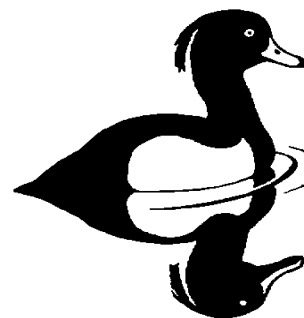


# READING ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

## ROC Newsletter

Spring 2006

No 33



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### **Introduction**

Looking out of the window it does look as if Spring has finally sprung, the sun shining and the sky blue. None of which explains why, when you venture out of the door, it feels so cold! Well, at least some of our summer visitors have decided that it is time to visit, with warblers and hirundines now arriving in numbers. All of which makes me think that we should all be out there enjoying the birds while we can. But, for those who can't get out, there is always the ROC Garden Bird Survey, the forms for which are included with this newsletter – I hope that many of you will continue to take part in this and the various other surveying work that the Club promotes. Either way I hope you have an enjoyable (and warm!) Spring.

All contributions to the newsletter are much appreciated – please get contributions for the Summer edition of the newsletter to me by Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

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

### **Bosnia & Herzegovena - Raising the profile of birds and ecological issues**

Trish Marcouse from Reading Urban Wildlife Group is working in Bosnia, helping them to start a birdwatching society and to record birds in the country. It is starting from virtually nothing. They have a childrens guide to birds, just published and are establishing 2 eco-schools. They badly need computers (Pentium 3 or above) and fieldguides, binoculars etc to help them. The binoculars can be of second quality as they will be better than nothing!

Ray Reedman has sought the help of the RAF to airlift items at no cost for this purpose so we are able to really help. I am personally donating a fieldguide (the old Collins Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe, Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom is favoured as they have a translation) but any guides with pictures would be helpful. I am also donating some old Swift binoculars. Do you think you can help also?

If you have something you think you can donate please bring it to a ROC meeting or hand it to a member of the Committee and they will get it to me. It would be good if the ROC could join the RUWG, who have given two computers already, and make Reading a recognised place for help to this project. If you want any more information please contact Colin on 01252 837411.



### **Social Event – Calling all golfers**

Do we have sufficient golfers in our membership to warrant a day of friendly competition ? John Roberts is willing to organise the event if there is sufficient interest. Please contact him at a meeting or on 0118 9482137.

### **Annual Photographic Competition**

The Club photographic evening took place on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and , as always, proved to be a thoroughly interesting and enjoyable evening, with the two judges (Gordon Langsbury and Dickie Duckett) rating the pictures and adding comments and constructive criticism. Speaking as a non-photographer, I always enjoy these events, if only to see how the judges rate the pictures and comparing my own (totally amateur) opinions with theirs (not that I would have the temerity to disagree of course!). There were some 75 entries spread across the 3 digital sections, while the 35mm slide entry attracted over 30 entries. As always the standard was very high and all entrants are to be congratulated on their efforts.

In the **Digital Portrait Section**, the winner was Dave Massie for a cracking shot of a Blue-tailed Bee-eater, with the runner-up prize also going to Dave for his picture of a White-throated Coucal.

In the **Digital Action Section**, Mike Smith took the top prize for his fantastic shot of two Mute Swans in flight, and Mike also took the runner-up with his picture of Waxwings.

In the **Digiscope Section**, Marek Walford took the top slot with a lovely shot of a Great Crested Grebe with a cargo of young, with Colin Wilson just missing out with his Grey Wagtail picture.

The **Slide Section** gave us a different winner with Alistair Mackay taking the top prize with his super portrait of a Whimbrel, while Dave Massie took the runner-up award with his Short Toed Eagle.

With all the Section winners being decided by the two judges, it was left to the audience to choose the Overall Winner and congratulations and the Cup went to Mike Smith for his superb Mute Swan picture.

