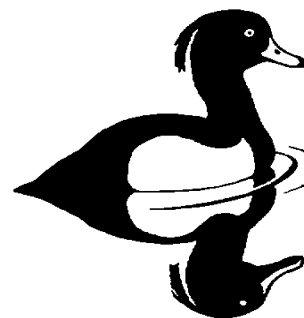


READING ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

ROC Newsletter

Summer 2004

No 26



Introduction

Welcome to the Summer edition of the newsletter (just in case you're confused, Summer is the time of the year when tennis gets rained off at Wimbledon!). I hope you have all had a fine Spring of birdwatching – my highlights included a great week spent on the fashionable birdwatching island of Lesvos and my first Berkshire Bird Race (although the less said about the result the better!)

Including with this newsletter is a flier for the upcoming Club coach trip to the Rutland Birdfair – an ideal opportunity to attend this popular annual event without having to make your own travel arrangements. Please contact Ray Reedman or Colin Wilson if you are interested in what should be a very enjoyable day.

Also for the first time I have included a review of bird sightings from around Berkshire, courtesy of Marek Walford. I hope you find this an interesting addition to the newsletter as I hope it will be a regular item – it's always good to learn of all the birds that you didn't get to see!

If you have any items for the next newsletter, please get them to me by the end of August - the next newsletter will go out with the membership mail shot in September - I am always pleased to receive any items that may be of interest to other members. I would like to thank all those people who have written and sent me items (with apologies to those who have sent in items that I have not been able to use) and also to Phil and Carole White who have helped me greatly with the mailings.

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Illustrations courtesy of Kingfisher Publications plc.

Chairman's Summer Message

I hope you are all enjoying the warm weather and still birding, even if it is limited to watching the young birds in the garden. The ROC has been busy over the last few months and I would like to mention a few things, some of which are mentioned elsewhere in this report.

We have traditionally left summer alone in our calendar but this year we have decided to offer a coach trip to the BirdFair at Rutland Water on 21 August. This is a big event and further details are with this Newsletter. We need to fill the coach to make it pay so please mark the calendar, come along and enjoy a day out with friends and see the Ospreys!

We are close to producing the 2002 Annual Report and still need advertising and promotional revenue. Members who would like to advertise their businesses or would simply like to publish words of support for a modest amount please contact me or Renton.

Our brand new website www.theroc.org.uk has launched and replaces the previous one so please update your 'Favourites'. I would like to offer the Club's sincere thanks to Chris Robinson who developed and managed our first excellent website. Chris now has his own business to run with all the time commitments that brings so Marek Walford, of www.berksbirds.co.uk fame has come forward and created and manages our new site for us. The two sites are linked to enable you to enjoy the benefits of each through either. For up to date news www.theroc.org.uk should be first stop for those with computers and internet access.

The Prudential has launched its consultation about the Kennet Valley Park development and rest assured we and other local groups will be inputting into the proposals to ensure birds are protected and habitats improved.

May I thank all those people who responded to my '10 ways to support the Club' in the last Newsletter. Many people have been generous in response and we greatly appreciate their support. We also have excellent volunteers to help us with publicity and our programme of events, Ruth Angus and Ray Reedman, respectively and we thank them for their considerable help already delivered, on behalf of all the members.

I hope you read and enjoy the Newsletter and look forward to seeing you all again in the Autumn, if not on the coach to Rutland Water! Meantime, if you fancy getting involved in activities, apart from coming to meetings, please volunteer, it is great fun!

Colin

Upcoming ROC Events

There are no Field Trips over the next month or so, but events start again in August – if you are interested in the Devon/Cornwall weekend please register your interest as soon as possible.

SATURDAY 21st AUGUST

Coach trip to the Rutland Birdfair

See flier for further information.

SUNDAY 22nd AUGUST

Titchfield Haven, Hampshire (Full day)

The nearest seaside reserve to Reading. Early return passage migrants should be on the move with plenty of butterflies and dragonflies to add to the interest. Meet at 9.00 am on the Meon sea front at Stubbington (SU533023). Leader: Colin Wilson (01252 837411) – Note change of leader from membership card

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH 2004

Theale Area Walk, Berkshire (Morning Only)

Excellent birding with a knowledgeable leader, on the edge of Reading. A regular TABCG event, on the 3rd Sunday of every month. Meet at 9:00am at Moatlands gravel pit, Theale (SU669702).

