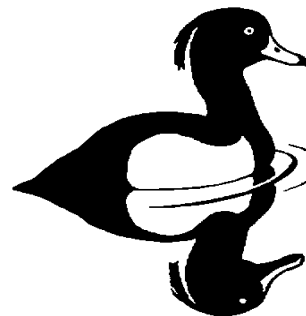


READING ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

ROC Newsletter

Summer 2005

No 30



Introduction

Welcome to the summer edition of the ROC newsletter, the 30th that I have produced - doesn't time fly when you are enjoying yourself !

With summer very much with us now, I hope you can look back on a good spring. My birding high and low lights this spring have involved birds of prey. Certainly some of the highlights were the Osprey which flew over Lavell's Lake on the morning of the bird song walk in May, along with Honey Buzzard and Goshawk seen during a brief visit to the New Forest. The lowlight was probably the Imperial Eagle which apparently flew close to our hire car on our trip to Hungary, the shame was that I was fast asleep in the front seat at the time! Still, the trip overall was excellent and no birdwatcher should get too hung up about the birds they have just missed!

You will see from other items in this newsletter that the Club is adding some new and exciting events to our calendar this year – please have a look and support as many events as you can.

The next newsletter will go out with the new season mail shot in September, so please get any items to me by the middle of August.

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

New Indoor Season

The new indoor season is due to open earlier this year, on September 14th with something really special...

We have managed to persuade **D I M (Ian) Wallace** to give just one more talk before he retires from such activities - a historic moment and not to be missed!

Observer, writer, and artist, Ian is one of the greats of British bird-watching. He started watching, in Reading, in the 1940s and has gone on to devote his life to the science, art and history of ornithology.

He has been chair of the British Birds Rarities Committee, is one of the authors of the mammoth reference work *Birds of the Western Palaearctic*, and is an author and illustrator of many other bird books. His illustrations are a delight to see, as art and because he is particularly adept at capturing the "jizz" of a bird in a painting or just a quick sketch.

He is a thoughtful and amusing critic and historian of ornithology (and some ornithologists!). Among the numerous books about bird-watching published in recent years, his history of bird-watching *cum* autobiography, *Beguiled by Birds*, stands out for its erudition and the generosity of illustration – several per page – and is a joy to read.

Ian will be giving a lecture entitled "**Bird-watching before Birding**" and will bring some of his books and paintings for sale. In addition, a new Robert Gillmor drawing will be the raffle prize for the evening.

We have reserved the large **ground-floor lecture theatre (G10) in the Palmer Building** of the University of Reading in order to invite members of other local birding organisations to join us. There will be plenty of room for other guests, so do encourage anyone who may be interested to come along. The guest fee for all visitors will be £3. Doors will open at 7.30 for 8 pm.

Coach trip to the Birdfair – Saturday August 20th

There are still some spaces left on the coach trip to the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland on Saturday August 20th. This trip has been organised by the ROC, in consultation with NDOC and East Berks RSPB. Non-members are welcome.

The first pick of the day will be at the Wharfe, Newbury at 6.30 a.m., then at 7.00 a.m. in Reading at the main entrance to Whiteknights Park (park in Elmhurst Road) and do a final pick up at Bray Nature Centre at about 7.20 a.m. The cost of £25 will include group entry rate to the event. We expect to have about 7 hours there. Come along to enjoy a huge exhibition of bird art, photography, equipment, travel etc. and to see regular denizens of the site: Tree Sparrows, migrant waders and, maybe, one of the several Ospreys. Note: this will be a full-sized coach with toilet and there will also be a short break at a service area.

Contact Ray Reedman (tel. 0118 9864338, email: meander2@hotmail.com)

Kingfisher Survey Reminder

Please remember that the Kingfisher survey ends on July 31st. If you haven't already done so, please get your records in as soon as possible either by email to kingfishersurvey@theroc.org.uk, or by post to Chris Robinson, 2 Beckfords, Upper Basildon, Reading RG8 8PB

Many thanks - Chris Robinson

Proposed Drawing and Painting Day, 2006

I have been in contact with wildlife artist, Antonia Phillips, to discuss the idea of a day devoted to practical bird art skills. The suggestion is that we form a group of about nine people to arrange a day's activity in drawing and painting birds with exclusive use of a hide on Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour. I anticipate that we will get about seven hours of practical work in this superb environment, under the expert tuition of a professional who specialises in that area of wildlife art. There is no entry level required, other than a desire to develop a desirable skill.

The cost will be in the region of £20-£25 per person and the date will be arranged for a mutually convenient time during the summer/autumn of 2006.

