



EDITORIAL

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Welcome to our 93rd BOC Newsletter. As usual we kick off with our latest Conservation news from Neil, and Sean follows with a BTO update. We have two BOC trip reports: to Keyhaven and Kent. Ray discusses issues surrounding the naming conventions of bird species; is it really necessary or sensible to change their names in such a way that we lose the history behind them? Sally reminds us about Ray's Bird-ID video guides on our website. We spend a lot of time on some stunning images from our Photographic Competition – many thanks to Jane for revamping its format. Peter Driver challenges us with a mini crossword before finally, another selection of Andy's excellent photos!

REPORT FROM THE CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE APRIL 2024 **Neil Bucknell**

1 – SITE ISSUES

Padworth Lane – There have been some developments. Harleyfords (the gravel company that extracted the site, and who have primary responsibility for restoring the site) have now been in touch with ourselves and the Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT). They have said that the original plans discussed and agreed in principle between ourselves, CRT and their consultants back in 2019 are no longer viable. The issue is the cost of carrying out the extensive work to re-profile the bed of the lake to create islands, beaches and similar features. This would involve pumping out the water and importing a considerable volume of material.

CRT have indicated that after many years delay, they wanted to conclude matters as soon as possible, and have asked Harleyford to put forward alternative plans for consideration. A response is awaited, but we can expect a less ambitious scheme.

Dorney Wetlands - having chased up a response following up earlier offers to see if we could organise some volunteer help for work on this site, the Environment Agency has said that they currently do not have the resources to engage with us, but they have promised to contact us when this changes.

Lower Farm – Bob Lyle reported a positive meeting between NDOC and Newbury Racecourse, the new owners. They seem willing to cooperate in management of the site, and to want engagement elsewhere on the racecourse. However, they have acquired the pits as a reserve reservoir, so there may be issues with water levels at times of drought.

Other sites – I am helping the Goring Gap Environment Organisation who are hoping to establish a nature reserve at **Streatley Meadows LWS** – a site I watch a lot! Matters are at an early stage, and progress is likely to be linked with a planning application for extending the car park of the Swan Hotel, whose owners also own the site. Also, Des Sussex has drawn to our attention problems at **Wildmoor Heath**, where it appeared that a pond had been dug that was attracting dog-walkers who were disturbing the site. He has since heard from the ranger service at the council, who dug it, that it was for livestock, not dogs, and he will follow up to see if they are addressing the issue of dog disturbance.

2 - LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY (LNRS)

Under the Environment Act 2021, local authorities are required to formulate a strategy to plan nature restoration in their area. In Berkshire, the six unitary authorities have been grouped together to formulate a strategy for their combined area, with the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead as lead authority.

A program of public consultation is under way, starting with a series of meetings across the county during April, more details can be found here - www.rbwm.gov.uk/news/communities-invited-help-shape-berkshires-blueprint-nature-recovery.

The Club is participating actively in the process, and has made a written submission, a copy of which can be found on the club's website here - <http://berksoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/BERKSHIRE-LOCAL-NATURE-RECOVERY-STRATEGY-2023-Representations.pdf>. We hope that you will find this document helpful in informing any contribution you might wish to make and welcome your support for the suggestions we have made for planning nature restoration across the county.

3 – SURVEYS

We have submitted our reports on the Englefield and Sulham farmland surveys we undertook last year and been thanked by the landowners in each case. The Englefield survey indicated that wildlife friendly management had resulted in generally stable bird populations since the last surveys just over 10 years ago notwithstanding continuing declines nationally, and that the estate still has Lapwings and Grey Partridges, both species in decline locally. Sulham have asked us to follow up this year as they are now implementing their Biodiversity Net Gain plans, and we are repeating our surveys and Andrew Taylor is carrying out additional monitoring of their breeding Lapwings.

I had hoped to put in place a possible survey of Coots and Great Crested Grebes on the Thames, but devising a survey method has proven more complex than I first envisaged. Sean Murphy has offered his assistance, so I hope we can run something next year.

