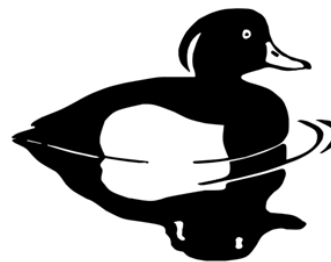


BOC Newsletter

Winter 2011

No 52



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Introduction

Now that I’ve moved the newsletter publication dates a little, I am slightly confused as to which edition this is, but looking out of the window it still seems pretty much like winter, albeit not quite so cold now (more real winter to come I guess – probably just in time for our annual weekend trip to Norfolk?). So here is the Winter edition of the newsletter – I hope you find it of interest

I also hope that everyone is enjoying the indoor meetings this year, with a fine eclectic mix of speakers, organised by Ray Reedman (who deserves all the thanks he gets and more). The “Celebrity Lecture” with Mike Dilger was deemed a great success. It was certainly well attended (by some 160 people - of whom about a third were non members!). Perhaps not the usual sort of BOC lecture, but enjoyable nevertheless I think. Congratulations go to the lucky raffle winners (see below).

If you are part of the Atlas survey team, you will know that we are approaching the last few months of this large piece of work, with the last few weeks of the winter period and the all important spring/summer period when breeding evidence will be much sought after. I know that I need to get out into the field a fair bit over the next few months to fill in the gaps. Good luck to all involved.

The next newsletter will go out in April, so please get any items to me by the end of March.

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

Changes to Published Programme

Please note that a couple of changes have had to be made to the Club programme over the next few months. The workshop scheduled for 13th April will now take place at a different venue and on a different date from those published in the programme card. Also the leader for the mid week walk to Wishmoor on Thursday 17th March has been changed - Ray Reedman is now the point of contact. The revised details are shown below :-

6th Apr 2011 - Identification Workshop: Frequent Finches and Basic Buntings

Earley St Peter's Function Rooms (same venue as Christmas Socials)

The focus of this “improve and revise” workshop will be on the more common finches and buntings.

Contact: Ray Reedman (0118 9864338)

Thursday 17th March 2011

Mid-week walk: Wishmoor, Berkshire

All the heathland birds can be found here and sometimes a Crossbill. Meet at the north end of Kings Ride, Camberley (SU875621), which is north of the A30 at Knoll Road traffic lights.

Contact Ray Reedman (0118 9864338)

Subscriptions: Standing Orders (SO) Not Changed & Payment Not Made

Dot Lincoln and I continue our attempt to clarify subscription payments, at some cost to the Club. Letters to 75 members cost £24 in second class stamps, together with the additional cost of paper and 150 envelopes. What adds to our disappointment is that many members did not respond to the correspondence. After telephone calls on 29 Jan we have 13 members still to reply. If you are one of these please contact Dot or I as soon as possible.

Many members had expected their SO to be amended by the Club, but we did try to explain in 3 Newsletters the need for you to amend your SO. Relevant SO forms were part of each Newsletter. For clarity, SO's must be altered by you; they are not Direct Debits which we can amend. We do not have sufficient members to introduce a Direct Debit scheme.

A suspicion arises that some do not read Newsletters*, or do not receive them because they have moved. Historically we had a member who paid by SO but did not tell us of his new address. For 7 years Newsletters and Reports went to the old address and were never forwarded or returned to sender. Hopefully none of the 13 still to respond are in that situation and we may hear from them soon.

John Roberts (0118 9482137)/Dot Lincoln (0118 9427563)

Editor's Note: * I am confident, of course, that everyone does read the newsletters ☺

Photographic Competition 2012 – March 16th

I hope that you have all been busy with your cameras capturing fantastic bird images for entry into this year's Photographic Competition. Plenty of 'bird in snow' and 'waxwing' pictures are expected! We will have the same two categories of "Action" and "Portrait" and look forward to yet another excellent evening of entertainment from our judges.

The rules will remain largely as last year, but watch the website for any minor changes. Last date to get them to Colin for inclusion is 2nd March 2011. Send by email to colin.wilson@berksoc.org.uk or by post on a CD to Colin at Blakeney, St Catherine's Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 9NP

N.B. Please note that venue this year is Room 27 in the Humanities Building at Reading University, starting at 8pm

Raffle at Mike Dilger Meeting

Prize winners were :-

Bob Walker (Club Member), Charlotte Faulkner (Club Member), Peter Roberts and Miss S. Jones
We had a gain of £330 from this raffle and we appreciate the support within the membership.
Bob and Charlotte were especially pleased with their Dotterel and Kingfisher provided by Robert Gillmor and Gordon Langsbury.



