



Introduction	1
Photographic Competition 2013	1
Photographic Competition Rules 2013.....	2
Membership Renewal Reminder.....	2
Vote to Support the Bird Atlas.....	2
Ex-Treasurer's Report.....	3
Upcoming Events – Indoor Meetings.....	3
Sand Martin Colonies.....	3
BOC Coach Trip to Dungeness – 7th October.....	4
Weekend Trip to Norfolk – February 2013	4

Introduction

I am pleased to report that my garden now enjoys the regular visits of a Song Thrush that seems to have taken a liking to a small and slightly unkempt corner of the shrubbery (please don't let my wife hear me suggesting that any part of her garden is in any way unkempt!). I mention this fact not to brag, but more in hope that the charismatic species is continuing its slow comeback – the new Atlas will tell us more about how the species is doing in Berkshire in due course. Of course, if I wanted to brag I would undoubtedly be mentioning the Bramblings that have been around the garden for the last week or so (first seen on Oct 21st) which seems very early and may be an indicator of a hard winter to come, but more likely tells us that the beech mast crop in Scandinavia has been poor. Either way it seems that winter is fast approaching!

Please note that the next newsletter will go out in February 2013, so can I ask that any relevant items get to me by the end of January.

Ted Rogers (01344 883237)
8, Ranelagh Crescent
Ascot
SL5 8LW
Email: ted.rogers@berksoc.org.uk



Many thanks go to all contributors to this newsletter. Illustrations courtesy of Kingfisher Publications plc.

Photographic Competition 2013



The time is nearing when members need to start thinking about their entries to the 2013 competition. The rules have now been published in the Newsletter/ website so you have the chance to submit up to twelve images between the three categories. In 2012 a hard fought competition resulted in Brian Winter's hovering Kestrel winning the flight category and the Gordon Langsbury Memorial Trophy so, this year, will it be you? If you need any help in submitting your entries contact Colin (details shown in the Rules below), but remember, not every year has such fantastic images, so its always worth a try. As usual there will be voucher prizes for photographic or optical goodies for the winners and runners-up in each category.

In 2013 we are delighted to have David Cromack back again with a new judge, Margaret Welby. You can see more about Margaret on her website <http://www.margaretwelby.com/index.htm> but suffice it to say that she has considerable experience and skill in bird photography including winning a 'Highly Commended' in the very challenging BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition. With your entries we expect another great evening in 2013. For those who, like us, felt the projection of the images didn't help last year's competition we are working on changing the methods to improve your enjoyment of the entries).

Colin Wilson

Photographic Competition Rules 2013

In 2013, we are offering 3 digital photo categories in our competition so get shooting now

These are:

- ✦ Best bird portrait
- ✦ Best bird action or behaviour photograph (non flight)
- ✦ Best bird in flight

Each of the three categories will be judged and winners chosen by Dave Cromack and Margaret Welby. The meeting will then, on a show of hands, choose the overall winner who will win the new Gordon Langsbury Memorial Trophy, currently held by Brian Winter for his superb hovering Kestrel. Gift vouchers will be given in all categories for first place and second place. Additional prizes may be supplied on the night. You may enter photographs entered before if you wish, so if you think one didn't get the attention it deserved feel free to try again. We encourage newcomers to show their photographs, an experienced photographer certainly does not win every time! You just might have the picture to catch the judges attention! Due to time limitations on the night, we have changed the number of entries per section to just four, so you still have up to twelve chances to win prizes on the night so have a look through your photos and give it a go!

Overall rules

- ✦ Photographs will be of wild, non captive birds only
- ✦ The competition is open to paid up members of the BOC.
- ✦ No more than four entries per category per entrant.
- ✦ Entrants agree to any entered photographs being displayed by the BOC on its website and used for Club and competition publicity purposes, at the Club's discretion. This may entail use of images in national publications in which case BOC will request compensation is paid to photographers but will not be responsible for payment.
- ✦ The BOC will make all reasonable attempts to ensure acknowledgement is given to photographers whose work is used in this way.
- ✦ The Club will not permit any use of photographs for any other commercial reasons by any other party and will ensure full details are given of photographers to enable them to negotiate terms with any publisher.
- ✦ Photographs will be judged on all factors including exposure, colour cast, focus, composition and form. The decision of the judges is final.
- ✦ Limited image manipulation is permissible e.g. removal of a twig or blade of grass, but no major changes to the bird image itself. Adjustment to exposure, sharpening, colour correction, sensor dust spotting and cropping and resizing is acceptable.
- ✦ The images, regardless of file size, image size and resolution will be adapted by the BOC for presentation as they see fit but without responsibility for the results.