4 – CONSERVATION FUND AWARD TO LAVELL'S WETLAND TRUST– DOT LINCOLN LEGACY

The club was grateful to former member and Membership Secretary Dot Lincoln who died last year and made a gift to the club in her will to the club's Conservation Fund. We have sought a suitable project to support which can be dedicated to her memory.

We have now made a grant to Lavell's Wetland Trust, to fund the refurbishment of the Sand Martin bank at Lea Farm Lake, partly funded from Dot's legacy. The work is scheduled to be carried out later this year and will include a plaque honouring her memory.

The Conservation Sub-committee welcomes applications for grants.

The criteria we apply when considering applications for grants and the way to apply can be found here - <http://berksoc.org.uk/conservation/conservation-fund/>.

UPDATES AND NEWS FROM BTO

Sean T Murphy (s.murphy@cabi.org)

In 2023, one of BTO's core surveys, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), reached its 30th year! It was evolved from another long-running survey, the Common Bird Census (CBC) which was set up to monitor bird population changes in woodland and farmland habitats. Unfortunately, the CBC proved too intensive and had limited uptake; in addition, the nature of its design meant that derived population trends could not be easily extrapolated. Thus, in the early 1990s, the 'easier' BBS (for volunteers!) was created and because of the huge uptake nationally, has become the important (national) scheme for the monitoring of close to 120 of the UK's breeding birds. However, the vast dataset that has been amassed has also provided a valuable resource to produce other outputs including official government statistics that guide national conservation policy. For those who receive the magazine '*BTO News*' (Issue 350, Spring 2024), there is a full article on the past, present and future of the BBS by the National Coordinator, James Heywood. And of course, the 2024 breeding season for birds is rapidly approaching. Many thanks to all the volunteers in Berkshire who take part or have participated in the BBS. If anyone is interested in taking part in this important survey, please see the BBS web site (www.bto.org/bbs) and/or contact me.

The first survey of the new Winter Gull Roost Survey (WinGS – see the BOC December newsletter) took place in January. The background to the survey was given in the BOC December 2023 newsletter but briefly, this new survey is of wintering gulls and runs in the winters of 2023/24 and 2024/25 although there are some supplementary surveys planned for the autumn of this year. For the survey there are key sites (historically with more than 1000 gulls known to roost) and sample sites (other promising sites) and these are shown on the survey web homepage (www.bto.org/wings). Berkshire has six key sites: four have volunteers (Theale GPs; Moatlands GP; Burghfield GPs; Lower Caversham GP) but two are currently uncovered (Dinton Pastures and Queen Mother Reservoir). One of the sample sites, Loddon Nature Reserve is also covered. There has been some useful local feedback from the first survey and many thanks to those who provided this. An important point from those who covered the key sites in the Kennet

valley at Theale, Moatlands and Burghfield GPs was that the gull populations were moving between the sites quite frequently. Thus, for sites that are close to one another, agreement on the timing of a coordinated count will be necessary. More details about the survey, including how you can get involved if interested, can be found at www.bto.org/wings; or contact me.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, some preliminary results of the 2023 national Woodcock survey are now available. The 2023 survey was the largest of the three national surveys to date (the first two were 2003 and 2013). Nationally, 1230 random 1 km squares were covered. For the Berkshire region the allocated squares covered together with a summary of the Woodcock data are shown below:

| Total random squares allocated | % of squares covered | % occupied by Woodcock | Max Woodcock count recorded | Mean Woodcock count over occupied squares |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 34 | 50 | 53 | 21 | 11.9 |

Berkshire was one of the BTO survey regions where a high mean count of Woodcock were recorded. So, some woodlands in Berkshire seem to be very important for breeding Woodcock. Further information about the 2023 survey can be found at: www.bto.org/our-science/projects/woodcock-survey/results