FRIDAY 15th to SUNDAY 17th OCTOBER

Devon and Cornwall (Weekend)

A weekend trip at the best time of the year for rarities in the West Country.

Details and leader to be announced, but please contact Ted Rogers (01344 883237) to register your interest.

Midweek Walks

There will be no midweek walks in July or August, but walks will restart in September - see appropriate Newsletter or check the web site (www.theroc.org.uk) for further details.

News from the Clubs

The annual Party in the Pastures will be taking place at Dinton Pastures on 11th July. It promises “an exciting mix of art, music and environmental fun for all the family”. Entrance is at the main car park at Dinton Pastures, starting at 11 am. Entry is free, but car parking costs £2. Friends of Lavells Lake will have a stand at the event, promoting the work of the group, holding quizzes for all levels and guided bird walks will happen throughout the day.

News from the TABCG

At **Hosehill** the interpretation boards are now in place and work on the willow screens around the Kingfisher bank is complete. The artificial island and rafts have been taken over by Black-headed Gulls, where some 54 nests have been built. Blackthorn and Hazel saplings have been planted on the west side near the gate and woodchip placed around the plantings to keep the weeds down. A strip of weed has been trimmed on the front edge of the island.

At **Main Pit** terns have moved onto the islands, possibly displaced from Hosehill by the gulls. Scrub and bramble

have been cleared at various points round the lake to improve the wind pattern for the Sailing Club

Upcoming Work Parties – After the summer break the next work party will be meadow clearance around Hosehill, on September 18th from 10am to 1pm (approx). All are welcome.

Dragonfly Sightings – if anyone has any records of dragonfly sightings from around the Reading area Derek McEwan would like to hear from you – he can be contacted via email at catherine@cmcewan.fsnet.co.uk

The 5th Annual Berkshire Bird Race took place in early May, with some 11 teams taking place. The results are shown elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Theale Area Bird Conservation Group always welcomes new members and anybody who can help out at work parties - please contact Brian Uttley for further info. (tel. Work - 01189 783783, Home - 01189 832894). The TABCG also meet on the first Tuesday of every month at the Englefield Social Club, a chance to meet other club members and listen to guest speakers.

Information courtesy of TABCG (with thanks to Cathy McEwan)

2004 Berkshire Bird Race

This year's competition was won by Fraser Cottington's team with an impressive 117 species raising hope that the long-standing 1990 record of 121 is beatable. The “bird of the day” award went to Andy Horscroft's team for Long-eared Owl. Not all of the sponsorship money has been collected yet but it thought that the event raised well over a thousand pounds. The money will be split equally between the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group and the Friends of Lavell's Lake.

The final scores are as follows:

1. Fraser Cottington, Adam Bassett, Andy Johnson (117)
2. Marek Walford, Mike McCarthy, Paul Bright-thomas (111)
3. Derek Barker, Eric Wooten, John Holt (109)
4. Andy Horscroft, Roger Stansfield, Gordon Wilson (104)
5. Richard Crawford, Ken Moore, Ken Spring (101)
6. Hugh Netley, Steve Ricks, Martin Hallam (100)
John Lerpiniere, Chris Robinson, Bruce Archer (100)
7. Robert Godden, Nick Godden, Rachel Godden (97)
8. John Andrews, Pete Hickman, Gwyn Evans (93)
9. Cathy McEwan, Derek McEwan, Ashley Stow (91)
Paul Cropper, Ted Rogers, Sue Charnley (91)

Fobney Lock and Island – a Reserve in the Making?

The Club has recently renewed discussions that Brian Uttley started some years ago with Reading Borough Council about the potential of the Fobney Lock area as a wetland nature reserve. Signs are positive. While the development of a reserve will be a long term project, the ROC is keen that as many people as possible visit the area and record birds seen there. These will help in designating the site as a reserve and in gaining financial support.

Our main area of interest is Fobney island itself which lies between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the river Kennet. The island itself and the fields north of the canal (Fobney and Coley meadows) flood in the winter and create a rich habitat for many birds species. A walk along the designated, signed paths in this area will show you reedbeds, meadows and hedgerow habitat surprising to find so close to the town centre.

We are looking at the possibility of some limited habitat management on the island in the short term, including mowing, baling and harrowing to create exposed mud. If you feel you would like to be involved in this new initiative at this early stage, or would like to contribute financially to the ROC Conservation Fund towards the cost of the work, please contact Renton Righelato who is currently managing this project for us. In particular, if you know a farmer or contractor who could help us do this work, preferably, on a non commercial basis, we would greatly value this help.