Closing date for entries is 20th February 2013. Images should be emailed to colin.wilson@berksoc.org.uk or sent on a CD to the following address: Blakeney, St. Catherine's Road, Frimley Green, Surrey, GU16 9NP. Any questions please telephone 01252 837411.

Membership Renewal Reminder

It is the time of year when the club is busy dealing with membership renewals and payments. The subscription was due on the 1st October, so if you haven't yet returned the renewal form sent to you in the August mailing, please don't forget! If you do not intend to renew, it would help us greatly if you let us know. Please note that if you do not pay by the end of March 2013 you will be removed from the membership list. About 70% of people who were members last year have already paid, and I know this percentage will increase when I see the statements for the remaining standing order payments. We have a few new members too. Thank you all for wanting to be a part of the BOC!

Heidi Bailey

Vote to Support the Bird Atlas

I am sure we are all looking forward to actually holding the Berkshire Bird Atlas in our hands in due course, but there is still some work to do in its preparation, and funds needed to complete our budget. However, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead have created a fund for local projects to apply to and if we were lucky enough to obtain the maximum sum, we would just about be there. Please, if you have not already done so, go to

http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/consultation_participatory_budgeting_voting.htm

and sign up. Use the 'Vote Now' link and tick our box (Berkshire Bird Atlas). One vote per pc is allowed and we have until December 4th to vote. All votes are important, but those from Borough residents are weighted higher. Thank you.

Brian Clews



Ex-Treasurer's Report

Many of you will know that I am no longer your Treasurer. I will present the Accounts at the AGM, but since 1 Oct Bill Nicoll has taken on the role of Hon. Treasurer. It will be he who will be in contact with those of you who have paid the wrong amount paid twice or not paid at all.

When clearing my desk I came across a "General Information" leaflet, which I date as about 1960. Our current and past Presidents may well have initials after their name, but can they match Sir John Wolfendon CBE, MA, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading, who was our Patron at that time.

The leaflet makes interesting reading and soon makes it clear that egg collectors are not admitted to membership. It defines the ROC recording area as within a 5 mile radius of Reading and a map of the Club Area is available at a cost of 2 shillings (10p). Reports were to be issued annually in the Spring of the year following the one with which it deals.

Honorary membership was available to eminent ornithologists and ordinary membership was available to adults who were not undergraduates. It was emphasised that membership affords scope for the aspiring scientific ornithologist, but "beginners are always welcome, and one of the primary aims of the Club is to assist them in those difficulties which are inevitably encountered in the early stages of becoming a birdwatcher."

The concluding paragraph reads "This leaflet is forwarded with the compliments of the Hon Secretary (Robert Gillmor) to whom applications for nomination to membership should be made by those who have not already a proposer and seconder for their nomination." I am left wondering if the Editor of our Newsletter would have found a proposer and seconder for his nomination to membership (but no doubt this will be edited out.)

I have been the Club Treasurer for almost 18 years, but the days of a soft pencil and rubber are no longer the tools of the modern Treasurer. I put mine back in my pencil case as Bill moves into the world of electronic accounts and, belatedly I am told, into the 21st century.

John Roberts

Editor's Note: As you can see, I did not edit out John's unprovoked and gratuitous attack on my good character in the above item. I will merely applaud Bill Nicoll's decision to take on the role of Club Treasurer – it is good to know that the Club's finances are now in safe hands ☺

Upcoming Events – Indoor Meetings

Do come along to the **AGM on Wednesday 21st November**. And if the AGM is not attractive enough it will be followed by a talk entitled "**Birding Catalonia**", an account of a trip in 2011, by Ted Rogers featuring photos by Photographic Competition winner Brian Winter. What more can I say?

The **Indoor Meeting on Dec 5th** is one not to be missed. **Ian Newton will be talking about Bird Migration** and if you've had even a brief look at Ian's superb volume in The New Naturalist series of books you will know why!

Our annual fun **Christmas Social and Quiz will take place on 12th December (not on the 2th as the membership card wrongly suggests!)** at 8pm in the Earley St Peter's Parish Rooms. You don't have to be an expert to enjoy the evening and you may well learn something along the way.

Sand Martin Colonies



Hannah Wickenden is researching for a PhD on the coevolution of Sand Martins and their fleas at Oxford Brookes University. An interesting feature of this topic is a hybrid zone between two subspecies of the Sand Martin flea that runs across the UK. To be able to carry out her research she needs to find large numbers Sand Martin colonies from a range of sites (river cliffs, quarries, artificial nest-holes, etc) all over the United Kingdom. The fleas (*Ceratophyllus styx styx* and *C. s. jordani*) over-winter in old nests, from which she will be collecting them following the southward migration of the sand martins to Africa and prior to their return in March. Thus there will be no disturbance of breeding birds. She will then be constructing a detailed map of the flea subspecies distribution across the UK.

