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Introduction

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Welcome to the 77th BOC Newsletter. Renton updates us on Turtle Doves and Nightingales. Colin Wilson makes a plea on helping Swifts. Richard Burness discusses Cat 2 & 3 differentiation and explains recent changes of the species in these categories. Ray’s summary of recent outdoor trips takes us round Southern England starting in Hosehill, then Moor Green Lakes, Slimbridge, Blashford Lakes and Bury Down, before returning via Portland and Weymouth to Fobney. Then Ray gives us the solution to the last issue’s amazing Anagrams and shows an unexpected garden sighting! We have Birding Highlights from last year courtesy of Ken while Jane recounts the winners of our recent Photo Comp. A very brief tour of the Internet follows and Jonathan Manley extols the use of one major site. This month’s Gallery on the last page is devoted to the best images from the March BOC Photo Comp. Enjoy - the next issue is due out in August 2019.

Conservation Corner

Renton.Righelato@berksoc.org.uk

With Spring almost here, I always look forward to the sounds of our summer migrants arriving – the warbler songs, the soft chirruping of House Martins, the screaming of Swifts. But the most iconic summer sound, the purring of Turtle Doves, sadly, I have almost forgotten. In the last few years, there have been only one or two singing in our county. If you are lucky enough to find Turtle Doves on territory this year, please let the County Recorder, Richard Burness, or me know as soon as you can. We are ready to seek the landowner’s permission and to set up a programme of supplemental feeding that has been found by Operation Turtle Dove to improve breeding success.

Another red-listed summer migrant, the Nightingale, is still under threat here in Berkshire. The postponed hearing of the appeal by Berfield against the refusal of their application for a 200+ house development at Theale Main Lake reopened in January. On the opening day, Neil Bucknell spoke in support of the refusal on behalf of the BOC and the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group, making the case for the nationally important Nightingale population and on other bird conservation grounds. Other ecological evidence has been heard but discussion of the flood risk issues has been further postponed until 7th May to allow more time for the EA and the appellant to complete their flood modelling. Let’s hope we can report a positive result in the next Newsletter!

The Disappearing Swift!

Colin Wilson

These birds are probably the most amazing species we could ever see. They spend nine months of the year in flight. They eat, sleep and mate ‘on the wing’. They are faster than a Peregrine falcon in even flight and have been studied in depth, not for biological reasons but for supersonic aircraft development!



And yet, they are disappearing before our very eyes. In the three summer months they visit us, they nest and rear their young before going back to a life on the wing. But they are declining in numbers at a catastrophic rate. Over 50% have gone in 20 years. The big question then is - “Why?”.

The full answer is unknown but one clear reason is linked to the worldwide decline in insect life; the vital base of our ecosystem. 73 studies across four continents recently showed 40% of insects are expected to be extinct in the next few decades. A Swift's diet is exclusively flying insects.

The other reason, clear in the UK, is the loss of nesting places. New homes make no provision for them, or for other declining species such as House Sparrow and Starling. People, possibly in ignorance of their plight, block their nest holes or renovate properties making their nest sites inaccessible. Yet, these birds are clean and don't stain walls or make a mess. What they can do is make a real spectacle for a few summer weeks when they join together in fast flying exciting parties around their nesting sites.

The Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust is working to help provide nesting places for Swifts. In 2018, we placed around 150 nesting places in the Blackwater Valley and Surrey Heath, in places like Camberley Theatre, the Square Shopping Centre, the Royal Military Academy and churches, office buildings and private homes. (*Editor: For sites away from the Blackwater Valley area, contact renton.righelato@berksoc.org.uk for BOC help with boxes.*)

Key to success is the presence of swifts in the area. Our Blackwater Valley and surrounding lakes and woodland with towns alongside is ideal from many perspectives but we need to find the populations and then erect nesting boxes or persuade developers to include 'swift bricks' into new houses.

You can help. Do you have swifts near you? Do you know where they might be nesting? Tell us please – colin.wilson@bvct.org.uk . Would you have a nest box on your house? You can read more on this page <http://www.bvct.org.uk/blackwater-valley-swift-project/>

Please help us help these wonderful birds.