The best way to approach the Fobney Island area is to follow the signs to the local Civic Amenity Site (refuse tip) on the A33 and once in Island Road, turn right immediately before you enter the refuse amenity. At the end of this lane, past Manor Farm Cottages, you will find a rough piece of ground where you can park (SU705709) and follow footpaths to the lock, onto the canal bank and around the whole area.

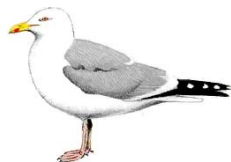
All records are valuable, they do not have to be rarities and we would like some for the summer as well as for the winter so any time is a good time to visit.

Enquiries please to Renton Righelato or Colin Wilson

Gull Identification Trip – 25th January

Gull-ability or Gullibility?

I vaguely remember a time when all white birds I saw anywhere near the sea were seagulls. Some time later, with a little knowledge gleaned from my Observers Book of Birds, I realised that not all seagulls were the same and so adopted the generic name of gulls, although still struggled to tell one species from another. Equipped with better field guides and a little more experience I started to differentiate between Black Headed Gulls, Common Gulls, Herring Gulls and the like with a degree of confidence, although,



with a fair proportion of all these gulls being in various stages of juvenile development, it was never easy. Now just when I thought I was getting a real grasp of things, I learn that there are also a number of sub-species, some of which seem to be heading towards full species status. For me, all large, pale grey winged gulls with black wing tips with white mirrors were Herring Gulls, but as anyone who attended the ROC Gull Identification evening last December will know, not all Herring Gulls are the same. For a start even the genuine Herring Gull consists of a number of sub-species, with the *argenteus* and *argentatus* being most often found in the UK. The similar but clearly different Yellow Legged Gull (or Yellow Legged Herring Gull as it used to be called!) is a separate species that I first came across on continental birding trips (but could only identify if it was well mannered enough to 'show a leg'). It doesn't stop there however – even the Yellow Legged Gull comes in different forms. The ever playful (or so the jizz experts will tell you) Caspian Gull is a variant which may soon achieve species status - it is distinguished by its elongated profile, longer wings and other subtler plumage features. Now you may think that there is not too much to remember here, but don't forget that Herring Gulls and other large gulls take at least three years to acquire adult plumage, leaving endless variations in juvenile plumage, along with differences between summer and winter plumages to contend with as well!

And so it was, brimming with all this new information, that a select few ROC members met up with gull expert Paul Bright Thomas in the car park at Farmoor Reservoir on the chosen Sunday afternoon. Afternoons are good times for winter gull watching as the birds return to the roost sites later in the day. Although the trip was set for late January, the feeling was that slightly earlier in the winter is better for spotting gulls such as Yellow Legged and Caspian as they acquire summer plumage (i.e. white heads) earlier than other Herring Gulls and hence are easier to pick out in a crowd when they have white heads and the Herring Gulls don't. We quickly moved on to the Dix Pit where we met up with our local expert Ian Lewington and soon picked out and identified a number of juvenile and adult Herring and Lesser Black Backed Gulls. We also picked out one Herring Gull that had even the experts puzzled (a fact that gave me some pleasure as I was struggling with the easier ones!). Leaving the mystery bird aside we moved on to some other likely pits in the area, where we quickly spotted an adult gull with a long bill, extended head shape, long wings and pale grey mantle endlessly splashing and preening on the lake. Surely this must be one of those playful Caspian Gulls, a suspicion that was confirmed by our expert leader (and we of course believed him!). Certainly the bird was quite distinctive, but whether I would have the confidence to pick out another unaided I have my doubts.

We then headed back to Farmoor in time for gulls arriving into the roost and were able to pick out a few Yellow Legged Gulls in the descending gloom, their white heads and slightly darker mantles showing quite well even in the poor light. No other interesting gulls were located (we could not possibly have missed the immature Glaucous Gull which was reported the following day, could we?). As the light failed we headed back to the car park, looking back on a very interesting afternoon, gaining an insight into this somewhat specialised aspect of bird watching. Many thanks go to Paul Bright Thomas and Ian Lewington for sharing their considerable knowledge with us. Now, what was that gull we found on Dix Pit ?