Finally, news of a new survey that will be launched by BTO for 2025. This is the Urban Green Space Survey. Currently, there is much interest in the wildlife of urban areas given the gradual and continuing expansion of these areas. This new study is about how bird populations are faring. There are three main aims: 1) to assess importance of these spaces relative to UK bird populations; 2) to study optimal management options; and 3) to increase engagement with local communities. The initiative will be based on structured surveys and engagement surveys. The survey is still in the design phase, but the next steps are to publicize the initiative, develop stakeholder engagement (and build up a base of collaborators), and to run some pilot surveys to finalize survey designs. If there is any initial interest in the survey in Berkshire, please contact



Woodcock images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

On Sunday 3rd December 11 members met in the carpark at Reading University to be given the disappointing news that the minibus driver had cancelled just that morning. Nothing daunted, nine of us were still keen to go to Keyhaven and our leader Robert Godden quickly organized us into two carloads and we set off. It poured with rain for most of the journey and the forecast was not good but we started in dry conditions, quickly enjoying wonderful views of a Kingfisher perched in the harbour. We then scanned a marshy area where we had been told Water Pipit had been seen but none were showing. We did, however, have excellent views of Rock Pipit and Meadow Pipit. As we walked along a group of birders from the Hampshire RSPB local group pointed out a Spoonbill. In fact we had views of at least three Spoonbills and were delighted to find that, instead of the usual sleeping white blob, they were actively feeding and were also seen several times in flight. We had good views of a Grey Plover, Curlew, Turnstone and good numbers of Dunlin. There were large flocks of Dark-bellied Brent Geese as well as the usual Greylag and Canada Geese and a good number of Great Black-backed Gull. The lagoons held good numbers of Pintail as well as Wigeon, Teal and Shoveler and hawk-eyed James picked out a male Scaup among the Tufted Duck. He also found a female Goosander on the same lagoon.



Kingfisher; Copyright James Porter



Spoonbill; Copyright James Porter

Unfortunately, after about 30 minutes of dry weather the heavens opened. Despite the wet and windy conditions, two small black blobs on the sea revealed themselves to be Common Scoter, which then flew past. We also had excellent close views of a male Red-breasted Merganser.



Eight of the intrepid 11 BOC Birders "On the Wall"; Copyright Liz Carr

Robert managed to guide us to a more sheltered spot for lunch by which time the rain had stopped. We had excellent views of two Marsh Harrier and a Kestrel. Just before lunch some of the group had seen a Spotted Redshank and further round the path we came upon another, this time conveniently standing beside a Redshank. It was very useful to be able to compare the two species and to see the longer more slender bill and longer legs of the Spotted Redshank, dubbed the supermodel version by Peter. There were also several Greenshank.

Smaller birds were in rather short supply but we did have Stonechat, Reed Bunting, Greenfinch and Linnet and James had a possible sighting of two overflying Bearded Tits near the start of the walk.

Turning inland, the marshy areas revealed large flocks of Black-tailed Godwit and Golden Plover. A Sparrowhawk flew over and as we returned along the coast path the sun came out and a Peregrine swept over our heads, putting up flocks of Dunlin.

Scanning the marsh towards the end of the walk two pipits were seen, one of which looked tantalisingly like a Water Pipit. James managed to get several good shots of the bird but after much debate and some close scrutiny once home, the bird's true identity as another Rock Pipit was confirmed.

In all we saw over 60 species and grateful thanks are due to Robert and Karen Lynch for doing all the driving in wet and dark conditions. Without their kindness we would all have missed out on what turned out to be a really enjoyable trip.



The Keyhaven atmosphere; Copyright Liz Carr

Oare Marshes was the meeting point for the six BOC members on a pleasantly sunny trip to Kent. Straight out of the car, we were greeted by the sound of Mediterranean Gulls calling overhead and singing Reed Buntings and Cetti's Warblers. The field neighbouring the car park also provided good views of Skylark, Linnets and Meadow Pipits while we set up telescopes and prepared for a good walk.

Climbing the sea wall, a fifteen-minute scan of the Swale produced a small selection of waders, as well as Brent Geese and Great Crested Grebes. We started by following the sea wall round, where continued scans either side were rewarded by very distant views of a pair of Spoonbills on the far side.