Ted Rogers

### **Our 60th Year**

The inaugural meeting of the ROC was on February 18<sup>th</sup> 1947 and your Committee is planning to mark our 60<sup>th</sup> year with some special events - full details in the Newsletter. We are aware of the continued membership of at least one founder member, Dr C C Balch, with Robert Gillmor being a member since November 1949. How many more are there who have been members for 50 years? We would like identify such members, and ask that you contact me on the telephone number below.

The following list shows those who had paid their subscription at the inaugural meeting :-

J M Barry	Mrs Nicholls	O T Chapman	Dr E White
R Chapman	Mrs White	R Berryman	Miss D Mason
H D R Thompson	Miss V Harwood	P Evans	Miss N Harwood
C C Balch	Mrs M Kendal	D M Walker	Dr Eric Watson
J E Coffyn	Dr D A J Williamson	Mrs Coffyn	Mr Spratling
B T Parsons	Miss I M Dans (or Davis)	J V Beer	Mrs M J Dans (or Davis)
J Knight	Miss B K Whitaker	H P Goodfellow	

Information about any of these founder members and of interesting events in the early years of the ROC would be welcomed.

John Roberts (0118 9482137)

### **Treasurer's Notes**

Those who have signed Gift Aid declarations will be pleased to know that some of their tax is now in the Club's funds. I reclaimed £680, bringing our total refund in the last eleven years to £3,003. If you are one who has not signed a Gift Aid declaration, and you pay Income Tax, please consider doing so. The process is easy; you sign the form and I do the rest.

At the AGM I said that the Committee would be reviewing subscription rates. That review has concluded that an increase is not necessary in October 2006. The half-rate for pensioners, a topic raised at recent AGMs, has been addressed and the constitution amended. The constitution now indicates, "A retired members subscription rate is an option", thus providing a choice of rate for retired members. It is hoped that most will opt to pay the full rate.

Some brief information about our accounts is that subscriptions show a small increase to £2,700, we have a new life member, Richard Bryant, raffles have raised £274, bird food sales how a profit of £45 and the Club capital stands at £10,640 (on March 21<sup>st</sup>). The University has increased the rental of Room 109 to £136 per meeting from October 2006 and the Committee has agreed our continued use of the facility.

Producing a Report remains a major cost, but it is anticipated that income from sponsors, advertisers and sales will again at least cover the cost.

John Roberts

### **Black Redstart Survey 2006 – May 7th**

A search for Black Redstarts in Reading will be made again this year. The date will be 7<sup>th</sup> May. As in previous years an early start of your choice will end with a gathering at the very top of Garrard Street car park at 7-30am. We will not allocate an area to search but choose our own, perhaps choosing a likely site and a less likely one. It should not matter that areas may be covered by more than one observer.



I personally choose to drive to one or two possible spots just for a brief look then choose an area to cover on foot. Areas with Black Redstarts in the past include the Station, Friar Street, Broad Street, King Street, Castle Street, Civic Centre, Battle, Beresford Road, and north of Greyhound Stadium.

Other areas that cross my mind include the Cattle Market and railway sidings, Oxford Road, Chatham Street, The Abbey, Old University, Newtown, old sewage works at Whitley, around London Road and Katesgrove and so on.

I encourage people to visit on other days too (or instead) for better coverage and to add to sightings. In fact some of us are going to try predawn visits from the beginning of April to see if they really do sing better at first light.

With this more loosely organised approach is a concern that some, with every good intention, will feel less committed and not make it on the day so I would like to hear from you if you intend to join in.

But go anyway, and beware Grey Wagtails, they sing from the rooftops too, and please let me know what you find.

John Lerpiniere (0118 9426225 - [johnle@ntlworld.com](mailto:johnle@ntlworld.com))

### **Kite and Buzzard Survey Update**

I've received 145 red kite and 22 buzzard records to date. I've also a couple of emails where people have just said that they get them "often" or "2-3 times a week" - I'm trying to get more detail on these. Over 50% of kite records have come from a few areas - 35 from Caversham, 14 from Lower Earley and 45 from Woodley. There have been some records of large numbers of red kites together e.g. 13 at Crazies Hill, 28 near Aldworth. Also it appears that a gamekeeper on the Hants/Berks border at Apsley is putting out pheasant carcasses and has had a maximum of 46 red kites and a number of buzzards (observer counted 9 buzzards on one day).

