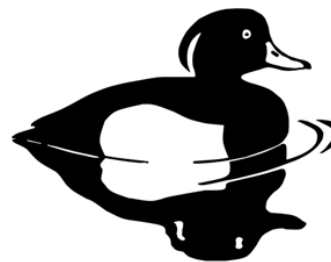


# BOC Newsletter

Summer 2011

No 54



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## Introduction

Welcome to the ‘Summer’ edition of the Club Newsletter, although the term ‘Summer’ does seem a bit misleading, given the current weather (I think we had Summer back in April!). This newsletter is going out with the Club’s new season mailshot, along with various inserts. Enclosed you will find the new season programme card, along with the membership renewal form, AGM papers and garden bird survey form.

Also, for those of you who are not on email, a paper version of the **latest Club questionnaire** is enclosed (see later item). Members on email will receive an invitation to complete it on-line – so look out for that. **Please try to find time to complete and return it** – it will help us run the Club to best meet the needs of our members.

The Committee has worked hard to put together a good and varied programme of events again this year - hopefully you will find many things of interest. It is good to see that, for most of the indoor meetings, we are in our usual Room 109 in the Reading University, Palmer Building (the exceptions being the ‘Members’ Magazine Evening’ on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012 which will be in Room 27 in the Humanities Building, and two events in Earley St Peter’s Hall). The programme card contains information about both indoor meetings and outdoor trips and excursions so please keep it to hand during the year.

The “**Members’ Magazine Evening**” provides a great opportunity for members to be part of a Club evening by doing a short presentation, which could be about any subject of interest (see later newsletter item for further details). Please don’t be backward in coming forward, as all help will be given in putting it together. Please contact Ray Reedman if you would like to take part.

All contributions to the newsletter are much appreciated – please get items for the next edition of the newsletter to me by the end of October.

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

## **Plea for Membership Info from All Members**

**We have a plea for all members, whether new or long-standing. Please can you send us your current details, so that we can ensure that you receive BOC communications correctly.** We have become aware that some details in our membership records are out-of-date, particularly for people who pay by standing order and do not complete a renewal form each year.

The simplest thing may be for you to complete the membership renewal form and send this to the membership secretary (address on the form). If you have email, please email the same details as requested on the form to [heidi.bailey@berksoc.org.uk](mailto:heidi.bailey@berksoc.org.uk).

In particular, we need title plus full name, full address, phone number and email address. Now would also be a good time to tell us if you would like to help with club activities and to fill in the Gift Aid section (if you are a UK tax payer). Thank you for your help.

Heidi Bailey (Membership Secretary)

## **Membership Questionnaire**

The Club has changed quite a bit since it last sought its members' views with a questionnaire eight years ago. We have a much larger and more geographically widespread membership. We have formally adopted the role of a county club, changing from the Reading Ornithological Club to the Berkshire Ornithological Club; there are more indoor meetings and the field trips programme been extended: there are more coach trips, overseas visits have been introduced; we are increasing our involvement with conservation issues. The responses to the last questionnaire have guided much of our evolution since 2003 and your Committee would like now to get your feedback and guidance for the next few years.

For those members who are not on email, a printed copy of the questionnaire and an envelope for returning it are enclosed with this newsletter. Members who normally receive the newsletter by email will receive an email (from LimeService) inviting them to complete the survey online - this will make processing the results much easier. Note that some spam filters may block this email so please check your spam folders.

So, please take a little time to answer the questions and give us your views on what sort of Club you would like to see. After analysing and discussing your input, we will report back to you at the next AGM. The closing date for responses is Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September, so please make sure that you have either completed the questionnaire online or posted your completed paper copy by then.

## **Gift Aid.**

Those who have completed a Gift Aid declaration will be pleased to know that the tax refund is now in our accounts. The Club benefitted by £1357, the Atlas Group by £183. Such refunds are obviously a major contribution to Club funds and I encourage those who pay tax, but have not completed a Gift Aid declaration to consider doing so. Please contact me if you want to know your situation.

