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Introduction

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Welcome to the 78th BOC Newsletter. Renton updates us on the BOC’s Swifts initiative, on the improving breeding success of raptors and a surprise at Theale Main Lakes and then reminds us of the downland farm surveys. We have a brief update on Moor Green Lakes work to help Swifts. Then we have the first part of what we as individuals could do to help mitigate climate change. Sean Murphy introduces himself as our New BTO Rep and explains how next year’s International Swan Census is being organised. We have Birding Highlights from last year courtesy of Ken Moore. Sally Wearing and Robert Godden are looking for help from members. As usual, this month’s Gallery is on the last page.

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.

Conservation Corner

Renton.Righelato@berksoc.org.uk



The BOC’s Swift programme has now provided 75 boxes for schools and homes around Berkshire. In Tilehurst, Reading, Crescent Road became a Swift street with the help of SSE who provided a cherry picker to install the boxes (*Ed.*; Photo courtesy Renton). In June, 16 more boxes, built by BOC member Bob Hulley, were put up on eight houses in Hamilton Road by the SSE team, organised by Ailsa Claybourn, our Swift Champion.

Many of our raptors are doing well. An analysis of Red Kite numbers recorded in the annual BTO Breeding Bird Survey shows them continuing to increase rapidly in abundance and Buzzard numbers are still increasing though not so rapidly. Peregrines are breeding at several sites around Berkshire. A young pair on the BT building in Newbury was unsuccessful this year, but, hopefully, will try again in 2020 (*Ed.* see page 2 for an earlier report by Ken White). In Bracknell town centre, at the time of writing they are faring better, with two well-grown chicks in the nest. Thanks to Ken & Sarah White who have been keeping an eye on the Newbury birds and Robin Dryden in Bracknell. Elsewhere we have heard that Goshawks have successfully reared young at an undisclosed site for a second year.

The company seeking to build a housing estate on the banks of Theale Main lake have withdrawn their appeal against West Berkshire Council’s refusal of planning permission. This surprise came during the hearing in May of further evidence on flood risks. What will happen next is by no means clear, but we hope that it will mean the nationally important Nightingale population in the Theale area will be safe for the foreseeable future.



Downland walks are one of my summer pleasures, which can be even more fun when combined with one of Neil Bucknell's farm surveys. Not only are there good numbers of Skylarks, Corn Buntings and Yellowhammers to be seen, but last week I had a delightful family of newly fledged Yellow Wagtails flying around me.



(Ed.; Photos: Corn Bunting – Ken White; Yellow Wagtail – Gordon Langsbury)

Towering Swifts!



Iain Oldcorn

The Moor Green Lakes Group are planning to install a swift tower on their reserve. A magnificent structure has already been constructed (see photo) so now it's simply (?) a matter of getting it installed! As with most endeavours the Group will be calling upon others to help them by sourcing and installing a pole for it and then hoisting the edifice to the top; they are looking to one or more utilities to help out with these next stages.

(Ed.; Photo © Colin Wilson)

If you wish to help indirectly, why not sign the petition "Save our Swifts"; you can read more and sign the petition here:

https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-our-swifts?bucket=email-blast-25_6_2019_swift_kick_topper

Newbury Peregrines

Ken White

Peregrines have been recorded frequenting the Newbury BT Exchange building on numerous occasions since 2008, by numerous observers and documented in the BOC Berkshire Bird Annual Reports; most sightings were in the winter seasons.

On the 1st April this year Sarah White observed a pair on the building. Sarah and Ken visited again on the 12th April and concluded from their behaviour that the pair were showing clear signs that breeding was well under way. The pair were observed mating, and the male was seen bringing prey items to her as well as chasing off intruders such as crows and buzzards. Ken also noticed from his photos that the male was bearing a coded colour-ring, but getting a photo that was sharp and clear enough to read took another four days. Poor visibility, ruffled breast feathers and the join on the ring all got in the way. Eventually all was revealed: 'Black 69'.

Using the www.cr-birding.org website, the coded colour-ringing scheme appeared to be run by Graham Roberts who rings Peregrines reared on Chichester Cathedral with black rings, though the actual numbers on the male bird at Newbury were higher. None the less, Ken sent the report in, and by return came back the reply that Black 69 was indeed one of Graham's chicks, which had been ringed on the 16th May 2016 as a nestling, and that this was the first report of this bird since it fledged nearly three years ago. One wonders where this bird has been since!