Can I ask that people who are filling in paper forms send their first batch to me by the end of April. This will cut down on the amount of data entry to be done at the end and mean that I can produce the spreadsheets sooner.

With thanks to all those taking part - Mike Turton

### **Berkshire Bird Records for 2004 – Last Call**

Work will shortly start on the 2004 Birds of Berkshire. We have a large database of records from [berksbirds.co.uk](http://berksbirds.co.uk) and Berks Bird Bulletin and other sources but the door is still open for personal records to be submitted. The final date will be 31 March after which we cannot guarantee your records will be included so please submit any you have as quickly as possible. All records should be on a spreadsheet such as that on the following link. [www.berksbirds.co.uk/submittinrecords.asp](http://www.berksbirds.co.uk/submittinrecords.asp).

Colin Wilson

### **Environmental Stewardship - Helping farmers to help farmland birds**

Many birders will be aware of the governments Environmental Stewardship (ES) Scheme launched in March 2005. The scheme provides grants to encourage farmers (and other landowners) to adopt management practises that will help to reverse the serious declines in some of our farmland birds. (NB. The scheme has 5 key objectives, namely Landscape, Biodiversity, Historic Environment, Resource Protection and Access ).

ES comes in 2 levels – the basic 'Entry Level Stewardship' (ELS) is open to all farmers, and the 'Higher Level Stewardship' (HLS) is aimed at landowners who are able to benefit high value 'features'. These include the declining farmland birds\* – indeed there is a government 'target' to have reversed the decline of these species by 2020.

Birders who are familiar with areas/farms where some of these species still occur could support their conservation by encouraging the relevant farmers to find out if they can join the scheme. For more info please get in touch with me - I can provide scheme literature for you to pass on, and will be happy to contact farmers if you can pass on their details.

\* Target farmland birds for 'HLS' in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Bucks.

Grey partridge, stone curlew, lapwing, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow, linnet, corn bunting, yellowhammer, reed bunting (also redshank, curlew and snipe in some areas).

(note. Barn Owl and Skylark are not picked out as key targets because they should benefit from the 'Entry Level Stewardship' part of the scheme)

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### **The British Bird Watching Fair at Rutland Water, 19th August 2006**

In consultation with other local organisations, the ROC is again sponsoring a luxury coach, to visit the Bird Fair at Rutland Water's Egleton Nature Reserve, on Saturday, 19th August 2006. The cost of £25 will include entrance to the event.

Pick-up points are: 1) Newbury, the Wharfe at 6.30 a.m., 2) Reading, the University's Whiteknights Park entrance at 7.00 a.m., 3) Bray Wick, Hibbert Road.

We will plan appropriate comfort stops and aim to arrive at the Bird Fair at about 10 a.m. to have about 7 hours to visit the exhibitions and perhaps do some bird-watching. Departure will be at 5 p.m., to be back at Bray by about 7.30 p.m., Reading at 8.00 p.m. and Newbury at 8.30 p.m.

This is a really good day out, with extensive exhibitions of bird-related optics, clothing, holidays, books, paintings, photographs and the like. There are talks by major figures in the world of birds, plus every chance of bumping into some of them for a chat as you walk around. From the hides you may see an Osprey or two, certainly guarantee Tree Sparrows, and find passage waders and a lot of ducks. Time will certainly fly!