Clearly this is still a tentative idea to be fleshed out, so, prior to pursuing arrangements, I should like to hear as soon as possible from anyone who would like to consider such a day.

You can phone me on 0118 9864338 or email me at meander2@hotmail.com

Ray Reedman

Photographic Competition

This year's Photographic Evening (on 23rd February) was again a great success, with a new digital section being introduced for the first time (which attracted 39 entries). There were four categories allowed: digital, slides (bird portrait), slides (birds in habitat), slides (composition and form). The winner of the Gordon Langsbury Cup, voted by the members present from each of the category winners, was Dickie Duckett for his superb portrayal of a pair of Black-browed Albatross' in their native habitat in the Falklands, which is shown here.

For much better views of the various winning pictures please have a look at the Club's Web site at www.theroc.org.uk

The category winners were as follows:-

Digital section

Winner : "Swooping Red Kite"
by Mike Smith

Runner-up: "Skuas fighting"
by Dickie Duckett

Slides - Bird Portraits

Winner: "Avocet Aggro!" by Mike Smith

Runner-up: "Black-browed Albatross" by Dickie Duckett

Slides - Birds in habitat

Winner: "Black-browed Albatross (pair)" by Dickie Duckett

Runner-up: "Olivaceous Warbler singing" by Dickie Duckett

Slides - Composition and Form

Winner: "Hippos" by Alastair Mackay

Runner-up: "Last light" by Mike Smith



Upcoming Trips and Outings

Coach trip to Titchwell RSPB Reserve

We have recently been working more closely with other groups to plan coach trips. This is both cost-effective and helps to avoid the need to cancel through lack of numbers. This year we have built into our programme three very attractive coach outings organised by the East Berks RSPB in conjunction with BBOWT. The first of these is already taking bookings, so don't miss out on a great day's bird-watching at a prime site. Details are below: Saturday 10th September 2005

Full day coach outing to Titchwell RSPB Norfolk

One of the best sites for autumn-passage birds, resident bearded tits and a lot more.

(Organised by East Berks RSPB - pick-up at Bray Nature Centre) The cost of the trip is £16.00 per person. Contact Ernie Allen on 01628 625324

September 2005 Mid-week Walk

There has been a change of date for this walk, which will now take place on the 22nd September. Not this time the third Thursday! The reason for the change is the lack of people available to lead or drive on the previously advertised date.

The plan is to kick start the autumn season with a whole day visit, mid week, to Titchfield Haven on the Solent, with enough drivers to take people who do not drive or are no longer willing to tackle longer distances, for a good whole day outing, that is not too strenuous. There are six hides, so those who want to sit and rest will have plenty of opportunity. Bird watching along the sea front or just walking can also be rewarding.

There is an entry charge of £3 or £3.50. There are toilets and there is a good little café for drinks and cakes, and they can also do hot lunches, but we would probably have to book for these. Or people can take a picnic and sit along the sea front, or outside the café.

An indication of definite interest (without final commitment), along with any offers of willingness to drive others, or the need for transport, would be appreciated a.s.a.p after the arrival of this newsletter, so that provisional arrangements can be made. E-mail me on dot.lincoln@btinternet.com or phone on 0118 942 7563 (latter is probably a more reliable method as my e-mail system seems rather temperamental in spite of paying to have it sorted out). I hope to be able to confirm all arrangements by the Birdfair on the 20th August and in time for the September newsletter.

Dot Lincoln

Bird News (courtesy of Marek Walford & BerksBirds)