Ken and Sarah contacted Alan Parfitt, a stalwart RSPB volunteer, and together they informed onsite BT staff who in turn immediately provided management contact details and within a couple of hours Alan had received assurance from BT that the nesting Peregrines would not be disturbed.

The male, Black 69, continues to regularly provision the female with food. Mrs Newbury, as she is now called, is a much larger and darker stocky bird. She is in partial wing moult in the primaries, and has a broken central tail feather. Also, when perched, her tail is tipped in buff, and sadly she is not ringed. He is paler, noticeably smaller (he is a Tiercel after all) and at present (4th May) he is feather perfect.

Here are three links to Ken White's web albums (they are best viewed on a computer):

[Newbury Peregrines album 1](#) [Newbury Peregrines 2](#) [Newbury Peregrines 3](#)

Climate Crisis

Iain Oldcorn

The climate crisis is impacting on our beloved birds so it would be helpful if we all "did our bit" to reduce our carbon footprint rather than leaving it to everyone else.

It would be unrealistic to expect anyone to revolutionise their lifestyle overnight to minimise their carbon footprint (though some manage it), however, every little change that we each can achieve in migrating to a more sustainable way of behaving must make some difference. Now it's difficult for an individual to alter a government policy on building infrastructure such as power stations, roads or airport runways etc., though we should put pressure on our Councils and MPs about such matters, however, there are many individual actions that we can take.

Background: carbon emissions (plus methane release) make the greatest impact on our climate, the figures are calculated in kilograms or metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted (KgCO₂e or tCO₂e). In terms of tCO₂e per head of population per year the worst countries currently are: Australia (22.8), USA (20.2), Canada (19.5), NZ (16.9), Netherlands (11.5), Germany (11.1), ... UK (7.4), Italy and France (7.2), ...Peru (2.8), India (1.8). Note that calculating all this is quite complicated; for example, my wife's Japanese car was built in France and so it's manufacture counts against French emissions, similarly my shirt that was made in India and the Peruvian peas that I'm having for dinner do not count as UK emissions! It has been estimated that to keep global warming below the 'agreed' 2C degree increase the global average emission needs to be reduced to below 2.1 tCO₂e per person per year. It is calculated that driving the average UK car just 4.4 miles will produce 1 Kg of CO₂ which will melt 650 Kg of glacial ice over the long, long lifetime of the gas.

So, what can the average UK citizen do to reduce their 7.4 tCO₂e? Well, not taking a return economy flight from London to New York would save a massive 1.8 tCO₂e, and not taking as many sea cruises would help. The average cruise ship inflicts between 1.56 and 6.3 tCO₂e on our atmosphere for each passenger carried. That vast 6.3 tCO₂e figure is for an Antarctic cruise and doesn't include the likely flights to/from the port of departure. Reducing one's travelling as the sole occupant of a car by 1000 miles in a year would save on average 0.4 tCO₂e. The KgCO₂e emissions per kilometre per passenger produced by various modes of travel within Europe are: Plane – 0.214, Car – 0.146, Ferry – 0.138, Diesel Train – 0.066, Coach/Bus – 0.036, High-speed Electric Train – 0.030.

To be continued. [This article is inspired by "SOS – Simple Actions That Make a Difference" by Seth Wynes, 2019, Penguin £7.99 (150 A6 pages).]

New BTO Regional Representative, Berkshire

Sean T Murphy

By way of introduction, I'm Sean Murphy (based in East Berkshire) and back in May I took over as the BTO Regional Representative for Berkshire from Sarah and Ken White. Also, and for information, for those who are surveying for the BTO WeBS, I took over the role of Berkshire Local Organiser from January of this year. First and foremost, I would like to give a big 'thank you' to Sarah and Ken White for the terrific support and guidance given to these roles for many years; from a personal angle, they both helped me 'get started' with some of the BTO surveys which I much appreciated at the time.

It's taken a bit of time to acquaint myself with the on-going BTO surveys and understand the needs of the role. However, my background is in ecological work where I am still professionally active, so hopefully I may be able to bring some of this experience to the RR role moving forward. However, there is no doubt that I have much still to learn and get familiar with but I'm looking forward to being a partner with the Berkshire 'team' involved in the surveys from this year onwards. And in that context do not hesitate to contact me (seantmurphy8@gmail.com) about any questions, points etc and I will do my best to help.