As last year's coach was sold out, please register your provisional interest as soon as possible, or, better still, guarantee a seat by early payment. For bookings or any other queries, contact:

Ray Reedman, tel. 0118 9864338, or email: [meander2@hotmail.com](mailto:meander2@hotmail.com)

### **ROC Photographic Galleries**

Do you know the ROC website ([www.theroc.org.uk](http://www.theroc.org.uk)) has many photographs of birds on it? They have all been taken by ROC members and there is also a gallery of Gordon Langsbury's spectacular shots. We would love more people to show off some photos in the Member's Gallery section so please have a look and see if you would like to add a few.

If you only have slides we can get them scanned and show them in the same way we show digital pictures. If you would like to show some of your photographs on our website please contact Colin on 01252 837411 to make arrangements. Your contribution will be very welcome.

### **Back Copies of Bird Reports**

Back copies of most of the Birds of Berkshire annual reports are currently in stock: all issues published for the years from and including 1979 except for 1985 and 1994/5 are available in return for a donation to the Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund of at least £3/copy plus post/packing (£1 for one copy + £0.65/additional copy).

Also available: Hampshire Bird Report, 1989 Birds of Oxfordshire, 1992

If you have any old copies of The Birds of Berkshire Reports that you would like to donate to raise money for the Conservation Fund, please let us know.

To give or to get, please contact Secretary, Renton Righelato (e mail [renton.righelato@theroc.org.uk](mailto:renton.righelato@theroc.org.uk) or telephone 0787 981 2564)

Renton Righelato

### **Trip Reports :**

#### **Visit to Tring Reservoirs and College Lake - 13th November 2005**

Never volunteer they say! Well, I am glad I did, because the day at the Tring complex was well worth the effort. Ted and I had made a preparatory trip there in the summer, but little did we imagine that there would be quite so much there in the winter...

Mind you, it was grey, very cool and inclined to drizzle, as nine of us started out at the Startops Reservoir at 9 a.m., with only a few common species in sight. But a mass of Shovelers on the second pool and a few Meadow Pipits gave us some encouragement.

By 10.30, we had moved to College Lake for the remainder of the morning. There the weather decided to give us a second chance, with really good light. This is, justifiably, one of BBOWT's premier reserves, a former quarry that contains a good lake and an area of marsh and young trees. Armed with our permit we went to a high spot, at the top of the cliff. This vantage point gave excellent views of a lot of birds on and around the main body of water below us.

Six of the group were new to this site and they were clearly impressed by the viewing conditions. In the picture here, most of us were concentrating on the water, but Lin had found a Green Woodpecker in the trees behind us. Fieldfares, Bullfinches, the odd Goldcrest and a Sparrowhawk were eventually among the birds recorded. Meanwhile, a search through a flock of Gadwall, Wigeon, Tufties and Teal on the water below had yielded a Pintail drake. Fairly soon, a flock of Pochard to our right was found to contain a female Red-crested Pochard. By this stage the day was looking very good! There were plenty of Greylags and assorted gulls here too. The marsh pools later added a Little Grebe, and we had good views of a Kestrel right over us.

Sandwich time, then a move to Willstone Reservoir for the afternoon. The first thing that struck, as we crested the wall, was the sheer, breathtaking volume of birds on the water. There were huge flotillas of Wigeon, Pochard, Coots, Mute Swans, Canada Geese and the like, together with the largest flock of Ruddy Ducks I have ever seen in one place. The sharp-eyed picked out a solitary Barnacle Goose and another drake Pintail, but it was the sheer mass that was fascinating.

At this point Ted and Bill had to go, but the rest of us went round to the hide. The spit in front of it held a large flock of Lapwings and as many Mallards: even this commonplace selection made a really satisfying sight. There was also a Heron and a small group of Mute Swans: among these was one of the feral Whooper Swans that frequent the area.

We were soon distracted from this view by the presence on the water of an immature Red-necked Grebe, the undoubted star of our day. Though it was at some distance, we watched it for a while as it paraded in clear view and in good light, allowing us to make comparisons with neighbouring Great Crested Grebes. Then it went doggedly to sleep, to provide us all with the periodic challenge of re-locating the amorphous grey blob it had become.