April

On the 1st a drake Pintail was at Lower Farm GP, a female Scaup was at Woolhampton GP and Oystercatchers were at Greenham Common and Moor Green Lakes. The next day a Jack Snipe was at Moor Green Lakes (till 11th) and a Water Pipit was at Pingewood GP. On the 3rd Curlews flew over Theale GP and Windsor and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was drumming at Bagnor Cressbeds. On the 12th the first Grasshopper Warbler of the year was reeling at Lavell's Lake where it stayed throughout the month. On the 5th a first-winter Mediterranean Gull was at Moor Green Lakes (till 7th). The next day a Red-crested Pochard was at Burghfield GP. On the 8th 25 Waxwings were in Slough and 15 were at Bray GP. The following day 2 Waxwings were in Moose Hill and a Peregrine was at Englefield. On the 10th a Curlew was at Lower Farm GP and Oystercatchers were at Moor Green Lakes and Lavell's Lake. At the latter site there was a Peregrine and a male Marsh Harrier drifted north. The next day 2 Red-crested Pochard were at Burghfield GP. On the 13th 2 Waxwings were at Binfield and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was feeding on reed mace at Moor Green Lakes (till 28th). On the 15th 2 Ring Ouzel were at Combe Hill. On the 17th 55 Waxwings were at Thatcham and an Oystercatcher flew over Windsor. The next day a Little Gull was at Theale GP (till 22nd), a Whimbrel was at Moor Green Lakes and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was at Bowdown Woods. On the 19th an adult Mediterranean Gull and a Little Gull were at Moor Green Lakes and a redhead Red-breasted Merganser and a Black Tern were at Theale GP. The next day a Curlew (till 21st) and a Short-eared Owl were at Moor Green Lakes. On the 21st an Oystercatcher was at Dorney Wetlands and 4 Waxwings were at Speen. The next day a Whimbrel was at Moor Green Lakes with another at QMR along with 33 Little Gulls. On the 23rd a Whimbrel was at Lower Farm GP and 5 Little Gulls were at Moor Green Lakes. The next day 2 Little Egret were at Boxford, a Greenshank was at Moor Green Lakes, 4 Little Gulls were at Brimpton GP and 10 were at Theale GP. On the 25th a Black-necked Grebe was at Theale GP along with 3 Black Tern, 2 Arctic Tern and a Short-eared Owl and another, or the same Short-eared Owl was at Moor Green Lakes. The next day a Black-tailed Godwit was at Lower Farm GP (till 30th), a Peregrine was at Moor Green Lakes and 2 Waxwings were at Newbury. On the 27th a Grasshopper Warbler was reeling at Wraybury GP. The next day a Whimbrel and a Little Gull were at Moor Green Lakes, 14 Waxwings were at Binfield and a male Ring Ouzel was at Broadmoor Farm, Crowthorne. On the 29th an Oystercatcher and 2 Turnstone were at Dorney Wetlands and a single Waxwing remained at Binfield. The last day of the month was an excellent day for passage waders. The highlight was 2 males and a female Dotterel in a bean field



at Pingewood with an Oystercatcher, 4 Whimbrel and a Spotted Redshank on the adjacent gravel pits. Elsewhere there was 4 Whimbrel and a Sanderling at Lower Farm GP; 2 Turnstone and a Whimbrel at Dorney Wetlands; Whimbrel at Woolhampton GP and Greenshank at Moor Green Lakes. Other notable birds were a Black Tern at Woolhampton GP, a Mediterranean Gull and a Grasshopper Warbler at Moor Green Lakes and an Arctic Tern at Theale GP.

May

The Lavell's Lake Grasshopper was heard reeling throughout May and another was reeling at Wraybury GP on the 1st. Also on the 1st an Osprey flew over Lavell's Lake, a Oystercatcher was at Pingewood GP, a Whimbrel was at Moor Green Lakes and 2 Greenshank were at Dorney Wetlands. The following day a Whimbrel was at Pingewood GP. On the 3rd a Sandwich Tern and a Whimbrel were at Theale GP. On the 4th large numbers of terns were recorded including 60+ Arctic Terns at Theale GP along with a summer plumage Little Gull and an adult Kittiwake. The following day 36 Arctic Terns and 2 Little Gulls were at Dinton Pastures and an Oystercatcher was at Theale GP. On the 7th a Little Egret was at Lavell's Lake (till 8th) and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was at Moor Green Lakes. The next day an Arctic Tern was at Dinton Pastures, a Curlew flew over Bagnor Cressbeds and 4 Little Gulls were at Dorney Wetlands. On the 9th a Greenshank was at Moor Green Lakes. The next day an Osprey flew over Dorney Wetlands where a Ruff was present. On the 11th 4 Wood Sandpiper were at Pingewood GP. The following day a drake Garganey and a Little Egret were at Lavell's Lake and a Curlew Sandpiper was at Dorney Wetlands. On the 13th a Black Tern was at Theale GP, a Kittiwake was at QMR and a Greenshank was at Dorney Wetlands. The following day a Temminck's Stint was at Horton GP (till 15th), 4 Greenshank were at Moor Green Lakes, a first-summer Caspian Gull was at Theale GP, 2 Black Tern were at Woolhampton GP and a pair of Black-necked Grebes were at Lower Farm GP (till 17th). On the 15th 2 Little Egret were at Great Shefford and an Oystercatcher was at Moor Green Lakes. On the 18th a Temminck's Stint was at Dorney Wetlands (till 20th). On the 20th a Black Tern was at Moor Green Lakes. The following day a Whiskered Tern, a first for Berkshire, was at Moor Green Lakes early in the morning before spending the day at Tundry Pond (Hants) and returning to roost at Moor Green in the evening. It was still present the following morning before moving to Staines Res (Surrey) before paying a return visit to Moor Green on the 27th. Also at Moor Green on the 21st was a first-summer Mediterranean Gull and a Greenshank (till 26th). The following day an Oystercatcher was at Moor Green Lakes. On the 23rd a Little Tern was at Greenham Common. On the 25th a Little Gull was at Moor Green Lakes. On the 29th a family party of 10 Crossbills was at Wildmoor Heath.

