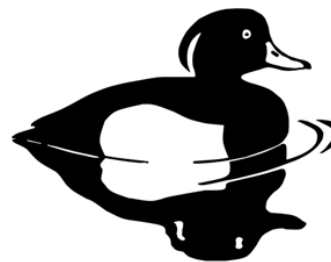


BOC Newsletter

Spring 2016

No 69



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Introduction

We are nearing the end of our winter indoor meeting programme but there are still two indoor events to look forward to. On Wednesday 6th April, in the Winch Room at Earley St Peter’s Hall, there will be a “Wildlife Photography Workshop” with Tom Way. However, although it is called a “workshop”, it promises a real treat with stunning photographs, and two talks entitled “The Wildlife on your Doorstep” and “Exciting Wildlife from around the World”. Starting at our usual time of 8pm, it should appeal to everybody whether photographer or not. If you need any convincing just visit Tom’s web site at www.tomwayphotography.co.uk

On Saturday 16th April between 2.30 and 5.00pm, again at Earley St Peter’s Hall, we are holding a “Social Afternoon” which will be open to all members, families and their guests. Please see below for more information about the event, and let Ray know if you plan on coming along so we can plan the event. There will be light refreshments, talks and displays and plenty of opportunity for everybody to meet up with fellow members and committee members for an informal chat.

Also don’t forget that the outdoor calendar of trips will continue through the spring and summer - mid-week walks, day trips by car, weekends away and coach trips. Please book the BOC coach trips with Ray as soon as possible to reserve your seat, although you can pay later. Please see the item later in this newsletter for a reminder of upcoming trips etc but ,wherever you go and whoever you go with, can I wish everyone a great spring and summer of birding.

Please get any items for the next newsletter to me by the end of June, as the next newsletter will go out with the annual mailshot in the summer.

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

Social Afternoon - Saturday 16th April

This new style of meeting seeks to provide a better opportunity for club members, their friends and friends to meet up socially and also provides the opportunity to discuss club activities with Committee members. We plan to be *in situ* at Earley St Peter’s community hall from 2.30 until 5.00pm. Feel free to drop in for half an hour or come for the afternoon. During the afternoon we will provide tea, coffee or juice and biscuits. If you wish to contribute, such as a cake, buns or jam tarts to the party, so much the better.

This will also be a good opportunity to bring any relevant item which you wish to sell: spare optical gear, a redundant camera, natural history books, etc: donations to the Club will be at your discretion, but the one condition will be that you take home with you any unsold items.

continued.....

There will also be a raffle, so if you wish to donate any prizes they will be welcome.

During the afternoon there will be two short presentations: Renton Righelato will talk about the activities of the Conservation sub-committee, and Chris Forster, will talk about invertebrates and their role as food items for birds. There will also be a chance to revise your warbler and other I.D. skills in time for the new season.

As we are flying blind, we do need to know roughly what sort of numbers will attend. Would you therefore let us know:

- a. whether you will be attending and how many of you
- b. whether you wish to sell any surplus items and what these are
- c. whether you wish to contribute refreshment, raffle prize or help with general organisation

Answers, please, as soon as possible, to **Ray Reedman :-**

Tel. 0118 9864338, email meander2@hotmail.com or text 07419 312134

Do please come along and make this an enjoyable and successful afternoon.

It is an experiment, but it is an attempt to provide a new dimension for your club.

Photographic Competition 2016 Results

As the judges said on the evening, the quality of the entries just keeps getting better and better, and certainly there were plenty of splendid pictures for the audience to enjoy, and the judges to comment on and mark. And there was not that much wrong with the pictures that had to be eliminated before the night either, as the audience could see when they were shown before the main competition judging started.

As usual the judges chose winners and runners-up in each of the three categories – Portrait, Action/Behaviour and Flight - before the audience voted to select the outright winner and new holder of the Gordon Langsbury Cup. The vote was unusually close, with each category winning picture having good support, and only after careful counting was a decision reached, with Mike McKee's stunning picture of a flying male Red-footed Falcon coming out on top.

