratory species passing through each spring. Having visited three years in succession to witness the spectacle of migration Oliver's talk will visit many of the important birding areas on the island and the value of each to the species that stop to refuel for their long journeys north. Oliver will also illustrate many of the common resident species as well as some other animals that live on this fantastic Greek island. Visit Oliver's website at <http://www.smartimages.co.uk/index.php>.

## Indoor Meetings

Bayston Hill Memorial Hall, Lyth Hill Road Shrewsbury, 7:15pm -10:00 pm  
For more details visit: <http://www.shropshirebirds.com/indoor-meetings/>

**3 October      Chris Ward**  
**Wildlife Down Under**

Centred on the rich and varied habitats of SE Queensland, New South Wales and the 'Top End', visited during a 3 month winter experience, this will be an extravaganza of colourful, rare and iconic Australian wildlife. Enjoy birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and others.



## Upcoming Field Trips

### **10 June                      Queen's Head Canal**

**Leader: Allan Dawes**    By car

Half Day – Meet at Car Park at 9am      Grid Ref: SJ338268

Directions: Turn right from the A5 if coming from Shrewsbury or left if from Oswestry, at Queen's Head. Use the canal car park. This will be a bird-watching walk along the canal, looking in particular for spring migrants

### **July and August: No field trips**

### **30 September    Brandon Marsh**

**Organiser: Sue Brealey**    By Car

Full Day – Meet at Reserve Car Park at 10am. SatNav. Post Code: CV3 3GW

Directions: Take M6 to Junction 2. Take A46 south, and then turn left onto A45 towards Rugby. Turns left after about 200 yards, and then turn left after the Texaco Station into Brandon Lane. The Nature Centre is 1 mile along the lane.

Follow the brown signs. Entry Fees £2.50 for Adults & £1.50 for Concessions

See <http://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/brandon-marsh>

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*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 Devanneybuzzard@shropshirebirdscouk**

**Copy deadline for the Summer 2018 issue is: 1 August 2018**