Spoonbill amongst Cormorant; Copyright Karen Lynch

While waiting to see if Bearded Tits would put in an appearance (they did not), the group picked up a particularly pale wader in a group of roosting Redshank. On further inspection, brief views of its head proved this to be a Spotted Redshank, but we didn't get a good photograph. On reaching the hide, we



Redshank; Copyright Karen Lynch

we were given a proper opportunity to scan through the birds on the lagoon, which included a previously unseen juvenile Spoonbill, which gave excellent views as it preened. Just as we were thinking about moving on from the hide, a winter plumage Water Pipit was found feeding along the near edge of the lagoon. This was an excellent opportunity for members to gain familiarity with the identification features of this scarce and often confusing bird and was a new species for some members.

The final stretch of the circuit back to the car park added a few new species to the day list such as Snipe, Pintail and Green Woodpecker. Lunch was the next order of business. We found a sunny, sheltered spot on the sea wall in the other direction to where we had walked, and where Marsh Harriers and a pair of Great White Egrets provided entertainment. Deciding we weren't quite ready to leave just yet, we continued a short way along this stretch of sea wall, where a pair of summer plumage pipits were found in the salt marsh. Their pinkish breasts and strong white supercilium initially suggested Water Pipit, but upon further inspection it was decided they were Scandinavian Rock Pipits (ssp. *littoralis*), furthering our journey along the learning curve of separating these two species. We then headed back to the carpark to conclude our time at the Marshes.



Scandinavian Rock Pipit; Copyright Karen Lynch

However, the day was not over yet! The group headed to Godmersham Park, with one goal in mind – finding the Little Bunting seen there the previous month. After overcoming the challenges of locating first the car park, and then where the footpath was, we found the feeding station the bunting had been visiting.

The feeding station as well as the whole of the beautiful parkland site was alive with birds: Chaffinch, House Sparrow, and a variety of tits. Diligently searching through the birds visiting the station, five minutes passed without any sign, then ten, then fifteen... After a good twenty minutes wait, a bird was picked out deep inside the hedge that didn't look right for Reed Bunting. After a tantalising couple of minutes, it hopped up, and there it was, the Little Bunting! Luck was on our side, as it then repeatedly came down to feed on the ground, allowing every member of the group to get good views and photographic opportunities. This rarity was a new bird for the majority of the group, so made an excellent end to the day.



Little Bunting; Copyright James Porter

We concluded the day with a list of 75 species, a very respectable total, with many special and exciting species within that total.

The Names Behind the Names

Ray Reedman

Do bird names really matter? Clearly, I think that they do, which is why I wrote *Lapwings, Loons and Lousy Jacks* a few years ago. I was therefore rather pleased when, in 2021, the IOC formally gave us back the name Common Gull and removed the American name Mew Gull from international usage. However, it seemed that the Americans themselves no longer had use for a name which was probably older than the English Language itself: Lockwood tells us that it had certainly been used ever since the Anglo-Saxons colonised our islands, though Pennant abandoned it in 1768 in favour of the word gull. Mew survived because colonists had by then taken the word to America. For those historical reasons it seemed more than a trifle sad to witness its demise.

That story is behind the title of my new book (*ED: published 2nd April by Pelagic*): *The Vanishing Mew Gull*, which sets out to explore the names pertaining to almost 1100 species. My subtitle explains that it was conceived as 'a guide to the bird names of the Western Palaearctic'. It treats not only the vernacular names, but also the scientific names, presenting the birds themselves in modern taxonomic order and with some supporting information. All relevant aspects of a bird's names are collected around the bird itself and the content is carefully indexed to allow easy searches. Suffice it to say that no-one in his right mind would ever have taken the first step in such a task, but I simply felt that it needed to be done and I eventually had the time to do it. By the time you read this, it should be in print. Whew! And my grateful thanks to BOC's Neil Bucknell, for his pre-publication comments.