Amazingly, when the actual names of the winners was announced, it was realised that Mike McKee had won each of the categories and hence he would have become the new trophy holder regardless of how the vote turned out!



The prize winners were as follows :-

Portrait Category :-

Winner : Mike McKee (Penduline Tit)

Runner-Up : Bill Watts (Lapwing)

Action/Behaviour Category :-

Winner : Mike McKee (Hoopoe)

Runner-Up : Ken White (Keel-billed Toucan)

Flight Category :-

Winner : Mike McKee (Red-footed Falcon)

Runner-Up : John Walker (Avocet)



Congratulations go to all of the prize winners, especially to Mike McKee for the quality of all of his pictures. And commiserations to all those who entered and went away empty handed - no doubt the comments of the judges will have helped to improve their chances for next year!

Thanks go to the judges, Dickie Duckett and Mike Lane, for all the effort that went into the difficult task of marking and selecting the winners, and to Colin Wilson for all his efforts in setting up the whole competition. More thanks are also due to Mike for the use of his projector which immeasurably improved the quality of the projected images and, no doubt, enhanced everyone's enjoyment of the evening.

Upcoming Trips and Excursions

*** Please note new contact for RSPB coach trips and change of leader for the Padworth Walk**

Thursday 14th April 2016 - Mid-week walk at COWLEAZE WOOD/ASTON ROWANT NR

There is a good chance of ring ouzels, but otherwise we will enjoy a lovely walk on some moderate gradients and see what we can find. Meet at 10.00 at Cowleaze Wood car park (2 miles north of Christmas Common, grid ref SU725955)
Contact Ray Reedman 0118 9864338

Thursday 21st April 2016 - Mid-week trip to FARMOOR RESERVOIR

Passage terns and hirundines can be present, along with a chance of little gulls, waders, wagtails and other passerines. The weather will dictate what we find, but the early start will increase our chances. Meet at 8.30 in the reservoir car park off Cumnor Rd. OX2 9NS (SP445065) (£2 payable on exit)
Contact Ray Reedman 0118 9864338. Leader Adrian Brown

Saturday 7th May 2016 - East Berks RSPB Weekend Coach trip to Dungeness - Cost £20

There could be all sorts still coming in, but some species will be settled on this special gravel habitat. Sea-watching from the shore can also be superb. Meet at 7.00 at Braywick Park (Braywick Sports Ground) Braywick Rd, Maidenhead, SL6 1DX (SU892798)

Book with Helen Pearson 01628 639648

Thurs 19th May 2016 - Mid-week trip by car to OTMOOR RSPB

This site is great for warblers, along with breeding waders, ducks etc. Cranes attempted to breed in 2015. Marsh harrier, hobbies turtle dove are possible. Dragonflies and butterflies too! Meet at car park at 7.30 (Access via Beckley down lane northwards near the Abingdon Arms). OX39TD is the closest reference (but go half a mile further north along Otmoor Lane to SP570126).

Contact Bill Nicoll treasurer@berksoc.org.uk 01344-455403

Thursday 9th June 2016 - Evening trip to PADWORTH

The main target is nightjar, but woodcock, owls and others are possible. Site not far from parking area. Expect to leave the site no earlier than 10.00 pm. Meet at 8.30 pm at the east of Padworth village in the top of Silver Lane: RG7 4QR (SU648652). Parking is limited, so car-sharing advised.