A few Kingfishers came to our rescue, some flashing close past the hide and at least one more playing a distant hide-and-seek in the trees and structures of a distant spit. A Snipe fed at the edge of the reeds to distract the Bittern-hopefuls, but there was no sign of the Bittern itself.

With the sun sinking, the temperature dropping, and the benches getting harder by the minute, we called it a day at about 3.30, after a really satisfying day.

Ray Reedman

### **Trip to Beddington Sewage Farm – 4th December 2005**

On a pleasant winter's day a large group of 16 members and guests assembled at Hackbridge railway station car park for a walk around this famous site. There to greet us was a Robin which sat on the end of a telescope while we exchanged greetings and met our guide, Nick Gardner, from the local group at Beddington.

Amongst our number were people who were birdwatchers here decades ago, including our Secretary Renton Righelato, who undertook studies of Yellow Wagtails in his schooldays, and Mick Sayles who recalled some of the speciality birds of the area.

It cannot be said this is the most attractive of sites. It is a sewage farm, a working rubbish tip and was extremely muddy, clambering over heaps of spoil, muddy ditches and rutted tracks was the only way to get around. Having said that the rewards were good and most people saw a good range of birds. Some time was spent negotiating muddy routes and pulling, if not lifting, people across some of them!

Our first view was of the main pool where Shoveler were apparent in good numbers with Gadwall, Teal, Pochard, Little Grebe and a solitary Goosander was briefly sighted. A highlight for some, a Kingfisher flew past settled on a willow and then returned in front of the group for all to see. We also had our first glimpses of Tree Sparrows, the speciality of this site where upwards of 200 birds are present. The conditions for the birds, with winter seed, nest boxes, constantly disturbed ground has been readily provided in the area although some concern exists for the long term maintenance of this habitat once the work stops there.



Following a track overlooking a shallow area of water and weed, we benefited from a flushing exercise by our guide who managed to disturb several Jack Snipe and a few Common Snipe from the weedy edges. Many Teal also appeared with a couple of Wigeon adding another species to the list. As we skirted the area we heard and then saw Rose-ringed Parakeets and Rooks, not a common bird in such an urban area but attracted to the rubbish tip. In the scrub birch, Redpolls fed with Goldfinch and Linnets flocked along the edge of the tip on weeds.

On the muddy channels up to 4 Green Sandpipers were startled by our presence and at least 13 Herons sat on heaps of mud as we approached them. Lapwings flew over as we checked the sludge beds, mainly quiet but with Pheasant an unexpected species to add to the list. Our guide then disappeared into the bushes as he attempted to disturb a Woodcock, two of which had been found earlier in the week but with no luck this time, apart from a startled Blackbird.

Finding our way back along the tracks we were alerted to a Water Pipit calling overhead. After spending a few minutes watching Pied Wagtails on settlement beds, the Water Pipit finally flew over and settled close to a Tesco bag, that well known identification marker in today's world! We all enjoyed good views of this bird as it searched for insects along the lagoon edge.

We returned to the main site for Tree Sparrows, seeing Kestrel, Reed Bunting and some common species of gull on the way and enjoyed the tits and Sparrows feeding on a large feeder for a while before setting off for our journey home. The now almost legendary generosity of ROC members ensured we bought all the remaining Beddington Sewage Farm reports as a contribution to the groups work. An unexpectedly good day at a new site, one we should visit again in the future!

Colin Wilson

### **Berkshire Bird Sightings (or “the birds you probably missed”)**

July 2005

An adult Gannet was on a small pond in Windsor Great Park (26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>). A pair of Garganey were at Moor Green Lakes (7<sup>th</sup>). Notable waders included an Oystercatcher at Moor Green Lakes (24<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>); three Black-tailed Godwit at Slough SF (25<sup>th</sup>) and one at Moor Green Lakes (27<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>) and a Wood Sandpiper at Moor Green Lakes (18<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>). A juvenile Mediterranean Gull was at Queen Mother Resr (18<sup>th</sup>) and a Little Gull was at Dorney Wetlands (11<sup>th</sup>).