I had no sooner delivered my draft text to Pelagic Publishing last autumn than the news broke that the American Ornithological Society had decided to revise all American bird names based on those of people. Unfortunately for me there are plenty of American vagrants on the WP list that bear such names, so I had to prepare some rapid amendments. These names (eponyms) are represented by such as Franklin's Gull, Wilson's Phalarope and Blackburnian Warbler, so it is inevitable that these will eventually be replaced by new and unfamiliar names on our lists and in our handbooks. It will take a while of course, because the American list is rather loaded with such names. These proliferated in the 18th and 19th Centuries, when European settlers and their descendants were 'discovering' the wildlife of the continent. The current argument seems to be that some potential birders may be put off the hobby of birding by the fact that some of the names concerned had links with slavery, colonialism and the oppression of Native American peoples. Sadly, the decision removes all eponyms, whether worthy or unworthy, in a blanket revision that potentially pushes a swathe of historical evidence into the shadows. It seems a pity that the obscure origins of the name Baltimore Oriole put that name at risk: it is in fact a symbolic shorthand description, since its colours reminded Mark Catesby of the aristocratic livery of the Baltimore family who owned Maryland at the time. Also due to be removed is the one memorial to the unmarried 18th Century pioneer

female British naturalist, Mrs Anna Blackburne, who used the married title to ward off some of the misogyny of her day.

That of course leaves the question of what will replace those names. This surge of social conscience does not seem to include the possibility of reinstating some of the lost Native North American names, which are almost totally absent from the formal American lexicon. (Even the name of the symbolic Turkey, originally a wild American species, is rooted in a Tudor-era Old World confusion about the bird's origins.) We are instead promised names relevant to a birds' appearance or habitat. I am not so sure that the world needs any more names like Black-throated Blue Warbler, and I certainly do not fancy the 'shades of grey' options that face those replacing Bonaparte, Franklin and Sabine in the names of the gulls.

Let us be clear that the AOS has no jurisdiction over world bird names in general, or over eponyms found in scientific names (the latter are the province of the ICZN), but their decision will have repercussions. I have already seen comments from one or two sources that imply that it is not a bad idea to get rid of all the 'old fogies'. Bo Boelens, writing on the subject in *Birdwatching* magazine made a strong case for respecting the historical facts that are contained in such names and I thoroughly endorse that viewpoint, though I do not consider all such names to be sacrosanct: there even used to be a Ray's Wagtail (for John Ray) but that was set aside a long time ago.

In any case it is my contention that most of the eponyms relating to British and European species would pass the moral litmus test. Gilbert White of Selborne is one of my personal heroes among naturalists and he deserves his thrush. Francesco Cetti also potted fruitfully around his natural home, while I could not begrudge the Brehm family their right to name a new lark after their prematurely deceased daughter and sister, Thekla. Few people did more in modern times to understand and promote the petrels than did Alec Zino and Christian Jouanin, so their memorials are worthy ones. Writing on this topic in *Birdwatch*, Lucy McRobert recently asked, rather ironically: 'Who was Pallas anyway?' It is a good question, and I trust that she eventually found the giant of ornithology and exploration behind the name.

If that all sounds a little complacent about the moral case in America, it is not. I am just very uncomfortable about indiscriminate revisionism. In any case I have my own candidate for 'revision': Verreaux's Eagle is sometimes found in a corner of the Western Palaearctic. Its name records the Verreaux family, who collected widely in Africa for their taxidermy emporium in 19th Century Paris. In all fairness, they provided science with a great deal of valuable material, which is why they are recognised in the names of several species. For one horrendous act alone, the family name is forever tainted. Incredibly, Jules Verreaux exhumed the corpse of an African warrior and shipped it back to France where it was mounted as a specimen and exhibited in Paris. Even more incredibly, it remained on display in Spain until the 1990s, when it was finally returned and reinterred.

What's in a name? Plenty! Just remember that when you put on your wellingtons, Hoover the floor, trim your fuchsias, or even argue that the American action is Machiavellian. The truth is that the names of historical figures are deeply rooted in the very fabric of language and can tell a few stories.