Ted Rogers

Trip to Pennington Marsh and the New Forest – Sunday 8th February

On a sunny but bracing morning, with a cold North-Westerly wind, 12 of us assembled at the small car park at the end of the lane adjacent to Pnnington Marsh. Brent Geese were flying about, and the flooded fields nearby were full of Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, lapwings and Golden Plover flocks. Walking along the sea wall, we found 2 Slavonian Grebes, some Mergansers, and a distant flock of Eider. The tide was very high, and the waders were all crammed onto the remaining areas of saltmarsh not under water. Suddenly a Peregrine was spotted, having just made a kill; the feathers were flying in all directions!

Further along, at one of the lagoons on the landward side of the sea wall, gulls and Shelduck were relaxing , when a chestnut-coloured bird was spotted among them – a Ruddy Shelduck – obviously of unknown origin, but interesting nevertheless.

As we were having lunch in the lee of a blackthorn thicket, a mild commotion was caused by a fox strolling through the assembled flocks, but not perturbing them unduly! Then, to everyone’s amazement, not one, but two Painted Ladies were observed flying around in the cold wind – what a welcome that must have been, compared with more favourable temperatures in North Africa or Southern Spain!

Then into the New Forest, to Blackwater Enclosure, where there is a small arboretum – very few birds about, but then at about 3.15pm the first hawfinch appeared on the top of a large conifer. In the course of the next hour or so, we saw about another 6 or so, including one in the middle of a large conifer, which had chosen to roost there; needless to say, when we peered at it closely, it decided to fly off elsewhere!



All in all, a successful day, although the number of birds in the New Forest was far less than expected, but we hit the main target species....

Martin Sell

Weekend Trip to Norfolk – 20th to 22nd February

I know that some people think that the mobile phone is an invention of the devil, but when you are leading a weekend trip to Norfolk and some 20 people are spread across 7 cars it does come into its own. As it happened every car had at least one mobile phone (and some people even had them switched on!), which allowed the usually harassed leader to keep in contact with everybody - at least most of the time.

The phones came into their own even before the meet-up at Abberton Reservoir, as a crash and resultant traffic jam on the M25 held up people en route. The causeway at Abberton greeted us with the usual chill wind and relatively few birds, with the highlight being Smew. Having warmed up and regrouped in the reserve centre we headed north to locate a splendid and typically well hidden Long Eared Owl at Lower Holbrook before moving on to Sizewell, where the wind off the sea made the Abberton causeway seem almost balmy. Our persistence in the face of trial by wind chill was rewarded by the distant sight of an Iceland Gull, hanging almost motionless in the wind near one of the towers.



Next stop was Westleton Heath where the reported northern race Long Tailed Tits had been reported for some time. Finding a small party of tits on a large heathland area was no simple task, but once found the

mobile phone came into its own again and everyone had good views of these truly delightful white headed birds (separate species they may not be, but lovely to see nevertheless). A quick stop at Great Yarmouth added the expected Mediterranean Gulls to the list, before we ended the day at the harrier roost site near Horsey. Both Hen and Marsh Harriers were seen along with several views of the famous Cranes as they flew into the reedbed.

After a warm and comfortable night we headed off once again into the cold wind at Hunstanton, where sea watching was somewhat disappointing, but fully justified our tucking into a hearty breakfast before setting off to Titchwell. This famous reserve produced its usual good mix of birds, although probably fewer than in previous years. Everyone located the now legendary Black Winged Stilt and other birds included Purple Sandpiper, Slavonian Grebe, Snow Bunting and Water Rail (although not all were seen by everyone in the group). At nearby Choseley most people managed good views of Tree Sparrows, a bird which is now almost a rarity, but a friendly local proudly told us that he has several nesting pairs in his garden.

Holkham held its customary selection of wild geese, along with a Rosses Goose and an elusive American Wigeon amongst its more common cousins. A long walk undertaken by some located a large flock of Snow Buntings in the Gap and the mobile phone soon spread the word to the now splintered group. The phone was also useful for telling some of our party that the birds had flown just before they were close enough to get even distant views! The day ended with a well earned pint in the Lifeboat Inn at Thornham, before returning to the hotel for dinner.

Early morning Sunday took us to Holme for a walk around the area near Gore Point. Our efforts were rewarded with a good number of waders, a flock of Twite and a Short Eared Owl hunting over the marsh. Breakfast once again lured us back to the hotel and conversation paused with the arrival of the 'best meal of the day'.

Now, we have been going to Norfolk for many years now and each year, without fail, we drive around a small triangle of roads near Sandringham known to birdwatchers as the Wolferton Triangle. The target bird here is the colourful, but elusive Golden Pheasant, which I had never seen before and frankly thought was something of a myth. Nevertheless we performed our usual slow kerb crawl around the area until a movement on the grass verge caught our eye. A glorious male Golden Pheasant had emerged from the rhododendrons; to be followed by two more and they gave us terrific views as they slowly walked across the road in front of us.