June

An amazing June record was a male Ring Ouzel in a Finchampstead garden on the 2nd (till 4th). The next day a Little Egret was at Moor Green Lakes. On the 4th a Black-tailed Godwit was at Theale GP (till 5th) and an Oystercatcher was at Twyford GP. The next day a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was at Bowdown Woods. The Grasshopper Warbler was heard reeling at Lavell's Lake on the 6th and on a few other dates during June. On the 11th 3 Red-crested Pochard were at Burghfield GP, a Greenshank was at Moor Green Lakes and an Oystercatcher was at Lavell's Lake. The following day a summer plumage Black Tern was at Dinton Pastures. On the 15th a first-summer Mediterranean Gull was at QMR and a Little Gull was at Wraysbury GP. On the 25th a Sandwich Tern was at Lower Farm GP and a Curlew was at Moor Green Lakes. The next day a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was feeding a juvenile in a Woodley garden and on the 29th a male and a juvenile were seen in a different Woodley garden. On the last day of the month 3 Greenshank were at Dorney Wetlands.



News from the TABCG

At Hosehill early spring work included scrub clearance and continued work on the paths around the lake, although adverse weather made the job more difficult. Sadly, vandalism has been a problem on the site over the last few months, with damage being done to the bird table and notice board, along with the record book (which was ripped up and thrown into the lake). The orchids around the Pond have also been picked, despite being netted off. On the plus side, efforts to control the weeds on the island have been rewarded with terns nesting on the gravel areas. Island clearance was also carried out on Moatlands island. It is indicative of the hard work done by the group that, after 9 year's sterling service, the group's strimmer finally span for the last time. Club funds have been used to buy a replacement for this invaluable piece of equipment.

At the end of March over a dozen members attended the meeting about the Prudential development proposals. Colin Wilson gave a presentation on the Wildlife in the area under threat and each of the local groups represented had a chance to air their concerns. In summary, there was widespread agreement (Environment Agency included) with the view that, although housing is badly needed in the area, this was not the place to put it. It is possible that the proposals will be re-presented as part of a future structure plan, so vigilance will continue to be needed.

Eleven teams took part in the Berkshire Bird Race held in early May and, after a close fought contest, a new team got it's name on the trophy. There were fewer species spotted this year, but the team of Bruce Archer, John Lerpiniere and Tim Ball won with 106 species. Special mention should be made of the team of Chris Robinson, Jim Burnett and Renton Righelato who scored an excellent 95 species with the entire day completed on bicycle!

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)

Car Thefts and Break-ins

Local birdwatchers seem to be subject to a spate of thefts from cars, sometimes just damage with nothing taken. Reports from local birdwatchers in Berkshire confirm places that are known birdwatching sites are particularly vulnerable such as Moor Green Lakes, Snelsmore Common and Dinton Pastures. Several times a red car has been noted and a person seen breaking a car window, even a registration number noted, but the police have not been able to stop the activity.

We all need to be aware of suspicious activity. In an effort to help I am willing to collect any evidence or information you have, including potentially suspicious behaviour and use it to help police on investigation. We also need to watch out for second hand equipment as the stolen goods have to be turned into money eventually. I prefer you send any information by email to colin.wilson@theroc.org.uk. It's only by working together we can do something about this.

Slide Projector for Sale

Alan Lott has some surplus equipment for sale:
Kodak Carousel 35mm slide projector (Model SAV 2010), with 3 Meridian lenses - f/3.5 70-120mm zoom, f/2.8 f=35mm fixed, f/3.5 f=180 fixed. He is looking for £125 for this equipment, which is in mint condition and also includes mains lead, remote control lead and original Kodak carrying case. Alan can be contacted on 0118 9473924.

Presentation to Peter Standley

At the indoor meeting on March 9th the opportunity was taken to present Peter with a special award for his many (almost countless, but apparently 40!) years he has been the Recorder for both the Club and the County. As you will know Peter has now relinquished these roles, although is still continuing to help and lend support in the production of the various annual bird reports. Appropriately, Peter was presented with a Robert Gillmor painting.

In Peter's own words:

"I would like to thank members of the ROC for their presentation at the March meeting of a lovely picture by Robert Gillmor of a Kingfisher on alders in winter. It will be a lasting memory of my many happy years as Recorder and is greatly appreciated"