Notes:

The late William Lockwood was a lecturer in German at Reading University and member of Reading Ornithological Club (now the BOC). He was author of the 1984: *Oxford Book of Bird Names*, which is an excellent reference for English vernacular names.

My other recommended references are James Jobling's incredible: *Dictionary of Scientific Bird names* (covering the whole world), and for American names Ernest Choate's 1973 work: *The Dictionary of American Bird Names*, a comprehensive coverage of vernacular and scientific names presented in a dictionary format.

IOC is the International Ornithologist's Committee, which is tasked with producing and maintaining a current list that reflects changes in taxonomy and nomenclature. Their Master Lists are available online and are under constant revision.

ICZN is the International Committee of Zoological Nomenclature, a body that oversees the structure and use of scientific names based on the Linnaean System.

Brush up Your Bird Id!

Sally Wearing

Whether you are new to birding or just want to brush up on some of your visual identification skills, we can help. One of our long-standing members, Ray Reedman, has given many informative talks in the past about how to identify birds. He has adapted his presentations to create a series of annotated visual 'tutorials', all of which are easily and freely available on our website. You can pick the types of birds you want to focus on, then view the presentations whenever you want and at your own pace. As well as basic identification, they include many tips about how to differentiate between similar species, and they finish with a quiz so you can test yourself.

We suggest you start with watching the introductory presentation, which gives a good overview of what is on offer. Then you can take your pick from waders, wildfowl, warblers, finches, buntings, larks, chats and many others! We hope you enjoy them. Find them at: <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/bird-id-guide/>

Ray Reedman



Membership Matters

Iain Oldcorn

Unfortunately, after a brief period of stability, the number of our members that support us financially continues to decline and now hovers just above the 250 mark. A number of members have encouraged their neighbours, friends and relatives to join in and support us, for which we are very grateful. If others among you could do the same that would be very helpful.

Our harrying of members that have not supported us financially since 10Oct2023 produced about 15 rewards. But, if you are one of the 20 or so that still haven't responded then this is likely to be your last Newsletter and we will shortly be removing your name from our membership records.

Our Treasurer Edwin says "We are very keen that all members pay by Standing Order as otherwise a lot of time is devoted to chasing members who have forgotten to pay.". If you don't already use this method perhaps you would consider doing so and thus avoid such issues; there's a suitable form [here](#) on our website, just fill it in and return it to me (address at foot of it), and we will then liaise with your bank to get your Standing Order set up for annual payments commencing from 1st October 2024.

BOC 2024 Photographic Competition

Jane Campbell

The club's recent photographic competition was great fun. Twenty seven members entered up to four pictures each which were all judged by Derek Gale. Derek is a professional photographer with extensive experience of presenting to and judging competitions at camera clubs. In the Portrait section Sue Truby's punk Cattle Egret was placed first and a Great Crested Grebe by Dave Rimes took the top spot in the Birds in Berkshire class. The winner of the Flight and Action category was Bryan Hutchings's beautiful image of a Green Backed Hillstar, this picture also took the audience vote for the Gordon Langsbury Memorial Trophy.

Feedback on the new format from both photographers and audience members was predominantly positive. For future competitions, the committee has agreed to use one professional judge and to reduce the number of entries per person from four to three.

Take a look at all the winners, runners up and commended photos, they are a delight. Many thanks to Derek for an informative and entertaining evening. *(ED: all photos Copyright of their named owners.)*

Portrait Section



Winner: Cattle Egret – Sue Truby

Birds in Berkshire Section



Winner: Great Crested Grebe – Dave Rimes



Runner Up: Great Reed Warbler – Marek Walford



Runner Up: Goldcrest – David Flory

Flight and Action Section



Runner Up: European Roller – Brian Winter

Flight and Action Section Winner



..... and Gordon Langsbury Trophy Winner: Green Backed Hillstar – Bryan Hutchings

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Here is a selection of audience quotes received:

'It was so nice to have comments on every entry. In the past, for obvious reasons, it wasn't possible to do this because of the number of entries but when your carefully selected photos didn't even get a mention it could be a bit discouraging even when you know you're not experienced. To have a professional photographer give positive comments on your pictures was very encouraging indeed.'