***Contact Ray Reedman 0118 9864338**

Sunday 19th June 2016 - BOC Coach trip to LAKENHEATH FEN

A superb place to stroll through marsh, riverside meadow and plane plantations. Bitterns, harriers, hobbies, cuckoos, bearded tits, dragonflies, butterflies and maybe barn owl, garganey, crane or even golden oriole! Cost £21. Depart at 7.00 Reading (Whiteknights Park, Main entrance) RG6 6UR Pick-up at 7.30 Braywick Park (Braywick Sports Ground) Braywick Rd, Maidenhead, SL6 1DX (SU892798)

Book with Ray Reedman 0118 9864338

Tuesday 28th June 2016 - Evening walk on the BERKSHIRE DOWNS at ALDWORTH

A good selection of downland species, along with the odd surprise - a badger and cubs in 2014! If it is a fine evening expect a late finish. Meet at 7.30 p.m. just past Starveall Farm (1 mile north of Aldworth, grid ref SU945560)

Contact Renton Righelato 0787 9812564

Saturday 20th August 2016 - BOC Weekend Coach trip to the BIRDFAIR at Rutland

This fixture provides something for everybody, with exhibitors and displays on everything to do with birding, interspersed with talks by top ornithologists and presenters. And great bird watching around the reserve as well, with ospreys top of the league. A truly great day out. Cost £35 incl. entry. Depart at 7.00 Reading (Whiteknights Park, Main entrance) RG6 6UR With pick-up at 7.30 at Braywick Park (Braywick Sports Ground) Braywick Rd, Maidenhead, SL6 1DX (SU892798)

Book with Ray Reedman 0118 9864338

BOC Excursion to Pennington - October 2015

At 8:30am, a small group comprising Carole White, John Hard and the leader assembled at the main car park at Keyhaven for the BOC excursion to Pennington. The settled weather pattern from the previous week was continuing, with a light north-easterly wind blowing and the rising temperature encouraged a Chiffchaff to sing quietly from a nearby sycamore. As we set off, John registered his request to see a Long-billed Dowitcher (one had been in the area for a few weeks but was generally elusive), plus a Yellow-browed Warbler and a Wryneck – no pressure then. The plan was to walk slowly and quietly along the inland track to the car park at the end of Lower Pennington Lane, and then return to Keyhaven along the seawall, which would fit in nicely with the high tide early afternoon. Other birders we met were intent on looking for the dowitcher on Fishtail Lagoon, and they set off in the opposite direction, but we stuck with our plan.

There were a number of gardens at the start of the track with lots of willow and sycamore, a habitat that looked enticing for migrants but we could only find Goldcrests, Chiffchaffs, Long-tailed Tits, Reed Buntings and a Coal Tit. The fields held large numbers of Curlew and a few Black-tailed Godwits, while several Teal, Wigeon and Shovelers were on the pools. We then met some birders looking closely at a section of hedge, and we learnt that they had just found a Wryneck, but it had dropped out of sight. The bare hawthorn bush where it was last seen looked perfect for a Wryneck so we waited and after 20 minutes it reappeared there, giving fantastic views of its beautiful mottled plumage in the telescope. It moved along the hedge and we watched it again perched on a low branch just above the bramble. By now we had all seen it well so we left it in peace and continued on our way, accompanied by a busy flock of Long-tailed Tits.



We turned right at the car park towards the seawall. More Curlew, Oystercatchers and duck were in the fields, and then a large bird of prey flew across distantly. We discounted the usual suspects, and when the bird turned away the white rump revealed it to be a Hen Harrier, a species that 20 years ago would have been higher up the list of possibilities to consider. We started to meet birders who had done the circuit in the opposite direction – no one had seen the dowitcher, but neither had they seen a Wryneck or Hen Harrier. We continued, noting a large flock of Greenfinches, a fine drake Pintail and a very rufous Wigeon on a nearby pool.



At the seawall, John pointed out a Kingfisher perched at the end of the jetty. It launched itself into the water, but returned empty-beaked. The tide was much higher than expected, and a few Turnstone were feeding on the narrow patch of seaweed below the seawall. The lagoon behind us held a few more Pintail, and many Teal and Snipe. Then Carole drew our attention to a different wader, somewhat similar to a godwit but with a perfectly straight bill. Well done Carole, we had found the Long-billed Dowitcher! We noted its strong white supercilium, nearly uniform grey upperparts, size intermediate between a godwit and a snipe, very long straight beak, and tertial feathers with smooth pale edges, a feature that rules out Short-billed Dowitcher.