If you have any information on the locations of Sand Martin colonies (past and present), she would be extremely grateful if you could send it to her at: SandMartinFleas@gmail.com.

BOC Coach Trip to Dungeness – 7th October

A very cold start belied a day which turned out to be perfect both in terms of weather and the birding. Even before we had reached the reserve we had seen two Marsh Harriers and within minutes of arriving in a hide we had found a late Curlew Sandpiper, two Little Stints, a flock of Golden Plovers, and hundreds of commoner ducks and water birds. A Greenland Wheatear, a really tall, sturdy, dark-bellied bird, appeared on the rough gravel near the path. Before we had reached Denge Marsh we had encountered Jay, Heron, Redwing, Kingfisher and Kestrel, as well as some Migrant Hawkers dragonflies, and a singing Cetti’s Warbler. A huge flock of Coots dominated the pool there, with a couple of Little Egrets, while the grass behind held a large flock of Greylags. We also watched the marsh from a raised viewpoint, where some of the group saw Bearded Tits and some managed to see the local Great Egret fly off into the distance. However a pair of Ravens performed a wonderful aerobatic display seen by all. Reed Warbler and Chiffchaff were added to the list there. As we walked back to the centre, a great flurry of Golden Plovers and Lapwings had us searching successfully for the cruising Peregrine. After that, we enjoyed the close spectacle of some fifty or so Great Black-backed, Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls roosting on the gravel. .



At about 1.45 we moved over to the lighthouse area. In front of the power station there was a Pied Wagtail, a Rock Pipit, and a Black Redstart, so we were happy even before we started on the sea-watch. Visibility was perfect over the sea and it was warm on the shingle ridge. Over the Patch (for the uninitiated that is where the cooling water wells up) there were several Common Terns and the odd Sandwich Tern among the Herring Gulls, but eventually Bill also spotted a Little Gull and we then found another. Further out we found a Red-throated Diver, then several Common Scoters, including a flock of twelve. Someone spotted regular movements of what turned out to be a number of Harbour Porpoises feeding a few hundred yards out – a wonderful bonus! Meanwhile, Gannets started to appear in moderate numbers, including one or two dark juveniles. I spotted an interesting silhouette coming in from the horizon and it

resolved into a dark-morph Arctic Skua, which eventually landed on the sea. We estimated from the short central tail-projection that it was a juvenile. When it lifted off about 15 minutes later we saw the wing-pattern and body-shape even more clearly. Before we had finished we had added a Razorbill and three skeins of Brent Geese, each with about thirty to forty birds, all moving west a bit off shore. As sea-watching goes, it was a wonderful session: visibility and comfort levels were perfect, while there were no end of birds to enjoy.

One final check around the power station and then we were off home, adding a Buzzard near Ashford. It had been a wonderful day – but what a crying shame that I had some empty seats in the coach when more could have enjoyed the day.

.....

Our next coach outing is on 2nd December, this time to RSPB Elmley, on the Isle of Sheppey, with pick-up at Reading and Bracknell. There we can expect a good selection of wintering raptors – Peregrine, Merlin, Marsh and Hen Harriers and Short-eared Owl are probable, and Rough-legged Buzzards often occur in the area. There could also be wintering wild geese and swans, plus plenty of waders, including one of the bigger flocks of Avocet on the Swayle. The coach size may be limited on this trip, so book soon, since many seats are already full. Tickets cost £20 and entry is free. Contact me on 0118 9864336.

In the New Year, there are RSPB coaches to Slimbridge on 20th January and Titchwell on 7th February. See the programme card and website for all details



Ray Reedman

Weekend Trip to Norfolk – February 2013

Unusually, the very popular trip to Norfolk on 7th to 10th February is undersubscribed at the point of writing. There are places for more people, especially, couples willing to share beds and or rooms! The cost of the weekend is roughly £120 per head for 3 nights B&B and two evening meals with another evening meal to be arranged (choice available at normal pub prices). The only other cost is a share of fuel, lunches and alcohol! We try to limit the number of cars so will try to provide lifts where possible. If you're interested in a varied birding weekend finding upwards of 100 to 120 species give Colin a ring on 01252 837411 or email at colin.wilson@berksoc.org.uk

Colin Wilson