Degrees of Rarity – What Are Category 2 and 3 Species

Richard Burness

The sighting of an eye-catching bird in the park, a garden or in the countryside is a wondrous thing. However, beyond the immediate aesthetic pleasure it gives, that observation has little external value. To turn that sighting into a record of interest we must add certain criteria. The most important of these is to give a name to the bird in question. There are numerous aids to identification (books, online tutors etc.) but there is no substitute for experience. In this instance familiarity does not breed contempt but competence. Having named the species (or subspecies) the sighting becomes a biological record and an element of scientific rigour is necessary. The less familiar a species is, the less certain becomes its identity. To ensure accuracy of identity, requirements are placed upon the observer by the national and local bodies accepted as authorities on the subject. They require the observers to back-up their identification with photographs and/or a written description and it is the responsibility of these bodies to then scrutinise the information accompanying the record to assess the accuracy of the identification.

Records of extremely rare species (in national terms) are adjudicated by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). The list of species that they assess is available on their web site. Here in Berkshire we have categorised these species as "Category 1". Local involvement is solely to act as a conduit to the BBRC. However, there are some species that, whilst not rare on the national scale, are rare or uncommon in our county. To adjudicate on these species the Berkshire Records Committee (BRC) was established by, and operates under the auspices of, the BOC and the NDOC.

The BRC have divided county rarities into two further Categories. "Category 2" is a list of species that have occurred in the county only once, or are less than annual. Their scarcity and unfamiliarity are such that the BRC requires that each record submitted is accompanied by a full written description and/or a good quality photograph. Species on this list include: Black-throated Thrush, which has occurred only once, Spotted Crake which is a very infrequent visitor and Caspian Gull which is fiendishly difficult to identify. The birds deemed to be "Category 3" are still scarce but probably annual. Each Category 3 record will need to be accompanied by, at the very least, notes on the circumstances of the sighting and/or a photograph. Category 3 species include Avocet, Sandwich Tern and Black Redstart which are still scarce but will be more familiar to the local birder.

The species on these lists are under constant review by the BRC. Changes to population densities and the number of annual occurrences cause a change of status. For example, Great White Egret has moved rapidly from Category 2 to Category 3 then to a point where the BRC are considering removing it from the categories altogether! The lists of Category 2 and Category 3 species are published in *The Birds of Berkshire – Annual Report* and changes notified on web sites and in local newsletters.

The procedure to follow then, if you think that you have found a rarity, is to take a description (and a photograph if you can) and submit the record to the county recorder. If it is a Category 1 species the recorder will send it to the BBRC without comment. If it is a Category 2 or Category 3 species it will be sent to the BRC for review. Both bodies will inform the observer of their decisions.

Category 2 and 3 Classification Changes

Richard Burness

The Berkshire Records Committee (the BRC) recently reviewed the species on the Category 2 and Category 3 lists. The primary aim was to recognise the changes in status of many of the species on the lists. A secondary consideration was to aid observers by reducing the number of species on the Category 3 list, those that require at least short notes to prove identity.

The new lists, http://berksoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BRC-Categories2_3_2019.pdf, will be applied to records with effect from 1st January 2018 (*sic*).

Among the changes of note:

Ferruginous Duck moved back to Category 1 on 01/01/2017; sadly, Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, Tree Sparrow and Turtle Dove have been moved to Category 2 (Willow Tit remains on Category 3 pending the outcome of the national survey); Yellow-browed Warbler moves from Category 2 to Category 3; Brent Goose, Bittern, Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Mediterranean Gull and Woodlark are removed from the categories altogether.

The status of Barnacle Goose is still under discussion.

BOC Field Trips: The Season so Far - December to March

Ray Reedman

The Pagham trip in December fell victim to a bad forecast and a lack of interest.

The 2018 Christmas walk at Hosehill, with Carole White leading, was not well attended, largely because of threatening rain. Around the lake margins, we saw such as Jay, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Redwing, Pied Wagtail etc. At the feeders there were Nuthatches and Coal Tits among the commoner species, and later there was a mixed flock of Long-tailed Tits, which carried with them two Treecreepers, a Goldcrest and a Marsh Tit. The water birds were all fairly routine, but we were pleased with the others. The heavens opened almost as soon as we were in the pub.