### August 2005

A Black-necked Grebe was at Queen Mother Resr (30<sup>th</sup>) and two were at Theale GP (31<sup>st</sup>) with one remaining till 9<sup>th</sup> Sep. A Shag was at Queen Mother Resr (6<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Nov). A Garganey was at Woolhampton GP (6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>) and another was at Lavell's Lake (29<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Sep). Ospreys were seen flying over Newbury (27<sup>th</sup>) and Lower Farm GP (30<sup>th</sup>). Notable waders included an Oystercatcher over Woodley (16<sup>th</sup>) and another at Queen Mother Resr (29<sup>th</sup>); Ruff at Slough SF (26<sup>th</sup>); Black-tailed Godwit at Moor Green Lakes (1<sup>st</sup>) with three there (3<sup>rd</sup>); a Whimbrel at Moor Green Lakes (3<sup>rd</sup>) and another over Compton Downs (31<sup>st</sup>); Curlew over Bray GP (6<sup>th</sup>) and a Turnstone at Queen Mother Resr (6<sup>th</sup>). Two Little Gull were at Theale GP (25<sup>th</sup>) with one remaining (29<sup>th</sup>). A Black Tern was at Theale GP (25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>). A Sandwich Tern was at Queen Mother Resr (18<sup>th</sup>). A Black Redstart was at Greenham Common (4<sup>th</sup>).

### September 2005

A Black-necked Grebe was at Lower Farm GP (11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>). Five Arctic Skuas flew over Dinton Pastures (11<sup>th</sup>). Garganey were at Lower Farm GP (5<sup>th</sup>), Padworth Lane GP (10<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>) and Theale GP (11<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Oct). Raptors included a Honey Buzzard over Wokingham (15<sup>th</sup>); Marsh Harriers over Dinton Pastures (24<sup>th</sup>) and Wraybury GP (28<sup>th</sup>); Ospreys over Caversham and Woolhampton GP (4<sup>th</sup>), Dinton Pastures (11<sup>th</sup>), Cockmarsh (12<sup>th</sup>) and Jubilee River and Silwood Park (13<sup>th</sup>). Notable waders included a Curlew Sandpiper at Pingewood GP (17<sup>th</sup>); Ruff at Slough SF (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>) and three over Dinon Pastures (11<sup>th</sup>); Bar-tailed Godwit over Dinton Pastures (11<sup>th</sup>); Curlew over Dinon Pastures (11<sup>th</sup>) and Wood Sandpiper at Padworth Lane GP (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>). A Pied Flycatcher was at Streatley (4<sup>th</sup>). A Little Gull was at Theale GP (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>).

### October 2005

Garganeys were at Lavell's Lake (3<sup>rd</sup>), two at Queen Mother Resr (8<sup>th</sup>), Dorney Wetlands (11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>), two at Theale GP (14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>) and one at Moor Green Lakes (16<sup>th</sup>). Raptors included a ring-tail Hen Harrier at Bury Down (30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>), Merlin at Cold Harbour (29<sup>th</sup>). A Black Redstart was at Greenham Common (23<sup>rd</sup>). Two Ring Ouzel were at Greenham Common (17<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>) and another was at Cow Down (22<sup>nd</sup>). A Firecrest was at Finchampstead Risges (15<sup>th</sup>). A Hawfinch over Lavell's Lake (19<sup>th</sup>) was the first Park record, quickly followed by the second (25<sup>th</sup>).