I once again resorted to the mobile phone to tell people what we were watching, but sadly on this occasion the birds disappeared before most of the rest of the group arrived!



A visit to Massingham Heath provided two (and later three) Rough Legged Buzzards as they flew around the hillside near the road, before we headed on to Linford Arboretum for views of Hawfinch feeding on the ground in the paddock. And so with a few more phone calls to bid farewell to the group the weekend came to an end. Certainly from a leader's perspective it had been a good and enjoyable trip, thanks in no small part to the diabolical mobile phone!

Ted Rogers

Portland Bill and Weymouth-Sunday 18th April 2004

This is always a good ROC trip and we provided two meeting times so people who were not too keen to get up early for seawatching could join us later and hear what they had missed!

The day ran true to form and even the early birds were too soon for our early arrival! A passage of skuas occurred just before we got there with Bonxie amongst them. Undeterred we faced South and seawatched with surprising good fortune as the number of Manx Shearwaters on the day was more than I had ever seen. We also enjoyed close views of the Razorbills and Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Gannets before the rain closed in and enjoying Wheatears and a Peregrine over the sea, we headed for shelter at the Café. From the path near the café we enjoyed close views of Purple Sandpiper, Rock Pipit and then a diver species flew past we failed to identify in the squall!

For about an hour we relaxed with coffee before making our way to Chesil beach at Ferrybridge to look for terns and waders. Only limited numbers of birds were seen including Turnstone, Dunlin and Ringed Plover and a possible Little Tern. As the weather was drying we travelled back towards the Bill as a Serin had been sighted. After a long search enjoying many Linnets and Whitethroat all the group finally saw the Serin so we tried our luck with a Hoopoe in a nearby garden. This was a failure but as it was dry and a pleasant walk no-one was complaining.

At Radipole nothing significant was reported but we walked the paths and found plenty of Cetti's Warblers, some Ruddy Duck and in the last hide a fine male Redstart which must have just landed and was in bramble over the reedbed. I think the only other bird to note was a Common Sandpiper found at Lodmoor although good close views were had of Ruddy Duck.

We travelled home very satisfied with our haul which, after the weather of mid-morning was very satisfactory. Another good day out with the ROC in one of the best areas in Southern England! Our thanks go to Ted Rogers for his excellent leadership on the day.

Colin Wilson

Berkshire Bird Sightings – April/May 2004

April

Long stayers included the summer plumage Red-necked Grebe at Wraysbury GP (till 22nd), the female Scaup at Bray GP (till 14th) and the Great Grey Shrike at West Ilsley (till 8th). On the 1st the White Stork, first seen the previous day flying over the M4 at Bray and later over the Jubilee River was seen flying over several sites in the Windsor area. It is thought to be the long-staying Kent bird of unknown origin. The next day a male Marsh Harrier flew over Lavell's Lake, with possibly the same bird seen later over Slough. On the same day an Avocet was at Pingewood GP and an Osprey flew over Theale GP. On the 3rd a Marsh Harrier flew over Wraysbury GP. Two Little Gull at Moor Green Lakes heralded the start of a good spring passage for the species. The next day an Osprey flew over Thatcham Marsh, a female Ring Ouzel was at Brightwalton and a Little Gull was at Theale GP (till 6th).

On the 7th a female Garganey and an Oystercatcher were at Pingewood GP. On 11th an Osprey flew over Wishmoor Bottom, an Oystercatcher was at Theale GP, a Jack Snipe was at Lavell's Lake and a second-year Ring-billed Gull was at Queen Mother Reservoir. The next day a Little Egret was at Burghfield GP (till 13th) when there was an Oystercatcher at Moor Green Lakes and Jack Snipe (till 14th). On the 14th a male Pied Flycatcher was at Whiteknights Park. The next day a summer plumage Water Pipit was at Pingewood GP and at Theale GP there was a Bar-tailed Godwit, 14 Little Gull and an Arctic Tern. Another Little Gull was at Queen Mother Reservoir on the same day. On the 16th a Little Egret and an Avocet were at Dorney Wetlands. The next day a pair of summer plumage Black-necked Grebes were displaying at Lower Farm GP, a Greenshank was at Moor Green Lakes, a Grasshopper Warbler was at Sandford (till 23rd) and a male Pied Flycatcher was at Theale GP. On the 18th there were two Black Terns and an Arctic Tern at Theale GP. The next day



