



Introduction	1
The Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund.....	1
ROC Field Trips - Norfolk in February – Book Early in Writing	2
ROC Garden Bird Survey.....	2
Treasurer’s Notes	2
Trip to New Forest – 4th June 2006	2

Introduction

This somewhat brief newsletter comes as part of the Club’s annual membership pack, along with various other items. The committee has put together a varied and interesting calendar of events for the coming year, with the usual mixture of indoor talks and outdoor walks, many of which I hope you will find of interest. We look forward to seeing you at these future events. As always, any ideas or suggestions for events, indoor or outdoor, would be much appreciated – please talk to any Committee member.

The membership pack also includes the recording sheets for the winter part of the Garden Bird Survey - hopefully you will take part and return your completed forms to the new GBS ‘owner’ – please see the item below for more information.

Can I add a further reminder that the regular newsletter can be sent via email, rather than via the post, which means you get a better version quicker and it also saves on the Club’s costs and also effort in packing and posting. Obviously, if you do not have email or simply prefer to receive the Newsletter by post, we will continue to send it that way, but if email would be good for you please let me know via a brief email to my address shown below.

The next newsletter will go out around the start of next year, so any items for inclusion need to be with me by Christmas.

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

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

The Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund

The Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund has made six grants since its first call for proposals in 2001, totalling £3,400:

- The **Newbury Ringing Group** - two grants for its work on birds of the reedbeds at Thatcham and elsewhere.
- **Lavell’s Lake** nature reserve - a grant for a sluice to give better control of water levels, to help breeding birds and enhance birdwatching from the hides.
- Kennet Valley Project - a grant to protect an area of open land at **Paices Hill**, near Aldermarston for ground-nesting birds like Lapwing and Little Ringed Plover.
- Barn Owl nest boxes at **Moor Green**.
- The **Berkshire Atlas Group** for bird survey work the revision of the county Atlas and Avifauna.

The fund was initiated by the authors of *The Birds of Berkshire* atlas and avifauna with the sales income from the book. It has been augmented by donations from ROC members and with the proceeds of sales of back issues of *The Birds of Berkshire* annual report. To enable us to do more for bird conservation in Berkshire, the Committee has decided that in the coming season the proceeds from raffles at our meetings should be donated to the Conservation Fund. If you can help with prizes for the raffles please contact John Roberts or me. And please buy lots of tickets – it will be a win for conservation and maybe for you!

The Club is now inviting proposals for winter 2006/7 from local organisations or individuals for grants to support bird conservation work in Berkshire. See the ROC website for details and an application form or contact me - Renton Righelato, 63 Hamilton Road, Reading, RG1 5RA; tel 0787 981 2564; email renton.righelato@theroc.org.uk.

ROC Field Trips - Norfolk in February – Book Early in Writing

The winter weekend trip to Norfolk continues to be a very popular and unfortunately numbers are limited by both the hotel capacity and also by what makes for a manageable group size. This year can I ask everyone who wants to come along to reserve places, as early as possible, by writing (post or email) to Ted Rogers (see address details above). Places will be allocated on a “first come first served” basis (with priority being given to Club members) and bookings will be accepted once this information has been sent out to all members.

In the past booking has been an informal affair, but given the growing demand and a desire to be fair to all members (including people who have not been on the trip before) I feel that this change in the booking arrangements is needed. Hopefully I will not have to disappoint anyone who wants to enjoy the delights of winter birding in East Anglia.

ROC Garden Bird Survey



After many years of managing the Club’s Winter and Summer Garden Bird Surveys, John Farnsworth has decided that the time has come to hand the task over to someone else. Needless to say there was quite a rush of volunteers, but I managed to prevail and as of this Winter’s survey I will be taking the reins, although I expect that John will still complete some analysis on the returns up to now. Many thanks go to John and Fiona for all the work they have done to date.

Hence the new forms included with this newsletter should be returned to me. The only change you will see, for the time being, is a reordering of the species on the recording sheet, which now shows the most frequently reported species listed at the top and the rest listed alphabetically below. Hopefully this should make completing the form a little easier, and also brings it more into line with the way that the BTO does in its garden bird survey, assisting those people who do both surveys.

Either way, I hope that people will continue to complete the forms as before and that new people will also take part. Recording birds in your garden is an easy and fun way of getting involved in bird surveys and, given the growing importance of gardens in the lives of many of our birds, will add to our knowledge in this area.

Ted Rogers

Treasurer’s Notes

Our financial position is “healthy”, and our Accounts for 2005/06 should show an excess of income over expenditure. Contributing to this excess is the Gift Aid tax refund of approximately £700. Most members have signed the appropriate Gift Aid form, but if you have yet to do so the opportunity is approaching. Your new season’s pack will contain the relevant form, and also one to pay your subscription by Banker’s Order. Signing both, or either, will help the Club’s finances.

John Roberts

TRIP REPORT

Trip to New Forest – 4th June 2006

An early start on a fine and warm summer day is one of the best ways to experience the sight and sounds of the New Forest, and this day was no exception. A dozen of us gathered at Bolderwood car park at the top of the Ornamental Drive for a preliminary walk through what I consider to be one of the finest parts of the Forest, and usually rewarding in ornithological and wildlife value. So it proved to be, for after seeing a herd of Fallow Deer in the Deer Sanctuary, unworried by our presence, we then had excellent views of Chiffchaff and Garden Warbler singing, followed by several Redstarts, and a family party of three young Crossbills not in the least concerned by our close approach. A little later, and a chance look up above the trees, and we all managed to get really good views as Honey Buzzard flew over our heads! A treat indeed...

Back at the road, we had failed to find a Firecrest until now, but with a considerable amount of patience, some of us were rewarded with brief glimpses as one foraged through the conifers. Also seen were several Spotted Flycatchers, a bird which has significantly declined in recent years.

Now that a major amount of tree felling has taken place, the War memorial, just up the road from Bolderwood, has become an excellent raptor watch point, but today we may have been too late, or the weather too hot and still, as all we saw were a few distant views of Buzzards – still, that’s birding...

More Redstarts in the Ornamental Drive, where we had lunch, then going to Hinchelsea Moor, but could not find Dartford Warblers, search as we might. Eventually, retracing our steps, we did find a pair at the lower part of the Moor, but it appears that they have suffered nationally as a result of the cold and prolonged winter, and are nowhere as numerous as last year.

Finally, alter in the afternoon, as numbers had dwindled, we went to the lower woodland walk at Acres Down in search of Wood Warblers – usually a sure-fire location, but as numbers have crashed in the past five years, we had the utmost difficulty, and eventually located one singing male, but just could not pin-point its exact whereabouts, so we had to make do with Nuthatch and Treecreeper, and more Redstart song to accompany us on our walk back.

A very pleasant day’s outing, but summer visitors to the Forest have become much harder to find in recent years – nationally there have been significant crashes in populations of Tree Pipits (we only saw one), Spotted Flycatchers and Wood Warblers, and Willow Warblers are also down in numbers, whilst Redstarts seem to be holding their own. We may have to look much harder for some of the birds we expect to see as a matter of course.



Martin Sell