### November 2005

A Black-necked Grebe was at Queen Mother Resr (23<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Dec). A Leach's Petrel was at Queen Mother Resr (9<sup>th</sup>). A Bittern returned to winter at Lavell's Lake (12<sup>th</sup>). Another was at Woolhampton GP (20<sup>th</sup>). A Garganey was at Dorney Wetlands (5<sup>th</sup>). Scaups were at Theale GP (12<sup>th</sup>) and Queen Mother Resr (22<sup>nd</sup>), and a Red-breasted Merganser flew over there (15<sup>th</sup>). Merlins were at Queen Mother Resr (2<sup>nd</sup>), Caversham Heights (11<sup>th</sup>) and two at Greenham Common (26<sup>th</sup>). Notable waders included Grey Phalaropes at Queen Mother Resr (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) and Lower Farm GP (3<sup>rd</sup>). A Water Pipit was at Queen Mother Resr (22<sup>nd</sup>) with two Black Redstarts there (5<sup>th</sup>).

### December 2005

Up to five Bitterns were at Dinton Pastures and another was at Burghfield GP (3<sup>rd</sup>). An adult Laughing Gull – the first for Berkshire – was discovered at Green Park (2<sup>nd</sup>) and showed intermittently into 2006, most frequently in the gull roost at Moatlands. A Glaucous Gull was at Theale GP (24<sup>th</sup>). A Yellow-browed Warbler was in Newbury (17<sup>th</sup>). A Snow Bunting was at Inkpen Hill (13<sup>th</sup>).



### January 2006

The five Bitterns were still at Dinton Pastures. A Scaup was at Theale GP (23<sup>rd</sup>) and another was at Wraybury GP (8<sup>th</sup>). A Merlin was at Cold Harbour (13<sup>th</sup>). A Knot was at Lower Farm GP (25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>) before being killed by a Peregrine. A first-winter Little Gull was at Theale GP (3<sup>rd</sup>). Up to six Mealy Redpolls were with a large Siskin/Redpoll flock by the River Thames between Sonning and Shiplake (10<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>) and another was at Theale GP (29<sup>th</sup>).

### February 2006

A Slavonian Grebe was at Pingewood GP (11<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Mar). An immature Whooper Swan flew over Woose Hill (3<sup>rd</sup>). Seventeen White-fronted Geese were at Pingewood GP (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>). A pair of Scaup were at Theale GP (10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>) with the drake staying into March. A female Common Scoter made an uncharacteristically long stay (3<sup>rd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Mar). A Jack Snipe was at Dorney Wetlands (6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>). After two months of only showing distantly in the Theale gull roost the Laughing Gull's daytime haunt was finally found to be McDonalds at the Madejski Stadium in Reading, where it has since shown daily down to ten feet! An adult Mediterranean Gull was on Black Swan Lake (26<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>) and another adult was at Theale GP (25<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>). A second-winter Iceland Full was at Moor Green Lakes (5<sup>th</sup>). Mealy Redpolls were at Sonning (7<sup>th</sup>), Brimpton GP (12<sup>th</sup>) and Theale GP (20<sup>th</sup>). A Firecrest was at Finchampstead Ridges (9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>).

### March 2006

Three Bitterns were still at Dinton Pastures (4<sup>th</sup>) with one remaining to the end of the month and another was at Theale GP (27<sup>th</sup>). A drake Ring-necked Duck was at Theale GP (24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>). Notable waders included Sanderling at Moor Green Lakes (24<sup>th</sup>); Jack Snipe at Lavell's Lake (22<sup>nd</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>) and Dorney Wetlands (10<sup>th</sup>); Curlews at Moor Green Lakes (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>), Lower Farm GP (24<sup>th</sup>) and Lavell's Lake (25<sup>th</sup>). Adult Mediterranean Gull were seen on a few dates at Dinton Pastures (4<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>); Moor Green Lakes (25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>), Burghfield GP (21<sup>st</sup>), Shinfield (26<sup>th</sup>) and Theale GP (28<sup>th</sup>). Four Little Gull were at Moor Green Lakes (28<sup>th</sup>) and five were at Theale GP (28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>) with two still there (30<sup>th</sup>). An adult Kittiwake was at Theale GP (29<sup>th</sup>). Two Water Pipit were at Woolhampton GP (25<sup>th</sup>).

Courtesy of Marek Walford and Berksbirds