The New Year walk at Moor Green on 3rd January 2019, with Marcus I'Anson leading, produced a good turn-out of well over a dozen people and some good birding. The passerines included such as Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Reed Bunting, Grey Wagtail, Siskin, Song Thrush and Redwing. The star bird of the season, the 1st winter Scaup, was still on the New Workings and a Mandarin drake was at the edge of Grove Lake. A dozen Goosanders were mingled with Pochards, Shovelers, Gadwall, Teal and Wigeon. The local flock of Barnacle Geese was grazing in a paddock. A pair of Great Crested Grebes was performing a courtship display. There were also a couple of Little Grebes, plenty of Lapwings, two Little Egrets, and one Heron. The highlight was a passing Peregrine. About half of us stayed on for a pleasant snack at the Frog and Wicket.

The Slimbridge coach on 12th January was almost full. The weather was a bit gloomy, but it was milder than of late and the visibility was good enough. The Tack Piece held many thousands of birds: Lapwings and Golden Plovers sometimes blackened the skies. Dunlin often joined them, again in considerable numbers. We



could easily spot the much larger Curlews and Black-tailed Godwits, but we also found a small number of Ruff, including one rather distant male with a white ruff already developing. Bewick's Swans were scattered around among Canada Geese, numerous Greylags, and about eight species of duck in huge numbers. The cryptic bundle of a roosting Jack Snipe was fairly close in front of the hide and a Water Rail was at the nearby feeders among the House Sparrows and Moorhens. At the Holden Tower there were excellent views of the Dumbles, with a total of five Cranes in two groups. Near a roost of large gulls, two Ravens were lounging in the grass, massive even at some distance beyond a flock of feeding Rooks and Jackdaws. A flock of a hundred or so Barnacle Geese flew past and

there was another large flock of grazing Wigeon. Later in the day, a roosting Peregrine added to the scene. We had to go to the opposite side of the reserve to see the White-fronted Geese well, but it was worth the effort. A Buzzard was also in that area. At South Hide, we located two Little Stints which had not previously been reported. The Floodlit feed on Rushy Pen was a bit quieter than in some past years, but it was a great finale as always.



Blashford Lakes on 24th January (Marcus again leading). This time there were just seven of us on a damp, cold day. We failed to find the Yellow-browed Warbler had been reported recently, but managed such as Treecreeper and Siskin as we searched. At Woodland Hide, the feeders were seething with birds, including a magnificent male Brambling and an amazing number of Reed Buntings. From the hide at Ivy North, and in spite of the horrible windows, there was a good view of a Marsh Harrier as it passed though and we eventually saw two Great Egrets, but the Bittern stayed hidden. We did get good views of a Cetti's Warbler and of a Kingfisher, and some saw a Chiffchaff feeding in the reeds, while others saw flashes of a very shy Water Rail. The gull

roost at Ibsley Water was distant and it was almost impossible to pick out the oddments. A range of ducks included Pintail, Goosander and Goldeneye. Meanwhile we were entertained by a flock of Linnets and a Water Pipit which was close to the hide

Dungeness on 3rd February. Sadly, because of snow and ice, the coach operator called off the RSPB trip.

Unfortunately circumstances side-lined me for the following three trips, but Rob Godden and Adrian Lawson have produced their own accounts below.

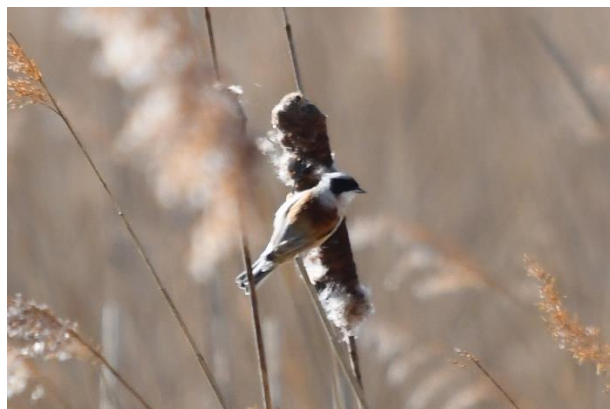
Midweek Walk at Bury Down 14th February 2019: About ten club members turned out for the midweek walk at Bury Down. Much of the journey there had been through fog, but up on the Berkshire Downs we were above the weather and bathed in sunshine - down below a tall chimney at Didcot appeared to float on a sea of fog. Bury Down in winter is an excellent spot for raptors and owls; a bird of prey in a crop field turned out to be a Peregrine and there were Buzzards and Red Kites in view most of the time. We quickly added some of the typical farmland birds - Yellowhammer, Linnet, Corn & Reed Bunting and Skylark, and there was a shout for a Merlin. We then all had excellent views of three Short-eared Owls, perched and flying, showing off their yellow eyes and short ears. When we saw them again on our return, two of the owls were flying high mobbing a Buzzard. Some other farmland birds that occur at Bury Down - Golden Plover, winter thrushes, partridges - were not to be seen this time, but the views of the Short-eared Owls more than compensated. Robert Godden