four Whimbrel were at Wraysbury GP. On the 20th there were six Whimbrel at Lower Farm GP and another at Pingewood GP along with a Ruff (till 21st). On the same day there were two Arctic Tern and a Little Gull at Theale GP. The next day there was one Black Tern and one Arctic Tern at Theale GP. On the 22nd a Stone Curlew at Pingewood GP was only the third record away from breeding sites. On the same day there were two Whimbrel at Dorney Wetlands and a Greenshank at Lower Farm GP. The next day a Grasshopper Warbler was at Theale GP. On the 23rd a female Black Redstart was at Greenham Common and a Whimbrel was at Pingewood GP. The next day an impressive 27 Little Gull were at Theale GP and an Avocet flew over Burghfield GP. At Moor Green Lakes there was an Oystercatcher (till 28th), Whimbrel and a Grasshopper Warbler (till 26th). On the 27th a Great White Egret was seen by one lucky observer at Theale GP and will be only the second record for Berkshire if accepted. Three Arctic Tern were at the same site. The next day a male Montagu's Harrier flew over the M4 near Theale. At Theale GP there was a Whimbrel and an Arctic Tern. On the same day there were Iceland Gulls at Burghfield GP and Queen Mother Reservoir. On the 29th there was a Bar-tailed Godwit at Pingewood GP, a Greenshank at Lower Farm GP, a Kittiwake at Queen Mother Reservoir and two Arctic Tern at Theale GP. The month ended with four Arctic Tern at Theale GP, one Grey Plover and three Bar-tailed Godwit at Dorney Wetlands and another Bar-tailed Godwit at Moor Green Lakes.

May

The first day of the month turned out to be the best day of the spring. The highlight, for the lucky few who saw it was a Red-rumped Swallow at Moor Green Lakes. Dorney Wetlands had a particularly good day with Grey Plover, Snipe, four Dunlin, 13 Bar-tailed Godwit, nine Whimbrel, five Common Sandpiper, Turnstone, Little Tern, 30 Yellow Wagtail and four Wheatear. Elsewhere there was Ruff and 12 Black-tailed Godwit at Pingewood GP; Bar-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Little Gull at Moor Green Lakes; Turnstone and 12 Yellow Wagtail at Lower Farm GP; Little Gull (till 6th) and three Black Tern at Theale GP and a Wood Warbler at Windsor Great Park. The next day the highlight was three summer-plumaged Black-necked Grebes that spent the whole day at Theale GP. An Oystercatcher was at Lea Farm on the same day. On the 3rd a Black-tailed Godwit was at Pingewood GP, a Greenshank was at Woolhampton GP and three Arctic Tern were at Theale GP. On the 5th an Osprey flew over Thatcham Marsh. On the 7th there was an Oystercatcher at Moor Green Lakes and an Arctic Tern at Theale GP. The next day there was ten Arctic Tern at Dinton Pastures. On the 10th a Marsh Harrier flew over Dorney Wetlands when there was a Little Gull at Dinton Pastures (till 11th) and two Black Tern at Theale GP. The next day a Temminck's Stint was at Greenham Common. A Greenshank was at Dorney Wetlands on the 12th when there were two Whimbrel at Lower Farm GP and a Turnstone at Theale GP. The next day a Honey Buzzard flew over Streatley and two Little Gull were at Dinton Pastures (till 14th). On the 14th a Whimbrel was at Dinton Pastures. Five Black-tailed Godwit at Dorney Wetlands were a pleasant surprise for several bird race teams on the 15th and were still present on the 17th with one remaining till the 19th. On the 16th a drake Garganey was at Lower Farm GP and a Raven flew over Theale GP. Probably the best bird of the spring



was a Dotterel at Bury Down on the 17th (till 18th) – only the third modern day record and the first since 1990. The same day two Black Tern were at Theale GP. The next day two Oystercatcher were at Dorney Wetlands when there were three Whimbrel at Theale GP. On the 20th a Greenshank was at Pingewood GP (till 22nd). On the 23rd a drake Red-crested Pochard was at Bunnthouse Lane GP. The next day a drake Garganey was at Dorney Wetlands (till 26th). On the 26th a Black Tern was at Theale GP. The month ended with an un-seasonal Common Gull at Moor Green Lakes on the 27th.

Marek Walford