John Roberts

WeBS for Berkshire

Ken White and Sarah Priest, the BTO Representatives for Berkshire, have taken over the rôle of WeBS Local Organiser for Berkshire. WeBS is the Wetland Bird Survey run by the BTO. This is the scheme which monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The principal aims of WeBS are to identify population sizes, determine trends in numbers and distribution and to identify important sites for waterbirds. Many thanks to Gavin Foster, the outgoing WeBS organizer, for all his contributions to keeping the WeBS show in Berkshire ongoing, and we all wish him well in his career move.

Ken & Sarah are reviewing the currently available information for Berkshire, WeBS sites and their respective 'loyal and much appreciated' surveyors, and, together with the Breeding Bird Survey [BBS] and their respective 'loyal and much appreciated' surveyors, will shortly be asking for more birdwatchers to help get Berkshire covered.

Make a difference.....make your birdwatching count.

WeBS background information is available on the following link

<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs>

Information for Visitors to Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures

Car park charging has again been put in place at ALL car parks, from 08:00 to 18:00 and the nearest ticket machine to Lavell's is in the middle of the sailing club car park (now called multi activity centre).

Prices as shown on link below are 50p for up to 1 hour, £1 for up to 4 hours, £2 for 4 hours plus. There are annual tickets at £76.50 available from DPCS. Disabled can park free. See <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parks/parks/country-parks/dinton/>

We are also told that they will be checking for tickets, so please be aware you may get a fine if you chose not to pay.

Future Overseas Trips

1. Autumn Raptormania, Andalucia, Spain - 5 Nights: Saturday 27th August to Thursday 1st September 2011



We shall visit a variety of habitats near the Straits of Gibraltar, concentrating on raptor migration; we could see around 130 bird species including flocks of White Storks, Honey Buzzard and harriers, plus Bee Eater, Red-rumped Swallow and at least nine raptor species. Some non-birding activity will be possible, e.g. visit to Granada or Cordoba. Depending on the availability of flights, the cost will be about £540 per person sharing, £605 single occupancy, including return flights from Gatwick by Easyjet, transport in Spain by minibus driven by the organiser, and B&B in 2 locations. Additional costs will be lunch, drinks, evening meals and admission fees (Allow about 30 Euros for evening meals and 6 Euros per day for lunch, plus about 20 Euros for admission fees). Final details will be confirmed when the number of provisional bookings is known. Contact the organiser, Ken White, as soon as possible; there are 9 seats in the mini bus, and we have 4 definite bookings. Tel: [+44] (0)1635 268 442, or best to email white.zoothera@gmail.com
Deposit of £250 per person by March 1st 2011, balance by July 15th 2011 please.

2. Winter Cranes & Bustards, Extremadura, Spain - 5 Nights: provisional dates: 11th – 16th February 2012

Based at the delightful rural hotel, Viña las Torres near Trujillo, we will visit some of the vast grassland steppe plains, embalses and wetlands as well as the hilly areas of Monfrague Park for a stunning suite of wintering and resident birds. These will include both species of bustards and vulture, azure winged magpie and hoopoe, and simply thousands of cranes, duck, larks & sparrows.

Depending on the availability of flights, the cost will be about £510 per person sharing & £630 single occupancy, including return flights from Gatwick by Easyjet, transport in Spain by minibus driven by the organiser, full board [but excluding your evening drinks].

Contact the organiser, Ken White, as soon as possible [only 9 seats in the mini bus]

Tel: [+44] (0)1635 268 442, or best to email white.zoothera@gmail.com

Deposit of £250 per person by September 1st 2011, balance by January 10th 2012 please.

3. I am also proposing a repeat of the trip of Spring in Andalucia in 2012; provisional dates being Thurs 12th to Wednesday 18th April 2012. Deposit £250 per person by Oct 31st 2011, balance by March 1st 2012. All other details will be the same as the 2011 trip.

Photo albums of previous trips can be accessed on the link: <http://picasaweb.google.com/white.zoothera>

Ken White, Berkshire BTO Rep

Report of the Chairman and Officers 2010

Club membership passed the 300 mark early in the year and now stands at about 312 units – taking joint memberships into account, that's well over 400 people. Our thanks are due to all those who had contributed to this rise in membership over this period, particularly Ruth Angus who will be taking some time off after 6 years responsibility for publicity. Dot has also signalled her intention to "retire" at the next AGM. A sub-group of the Committee, led by Colin Wilson, has been formed to handle all aspects of membership and publicity.