BOC Day Trip to Portland & Weymouth 17th March 2019: On Sunday 17th March, the club ran a one-day trip to the Portland and Weymouth area. There are many excellent birding sites in the area so the choice of starting location was left until the preceding evening after the weather forecast and recent bird news had been checked. A number of long-staying rarities were still present and the strong winds of the previous week were set to continue albeit without the rain. It was decided to start the day at 8am at the obelisk at Portland Bill. Just four BOC members travelled down independently to join the leader and remarkably a fine stag Sika Deer feeding on the roadside verge was seen from both cars as we sped through Puddletown Forest. At the Bill, one observer watched an early Swallow as it was swept past. The strong westerlies made the offshore tide race an impressive sight, but the bird passage was limited to the resident seabirds and a few Gannets. We moved closer to Pulpit Rock where it was more sheltered and had good views of the auks flying out to sea from the cliff and back again; large flocks were also on the sea with Razorbills far outnumbering Guillemots. A few Fulmars and Shags were also seen here.

We then did a circuit checking the quarries by the Bill and a short way along the East Cliffs, through the hut fields to the observatory, a short way up to the Top Fields and then back to the Bill car park. The strong wind was keeping any landbirds low with just Rock Pipits, Skylark, Chiffchaff and Buzzard noted, and the observatory warden, Martin Cade, confirmed that we hadn't missed much. Even the regular Little Owl was keeping out of sight. It was time to move on.

At Ferrybridge, the lagoon behind Chesil Beach reaches its eastward limit and can be a good place for watching waders and ducks. The tide was coming in but the mudflats only produced a few Ringed Plovers, Oystercatchers and a Little Egret. Across the main road, watersports were occupying most of Portland Harbour but a flock of 50 Red-breasted Mergansers had found an undisturbed corner.

Our next stop was the RSPB reserve at Lodmoor on the eastern edge of Weymouth where a large area of reedbed, shallow pools and exposed mud is attractive to a good variety of waterbirds. A rare wader from USA, a Lesser Yellowlegs, had spent the winter here, and in their eagerness to see the bird some of the group walked right past it and had to be called to heel. The bird was only 10m away, untroubled by the admiring crowd, feeding in the shallows and showing off its splendid summer plumage and eponymous legs - a dirty yellow colour. Other birds in this area were Teal, Shoveler, Mediterranean Gull, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit and Ruff. A Spoonbill had been here earlier in the day and despite much looking we couldn't pick out the Little Gull which was probably keeping low on a pool within the reedbed. We continued our clockwise route around the reserve perimeter until we reached Beachdown Way, a track that bisects the reserve from north to south.



A small crowd had gathered along here looking over the reedbed, and we were soon watching the bird that had captured everyone's interest - a male Penduline Tit. This rare species turns up in the UK from Europe most years but can be notoriously difficult to see, but the individual in front of us was very cooperative, feeding from the Great Reedmace seed heads, occasionally edging its way down to the ground and then climbing up a neighbouring stem. The group were now happy - after a slow start in difficult conditions we had now seen two rare birds, the latter a lifer for some.

We continued our walk around the reserve catching up on more common wetland species, but the hoped-for Ring-necked Duck wasn't to be seen. We looked for this later at Radipole Lake without success and then decided to head homewards. The scan of the gull roost at Blashford Lakes on the way back was rather half-hearted - maybe the morning's stormy conditions had taken their toll or maybe everyone was content with their earlier sightings! I'm grateful to Richard Sajdak for providing photos to accompany this report.