'To have one judge who was a professional photographer was so good. He carefully picked out the good points but also gave advice on what might have made a better picture. I found it really informative as well as thoroughly enjoyable. I do hope he comes back next year.'

'I was a little sceptical about the judge not being a wildlife photographer but it didn't really matter, he was very good on the technical aspects of photography.'

'I feel a pro is better as they will set and expect higher standards.'

'Prefer professional photographer with judging experience. It's a photography competition so the entries should be judged by a professional photographer.'

'Having one judge made it more efficient, but as these things are very subjective, having more than one judge may give a more objective result.'

'Fewer entries - good in that it allows all photos to be commented upon, but bad in that there didn't appear to be any pre-screening to weed out a very few really bad photos that were out of focus.'

'Personally I would prefer two judges as it can be very subjective so better to get an average of two opinions. I like the fewer entries as it's good to get feedback. As a total amateur (I just use the point and click technique!) a professional photographer as judge is not that important; I'd be happy just with other BOC members as judges.'

'I enjoyed the new format and it was nice to see all the entries submitted. As a keen amateur photographer, it was nice to hear a professional's opinion, which enabled me to pick up a few tips on how to improve for the next competition. The judge gave a fair review of each photograph and his criticism was constructive which was nice. In my opinion I would be happy to have one professional to judge in the future.'

'It was very useful having feedback from a professional photographer. I learned a lot from his presentation and his comments on all the photos.'

'It was good to have a very professional judge (BOC member or not), and I learnt a few technical things from him. He judged well enough but somewhat repetitive in pointing out the same "faults" in each photo. A bit of time management would have helped. Having two judges would probably make the repetition worse. However, I am in two minds whether we should have two judges. Two would make it less subjective, as they have to agree, without using a points scoring system. Perhaps a second judge would make it more balanced and if so, they should be a BOC member.'

'Perhaps the weeding out process should return, but skimmed through as has been done previously, to get to the better quality images quicker. It might be "inclusive" to have every photo shown, but I would hope that an entrant would learn the standard that has to be met.'

'I prefer the two judge format as I believe the dynamic interaction is valuable and interesting.'

'A professional photographer does add value but I think a Wildlife Photographer brings a different perspective.'

'Best photo competition night we've had since I joined!'

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On the next page the three commended photos from each of the three sections of the competition; in order and reading vertically, photos submitted by and copyright of: Nancy Massie, Dave Rimes, Nany Massie, Sue Truby, Paul Jaskulski, Mike Smith, Marilyn Hockey, Sue Truby & Rebecca Rees.



Quick Birdword **Peter Driver**

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- 1. Cairngorm grouse (9)
- 6. A subject of 'the feather speech' (5)
- 7. Evolve (5)
- 8. Successfully reintroduced (3,4)
- 10. Toted by wildfowler (3)
- 11. Abbreviation of 5 (3)
- 12. Protected area? (4)
- 13. BBS organiser (3)

Down

- 1. Perching birds
- 2. Maybe *flammeus* or *capensis* (4)
- 3. Pied or White maybe? (9)
- 4. It's White and it's not Little (5,5)
- 5. Creatures of the night? (9)
- 9. Teal, Pochard etc. (5)



Sedge Warbler: Sonning Meadows; 12Jun2023



Great Northern Diver: Theale MP; 3Nov023



Sandwich Terns: QMR; 29Aug2023



Common Scoter: Theale MP; 4Nov2023



Peregrine: QMR; 16Sep2023



Short-eared Owl: QMR; 20Dec2023

(Disclaimer: The views expressed in articles in this Newsletter are those of their respective authors and may not be representative of those of the BOC or of any of its Committee.)

**And lastly, a message from your committee:
We hope that you enjoyed the Easter break and are looking forward to the Summer.**