The Committee has also set up an Editorial Board to manage the records database and produce the report. This is chaired by Ken Moore and includes our records database manager, Marek Walford, and Derek Barker. Production of the 2006/ 7 report is well advanced, work has started on 2008 and will begin shortly on 2009.

Ray Reedman organised a typically full and varied programme of evening meetings which had attendances at much the same levels as recent years. We had some problems with the University's facilities last year, so we again looked for alternative venues, but so far have been unable to come up with anything of comparable quality and accessibility in the central Berkshire area.

We had a busy season of mid-week walks, Sunday trips and weekend visits; with perhaps the highlights being the Norfolk weekend in February which managed an impressive combined group list of 140 species, and the Dungeness visit which provided Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret and White-rumped Sandpiper. This year is just as full, with several new venues and trips to Spain in April and August, led by Ken White.

In the field, the last three years have been dominated by work on the national and county atlas. Hundreds of observers have contributed to the database of around a quarter of a million records for Berkshire so far. A preview of the results will be given to the Club in March 2011. We are just entering the last year of recording and will now be focussing on filling the gaps in the data.

The Club's conservation activities in the year included working with Reading Borough Council on the conversion of Fobney Island into a wetland reserve, investigating ways to enhance the protection of the lower Kennet valley and discussions with the National Trust at Basildon Park on surveying and possible conservation projects. The Conservation Fund made a grant of £1,000 towards work at Hosehill Lake to improve the reed-beds as bittern habitat. With public sector effort on conservation inevitably being scaled down as expenditure cuts bite, I anticipate that the protection of the natural environment is going to depend increasingly on voluntary bodies like the BOC.

Finally, let me thank the many people whose support, enthusiasm and hard work, in the field and indoors, have contributed to the BOC's continuing growth in scope, scale and influence.

Renton Righelato, November 2010

Berkshire's Bird-watching Highlights of 2009/10

Prepared by Ken Moore, Assistant Recorder, for the Annual General Meeting of the BOC

Starting in **December 2009**, the 17th brought the first report of BITTERN returning to Dinton Pastures. The BITTERNS were there until March, with up to 3 being present and at least 3 others elsewhere in the County. A juvenile GREAT NORTHERN DIVER was at Brimpton Lakes, whilst a lucky Charvil resident unwittingly photographed a GREAT WHITE EGRET on the 3rd and 4th December. A total of 12 BEWICK SWANS during the month was a very good record for Berkshire. A handsome drake FERRUGINOUS DUCK only stayed for a day at Dinton Pastures, as did the drake RED BREASTED MERGANSER at Woolhampton.



January began with a ring-tailed HEN HARRIER in the Bury Down area, staying into **February**. The MEALY REDPOLL in a Caversham back garden was a new Garden Bird for the observer. Three WHITE FRONTED GEESE enlivened the Charvil area for the last two weeks of **February**.

In **March**; another juvenile GREAT NORTHERN DIVER, this time at Queen Mother Reservoir, but this one, with its bill deformity, was more of a crossbilled GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. The first Osprey of the year flew over Moor Green Lakes on the 18th March, whilst on the 20th, an ALPINE SWIFT was located in the Borough Marsh/Wargrave area. The Swift was very mobile, and only two observers were fortunate to connect with it.

April, a month of avian 'brief visits', included our only PIED FLYCATCHER of the year at Padworth.

A drake SMEW at Moatlands on the 21st **May** surprised us all. HOBBIES were back in near-normal numbers, but also noticeable were good numbers, despite the very harsh winter, of KINGFISHERS, DARTFORD and CETTI WARBLERS. Berkshires first, and second breeding records of OYSTERCATCHER occurred at Theale Main Pit and Twyford. Both TEMMINCK STINT and KITTIWAKE at Hosehill on the afternoon of the 28th May were one day birds.

June and July are normally light months for birds, then four different RUFF were certainly **August's** highlight.

September highlights were 2 reports of GANNET, both on the 26th and at least 4 OSPREY moving through. **October**, with another GANNET, and a 5 day AVOCET were both eclipsed by the first BITTERN of this winter being seen at Dinton on the 20th.



November the 1st, a brief visit by a male BLACK REDSTART to Hungerford, and finally on the 6th, the much expected first WAXWING arrival of the autumn, at Worlds End, Bracknell.