Robert Godden

BOC walk to Fobney, 24 March 2019: A cool bright and sunny morning with 9 people accompanying me around the Southcote Coley Fobney area of Reading. A couple of Herring Gulls harangued a Buzzard above as we waited by the gate. Immediately we set off we had Chiffchaff, Dunnock and Blackcap singing, along with the usual residents such as Song Thrush, Robin, Wren, Dunnock and a quiet rattling call we were unable to identify. It stopped and after a few moments we carried on. Buzzards soared over the meadows at Southcote as we headed to the restored gravel pits north of Cottage Lane. Great Tit and Blue Tit were all around, a few Goldfinches and a couple of quiet Bullfinches were heard. A Kestrel sat on the wires, and a Green Woodpecker called in the distance. We headed east to Fobney Island which was busy with people. A Heron dropped in. Moorhen and Coot were all that we spotted on the pools, and Mallard asleep in the grass. Greenfinches wheezed from the bushes. We didn't have to wade to get to Fobney meadows as for the first time in months the path was dry. The pools had plenty of Teal, two Black-tailed Godwit (the male in breeding plumage), a Redshank, some Gadwall, Wigeon and Shoveler. We missed a Snipe by a few minutes and the Little Owl failed to show. More Buzzards soared with the numerous Red Kites, as we headed north towards Coley. The resident Tawny Owl obliged by basking outside its hole in an old ash tree and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker drummed while we watched the owl. Oddly, I don't recall hearing Great Spotted Woodpecker on the walk at all, even though they are very common here. We were soon on the way back to our start point and home in the warm sunshine that blessed the day.

Adrian Lawson

There is still quite a lot planned for the spring and summer season, so we look forward to further successful trips. Hope to see you there.

Anagrinds

Ray Reedman

Here is the solution to the mysterious anagrams of exotic Trinidad birds from the last Newsletter.

1	HARBOUR DEER-MITE FUSS	RUFOUS-BREASTED HERMIT
2	ORDERED CLEAN STOOP	CRESTED OROPENDOLA
3	LO! THE RAGE AWAKEN	ORNATE HAWK-EAGLE
4	PIED LOON WRECKED TEA	LINEATED WOODPECKER
5	LONE BUCOLIC BIRD, LEO	BICOLOURED CONEBILL
6	PROPEL CHEERY U.N. PEER	PURPLE HONEYCREEPER
7	BLIND CAUSE	BLUE DACNIS
8	GARBLE RED-LENTIL	LARGE-BILLED TERN
9	A WRONG LAW'S LATE	SWALLOW TANAGER
1 0	STEER GABLE	LEAST GREBE
1 1	BLUE MOUSE KIT	PLUMBEOUS KITE
1 2	GRAB AS QUICKEST BULL	BLUE-BLACK GRASSQUIT
1 3	RAIDING A DUMPING-PIT	TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAM
1 4	THIN-BACKED GULL'S WICKED BILL	BLACK-BACKED WHISTLING DUCK
1 5	DAI TAKES GREEK	GREAT KISKADEE
1 6	TRY WANTED PIRATE	PIED WATER TYRANT
1 7	CARIB ISLETS	SCARLET IBIS
1 8	SCOPED CAT WELL	SPECTACLED OWL
1 9	PLANE CORONER WIPED BROW	PLAIN BROWN WOODCREEPER
2 0	ICE OR HEIRLOOM?	MORICHE ORIOLE

An Odd Sighting

Ray Reedman



The morning of 31st January 2019 was cold and wintry, but with a beautiful hoar frost. I could see a number of Redwings and a couple of wild-looking Blackbirds around the area, but one bird, which seemed to be part of this mixed flock, was just too far out for identification with the naked eye. The camera was to hand so I used the zoom at maximum and took several shots.

I was surprised to see that it was a Song Thrush, but with a greatly-overgrown upper-mandible. This happens usually as the result if some trauma, infection, or genetic quirk and occurs in many species, but it came as a bit of a shock to actually see the condition, especially in weather conditions that were already very



challenging for the birds. I put a report on the web-site in case anyone else came across it, but apparently it was not seen again.

In winter, such a nomadic Song Thrush might just be of the greyer continental form. I wouldn't claim that for this very brown bird. The form we see in most of Britain (and on the near continent) is the race *clarkei*.

Birding Highlights: April – July 2018

Courtesy Ken Moore

Will we see similar species in the next few months this year?