The walk back to Keyhaven was relatively uneventful, with occasional views of Ravens flying past, more Pintail, Grey Plover and many Dunlin, and calling Water Rail and Cetti's Warblers. The sycamores in the town were checked for migrants; a Chiffchaff called but it was not possible to grant John the third species of his request so my autumn's tally of 76 Yellow-browed Warblers remained unchanged!! Nevertheless, all agreed that it had been a thoroughly successful and enjoyable excursion.

Robert Godden

BOC Trip to Titchfield Haven – December 2015

I led the BOC trip to Titchfield Haven nature reserve, we enjoyed a walk around the western side of the reserve, we saw the usual waders and ducks including Oystercatcher, Turnstones, Gadwall, Teal, Redshank and Lapwing, we enjoyed watching a Marsh Harrier quartering the reeds. We were lucky to see a flock of Bearded Tits near the entrance gate. A diver was seen on the sea and groups of Sanderling, Dunlin and turnstones roosting on the single at high tide. By lunchtime a dull grey day had become wet, so we adjourned to the Osborne View for our booked Christmas Meal which was enjoyed by all, it was nice to see some of our older members able to make it, including Dot and Ken Lincoln and Alan Woods. A very wet journey home finished the day.

Carole White

Close Encounter of the 'Lousey' Kind

We've probably all had had that feeling that something creepy/crawly has found its way on to our head somewhere. And so it was the other day in my back room at home when I felt something rummaging around in the hair on the back of my head. I was expecting the usual spider or something similar but whatever it was then either jumped or flew quickly away and seemed to disappear without trace. That is, until it then landed on my wife's neck, before apparently flying off again. A few minutes later it landed and attached itself on the side of my neck (showing itself to be some ugly sort of fly, less than a centimetre in length), where my wife's attempt to render it unconscious were unsuccessful (fortunately she missed me as well!). Whatever it was, it was proving to be a fairly tough and elusive customer and it made a rapid escape yet again. By now, my curiosity was aroused and I was keen to find out exactly what it was, and so, when it then landed and attached itself to my wife's neck, I selflessly asked her to stay still until I had captured it (using the classic combination of a glass and a piece of card). Needless to say she remained totally 'calm' through this, merely saying, in a slightly high-pitched voice, "can you get that horrible **** thing off me!"

Subsequent closer inspection and investigation (using the Web and my copy of the excellent Collin's "Guide to the Insects of Britain and Northern Europe" by Michael Chinery) I eventually found the mystery insect to be an *Ornithomyia avicularia* (pictured here). It is described as a sort of Louse Fly, a flattened blood-sucking parasite, which feeds on a wide variety of woodland birds, particularly young owls, pigeons and thrushes. It is certainly not something I have come across before – maybe people who handle birds e.g. bird ringers would know them. Suffice it to say that I did not take pity on it and it was not returned to the wild. But quite why it apparently mistook my luxuriant locks for the feathers of a bird will probably remain a mystery!



Ted Rogers

And Finally – the solution to the crossword in the last newsletter

Editor's Note: "Although I'm sure that you had all worked it out!"

1 R	H	2 E	A	3 D	4 E	L	5 T	6 A	7 N
8 O	9 T	U	10 S	U	L	11 Z	I	N	O
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K	R	14 H	A	N	D	15 S	A	16 W	D
T	S	O	17 R	O	18 S	E	19 M	A	Y
H	I	N	20 E	C	O	L	O	G	Y
21 R	22 A	I	L	K	R	B	U	T	23 I
U	N	A	I	24 C	A	Y	M	A	N
25 S	I	T	C	26 A	R	C	T	I	C
H	27 C	A	T	B	I	R	D	L	A