John Roberts (0118 9482137)

## **Entry Fee to Indoor Meetings for Visitors**

The entry fee that the Club charges for non-members (visitors) at indoor meetings has been set at £2 for a number of years now. In that time there have been increases in both the annual subscription and the cost of hiring the meeting rooms.

The Committee had agreed to increase the entry fee for visitors to £4 as of the start of the 2011/12 indoor meetings in October. If a visitor joins at the meeting, the visitor fee will be refunded through their subscription.

### **Can you offer lifts to Indoor Meetings?**



Do you regularly attend the Club's indoor meetings? If you do, could you offer a lift to a fellow member who does not drive or is not comfortable driving into Reading on a winter evening? In an attempt to allow some of our members the opportunity to attend indoor meetings we are looking to build a list of willing 'lift-givers'.

If you can help please contact Ted Rogers, at a meeting, or via email at [ted.rogers@berksoc.org.uk](mailto:ted.rogers@berksoc.org.uk). Thanks for your help.

## **Elections at the AGM**

Included with this newsletter is the paperwork for the AGM to be held in November. Three members of the Committee (out of six) retire by rotation this year. In order to move back to a position whereby 2 Ordinary Committee Members are elected in each year, the election this year will be for two Ordinary Committee Members to serve for 3 years and one to serve for two years.

The elected members of the Committee are also the Trustees of the Club. The duties are not onerous; a list is printed on the back of the AGM agenda. There are normally four committee meetings a year. We are particularly seeking committee members who will help with the Club's publicity.

If you would like to be involved in running the Club in this way, please contact Mike Turton (Hon. Secretary) at [mike.turton@berksoc.org.uk](mailto:mike.turton@berksoc.org.uk).

## **Preview of the BOC Indoor Programme for 2011-12**

This autumn, the programme will start and finish a bit later than usual. I hope there will be plenty for everyone, since we aim to cater for a wide variety of interests and levels of experience.

Travelogues bring nostalgia for some, and a novel and exotic adventure for others. This year a former BOC President, Andy Swash will open the programme with a trip to Ethiopia: we can expect in-depth commentary and great pictures. Our second speaker is Chris Goodie: having read his book, the *Jewel Hunter*, I can promise you a jaw-dropping narrative of a solution to the mid-life crisis, delivered with self-deprecation and great humour. Our third visitor will be the illustrious Polish naturalist, Marek Borkowski, who will share some of his special insights into the wildlife of his native country. Gordon Langsbury will be doing the honours again at the AGM, with a talk on Spring-time in the Pyrenees and Estremadura. In early December, the highly successful BBC Natural History producer, Stephen Moss, will talk on the origins of British bird names. The Christmas Social and Quiz will be the following week.

After the Christmas break we will take a second excursion down one of ornithology's branch lines, when Nik Borrow will be talking about the distortion of ornithological records by such as the infamous Hastings Frauds. Committee member, Debby Reynolds, will then take us to the Causasus, the eastern extremity of European birding. Then, for depth and insight into a famous British conservation area, Andrew Cleave will be talking about the island of Lundy. BOC member Ken White will take a close look at birding the Straits of Gibraltar, a wonderful mix of the exotic and the familiar. After the usual cut and thrust of the Photographic Competition, our last speaker of the year will be Ken Norris, whose accident this spring caused postponement of his talk on the *Ecology of Tropical Birds*. An ID workshop will conclude the programme. And now I need your help...

The meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February will be in the form of a **Members' Magazine Evening**. We do have two new member contributions this year, but not everyone is bold enough to offer a major talk. I envisage a compilation evening of much shorter contributions. Do you have a something which you would like to share with the club? e.g. a personal observation record of garden-nesting birds and their behaviour; a sequence of pictures representing a dramatic piece of bird behaviour; a few photos of special birds from a field trip or holiday; a collation of bird-song recordings; a report on a conservation activity; a relevant item of your own special interest. We will give any help needed in preparation and presentation. If you feel that you never get a word in, now is your chance to contribute to an evening. To offer your ideas, contact me at [meander2@hotmail.com](mailto:meander2@hotmail.com) or by phone at 011898634338. Go on, don't be too modest!