[Wood Warbler](#), [Dinton Pastures CP](#), 28th April 2018
© [Andy Tomczynski](#)



[Lesser Scaup](#), [Main Pit, Theale GPs](#), 20th May 2018
© [Marek Walford](#)

[Cranes over Binfield](#), 28 June 2018
© [Stuart Bell](#)



[Juvenile Goshawk](#) - [Undisclosed Location](#) - July



BOC PhotoComp 2019

Jane Campbell



Richard Collins won the Gordon Langsbury Memorial Trophy with his wonderful picture of a Welcome Swallow which was also winner of the portrait category with Mandarins by Ewan Jones taking second place. In first place in the action category was John Absolom's Sanderling; second was Dave Rimes' Splendid Fairy Wren. A Skylark taken by Ewan Jones took first place in the flight category with Richard Collins' Australasian White Ibis in second place. This was a fun evening and thanks are due to our wonderful judges Ashley Grove and Colin Wilson.

Colin took this picture of Ashley presenting the Trophy to Richard.

The winning photos are on the BOC website and in the Gallery on the back page we also show the three runnersup.

The Internet of Birding Things

Iain Oldcorn

Who would have realised on first encountering the Internet how widespread its usage would become even for those interested in birds; everything from Education, through Enjoyment to Recording/Research and to useful Information? And unfortunately, some undesirable traits as well! And we find it working at global, national, regional and local levels. Here is a selection of a few sites I have used; you will be familiar with some, possibly many, and I suggest they are worth a look without declaring them in any particular order of commendation.

Global/National: **Birdlife International** (<http://www.birdlife.org/>), **eBird** (see following article), **RSPB** (<https://www.rspb.org.uk/>), **BTO** (<https://www.bto.org/>), **Fatbirder** (<http://fatbirder.com/>), **LIPU** (<https://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/partners/italy-lega-italiana-protezione-uccelli-lipu>), **IOC World Bird List** (<https://www.worldbirdnames.org/ioc-lists/master-list-2/>), **WWT** (<https://www.wwt.org.uk/>), **Lynxedsions** (<https://www.lynxeds.com/>), **African Bird Club** (<https://www.mglg.org.uk/bird.html>), **Avibase** (<https://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/avibase.jsp>), **Audubon** (www.audubon.org/), **Birdlife Australia** (<https://birdlife.org.au/>), **Cornell Lab** (<https://dl.allaboutbirds.org>)

UK Regional: **BBOWT** (<https://www.bbowl.org.uk/>), **NWT** (<https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/home>), **CumbriaWT** (<https://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/>), **BerksBirds** (<https://www.berksbirds.co.uk/Index.asp>), **TVERC** (<http://www.tverc.org/cms/>), **Going Birding** (<https://www.goingbirding.co.uk/>)

Local: **TABCG** (<https://tabcg.webs.com/apps/photos/album?albumid=4994877>), **BOC** (<http://berksoc.org.uk/>), **RSPB Local Groups** (<http://eastberksrspb.org.uk/>, <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/groups/wokinghamandbracknell/>, <https://www.reading-rspb.org/>), **Ascot Wildlife** (<http://wildlifeinascot.org/>), **NDOC** (<http://www.newburybirders.co.uk/index.htm>), **BVCT** (<https://www.bvct.org.uk/>), **FOLL** now **LWT** (<http://lavells.org.uk/>), **Bracknell Forest Natural HS** (<http://bfmathistsoc.org.uk/>), **Moor Green Lakes** (<https://www.mglg.org.uk/bird.html>), **Reading District Natural HS** (<http://rdnhs.org.uk/blog/>)

And if you just want to look at pretty pictures, here are a few Pro and semi-Pro Photographers:

Dorian Anderson (<https://www.dorianandersonphotography.com/>), **Jim Almond** (<http://shropshirebirder.co.uk/>), **David Broadbent** (<https://davidbroadbent.zenfolio.com/p30030318>), **Ashley Grove** (<http://www.ashleygrovewildimages.co.uk/engalleries.php>), **Ian Newton** (<https://iannewton.foliopic.com/>), **James Lowen** (http://www.pbase.com/james_lowen/flight)

In some of the above I have given the direct link to the bird photographs on a site rather than to the website's Home address and of course, many of these organisations and individuals also have social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc – but I have restricted my references to their website addresses. There are also a myriad of “commercial” sites that are dedicated to help one organise a birding trip/holiday – but I have tried to exclude any such purely commercial sites.

Okay, Okay, sorry if that was overkill but I hope I have whetted your appetite! Don't just go birding, go browsing.

(My apology to those readers that do not have a digital version of this article and no ready access to the Internet.)

News Snippets

Iain Oldcorn

On 11Mar2019 the Fair Isle Observatory was destroyed in a catastrophic fire and will take months to recover: (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-47515175>)

Moor Green Lakes Group plan to install a Swift Tower on their reserve; they already have a magnificent nest box ready to go; more details hopefully in the next Newsletter.

Do you know that you can report Swift sightings to the RSPB? (rspb.org.uk/swiftsurvey)

More information on work to help Swifts can be found at several places on the RSPB website, for example: ([are your swifts under threat?](#))

Lynx and Cornell Labs join forces: see posting on [BirdForum](#)

That's all for now.

Imagine.....

Jonathan Manley

Imagine: if you could record your bird sightings online (and upload photos and audio) wherever in the world you were (free of charge) so that information could be shared with other birders (who are doing the same), with scientists, educators and conservationists interested to uncover the secrets of migration, the impact of habitat loss and climate change and – most crucially – to have the data to prove what’s really happening out there: if you could identify birding hotspots before you visited a new destination and see details of this week’s sightings or the sightings for the same period last year: if you had a permanent record of the species you’ve seen, the checklists you’ve completed, all being shared with the global family of birders?

Imagine no longer – welcome to eBird; built and run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology which was founded in 1915 to further the science, conservation and study of birds, globally. It is a “not for profit” unit (aka a charity) of Cornell University based in Ithaca, upstate New York. In 2002 the Lab set up eBird, with the motto, “every bird counts”. You can find more info at their website, www.ebird.org where a video describes eBird far better than I can.

Some numbers for you:

- in total 10,417 species recorded in over 32m completed checklists by over 431,000 birders.
- In 2018, 6.5m checklists were submitted and this number grows every year.
- seven of the top 10 birding countries – measured by number of species – are in Central and South America (Columbia is top), where the migration data (supplemented with data from NASA) has helped to create collaboration between origin and destination migration locations to the benefit of the countries concerned, the birders who then become eco-tourists and ultimately to the benefit of the birds themselves.

(As a footnote, the UK is 44th on the (observed) species list.)

I was introduced to eBird in November 2017 by a ranger at Bandhavgarh National Park in India and have never looked back. Before any birding trip, I can see what was most recently seen at the same location and what was there the same time last year. I could – but I don’t – use the eBird app to record each species on my smartphone whilst birding but I prefer to do it after the event. You will be presented with a list of most likely species for the location and time of year and eBird will ask you to provide audio or photographic evidence of anything unusual in terms of species and/or numbers. I can’t imagine being without it and I urge you to give it a try. Happy eBirding!

Membership Matters

Iain Oldcorn bocmembershipec@hotmail.co.uk

2018/19 membership subscription were due on 1 October. The few that have not paid are now being removed from our membership lists and so this will be the last Newsletter that they will receive and, where relevant, their QMR Permit will not be reissued for 2019. Unfortunately, this also means that the RSPB SE Region are no longer supporting us. After these removals we will have 280 members.

If you change your postal or email address please remember to advise me so that we can maintain contact with you; your email address is particularly important to us as using it costs us virtually nothing and is so easy.

For those members with a QMR Permit, I have to report that the problem of access is still unresolved as Thames Water has not yet replaced the locking mechanism for “our” gate with a suitable alternate; so, for the time being we still only have access at the restricted times as set out in the letter accompanying the issuing of the 2019 Permits. We will advise members when TW get their act together.

The Committee is looking to update its procedures for the Safeguarding of Junior members (under 18 years of age); when finalised we will need to approach all those with a Family membership to determine whether or not it applies to them; more details in due course.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in articles in this Newsletter are those of their respective authors and are not necessarily representative of those of the BOC or of any of its Committee Members.



Portrait and Gordon Langsbury Memorial Trophy Winner: Welcome Swallow by Richard Collins



Action Winner: Sanderling by John Absolom



Flight Winner: Skylark by Ewan Jones

..... and the Runners Up were:



Mandarins
Ewan Jones



Splendid Fairy Wren
David Rimes



Australian White Ibis
Richard Collins