And finally please note that the ideas for the programme are not mine alone: most of the suggestions come from other members, and most talks by members are offered spontaneously. I have already been offered some exciting ideas for the 2012-13 season, but need a lot more yet – and the sooner the better, please.

Ray Reedman

## **BOC Trip to Lakenheath Fen - 19th June, 2011**

A dozen or so people turned out to visit this Suffolk reserve. The strange thing about leading a trip is that you set your sights high and feel a bit disappointed if things are less than perfect. In some ways that was how my day to Lakenheath felt when I returned home, quite tired after a long day out.



No, we didn't see any Golden Orioles, in spite of hearing their rich fluting calls many times and sometimes close: the poplar foliage is dark and dense, the light was leaden and the birds are notoriously elusive. And no, we didn't see the Cranes, in spite of hearing their bugling calls while we were separated from them by the aforesaid dark poplar wood. And no, we didn't see Bearded Tits, because it was just too windy for them. And yes, we did get wet a couple of times – that's June for you!

But, hey! For some of our group the magical sounds of Orioles and Cranes were new experiences and the sounds still thrilled those who knew them. And surely no-one is going to mind seeing a few Bitterns, Hobbies, Marsh Harriers and Cuckoos while waiting for the "top" birds to show. After all, when were they relegated to the Championship?

In fact I had rarely heard the bubbling calls of our female Cuckoo so well, or so frequently. Nor had I ever seen two male Marsh Harriers dive-bombing an escaped Harris Hawk perched in a bush in the middle of their marsh. That was an odd experience! I noted three good Bittern sightings during the day, and counted at least six Marsh Harriers on a single sweep of just one area – they were everywhere! I missed the Montagu's Harrier that Martin and a couple of others saw later, but we did share a distant view of a pretty-convincing female Garganey.

Throw in Common Terns, a lot of Swifts, and an assortment of warblers – Reed, Sedge, Whitethroat, Garden, and Cetti's - plus a good helping of Reed Buntings, then even that Blue Tit can be forgiven for raising my pulse-rate by pretending to be a Bearded Tit.



And we mustn't forget the ex-Water Shrew, like a tiny white-bellied Mole, which we found on the path –you don't find those every day - and Ian took the trouble to point out the special skin filaments on the feet which enable it to swim. The Weasel which David saw at the car park apparently had a bit more life in it.

And the finale, brief but glorious, was a quick trip to a bit of Breckland to witness some Stone-Curlews being bullied by a Rabbit. And that's a Premiership bird if ever there was one!

Perhaps, on reflection, our cup was considerably more than half-full after all!

Ray Reedman

### And Finally - Just for Fun ☺

Not sure of the source of this, but the challenge is to find as many names of birds as possible hidden in the following letter. Rumour has it that there are over 30! There are no prizes, but at least it will help to pass the time on a miserable wet day! Let me know how you get on and I will publish the best solution in a future issue.

Ted Rogers



"Dear Ed

Starting early, we took it easy to the Bell Inn, Eton, where we picked up Jack Dawling and Ernest. One chatted a lot so time passed swiftly, but rain on the motorway was a grave nuisance.

After a splendid lunch I decided to hand over the wheel and steal an hour's sleep before reaching Ullswater, eventually at midnight, in gale force winds.

Next morning we were in Scotland and our hotel is situated in as fine a glen as I have seen, with rushing streams at the bottom of a steep lovers' lane. A building at the bottom is all that is now left of an old mill, but it is now renovated and is indeed very smart inside. Not another one for miles around. Eric Rowland, our host, took us rowing with awkward shaped oars. We quickly returned to the shore, leaving Anne to doze in the stern of the boat.

The food is excellent and much of it, no good for taking off inches from the waist or keeping wide awake! Really, nothing is wanting, except perhaps regular kilts and pipers!

Love from all

Ardell"