For the BTO Breeding Bird Survey, I see many online forms coming in for this survey this year. Many thanks to all for this and I will soon look at these, not least to get a better idea of where in the region what species are being recorded.

As mentioned, wing me an email on any points you may have. Just a note to say that in my current job, I do travel from time to time so if you hear nothing for a few days, it probably means I'm in the air somewhere! But I will get back to you asap. This situation will change next year when I expect to be in the UK most of the time.

International Swan Census, January 2020

Sean T Murphy (seantmurphy8@gmail.com)

The next International Swan Census (for Whooper and Bewick's Swans) takes place during the weekend of 11/12 January 2020. This census takes place across Europe every five years and aims to estimate the current size and distribution of the Iceland Whooper Swan and Northwest Bewick's Swan populations. It is coordinated internationally by the Wetlands International/IUCN Swan Specialist Group; here in the UK, the census is coordinated by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT).

The WWT have asked BTO Local Organisers to pass on information about the survey to WeBS counters to help with the census (as many of the sites likely to have these swans are covered by the WeBS); although these swans will not be common in Berkshire, I have already sent early information about the census to those counters in Berkshire (note that the organisation of the census is still on-going). Further information is available at: <https://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/get-involved/isc-2020/> in case there is wider interest in this census.

If you have any questions please contact me and/or the WWT organiser (kane.brides@wwt.org.uk)

Birding Highlights: August - November 2018

Courtesy Ken Moore

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



Clockwise from top left:

- 28th August – Great White Egret, Hosehill Lake, Theale GPs © Andy Tomczynski
- 25th September – Cattle Egret, Hosehill Lake, Theale GPs © John Absolom
- 28th October – Yellow-browed Warbler, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP © Dave Rimes
- 1st November – Grey Phalarope, Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP © Steven Day

Thanks to Ken Moore for doing the research and to all the photographers.

The BOC Needs You

Sally Wearing secretary@berksoc.org.uk

The BOC is entirely run by volunteers. Without them, there would be no Club. We will soon be sending out the notice for the AGM, which will detail these vacancies:

1. The Chairman, responsible for running meetings and managing the Club
2. The Secretary, responsible for organising and minuting committee meetings and the AGM
3. Four Ordinary Members of the Committee, who are elected for three years
4. The Outdoor Programme organiser, to take over from Ray Reedman.

Could you help us fill any of these positions, either by volunteering yourself or persuading someone else to?

There is more information on our website at: <http://berksoc.org.uk/about/how-you-can-help-the-club/>

Or for an informal discussion please contact me, or our President (renton.righelato@berksoc.org.uk), or Ray Reedman (meander2@hotmail.com)

If you are interested in helping run the Club, but none of the vacancies sound attractive to you, please do still get in touch, as there may be other ways you can help.

Please volunteer – or as Lord Kitchener would have put it: **‘Your Club Needs You!’**

Can You Help? Royal County of Berkshire Show

Robert Godden

The Berkshire Ornithological Club has been granted a stand at this year's Royal County of Berkshire Show, September 21st & 22nd at the Newbury Showground. Our stand will be outdoors in the Countryside Area, so it would be good to have some protection from the British summer and fortunately we have been loaned a gazebo for the weekend! However, as both days will be rather long, we would also welcome a few more volunteers to help man the stand; we could then take turns and have opportunities to check out the other exhibits at the show.

Please contact me for more details; Tel: 07543 800921, email: godden_robert@yahoo.com

Membership Matters

Iain Oldcorn bocmembershipsec@hotmail.co.uk

Those of you who pay by Standing Order do not have to worry about your 2019/20 membership subscription which is due on 1 October. If you do not pay by Standing Order then a renewal form is enclosed/attached to this mailing.

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 not yet fully resolved as Thames Water has not replaced the locking mechanism for “our” gate with a similar mechanism; however, a solution is in sight which will require some change in the administration arrangements. 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 the position alters.

In passing: I am sorry to have to advise you of the death of two long established members of the club. In early July we learned from Jeremy Brock that Clive Balch died in hospital in Alcañiz on 26th May after a short illness following a fall while bird watching; Dr Balch was a life-member of BOC and did much for the ROC on start-up. On 7th July Paul Andrew advised us of the death of his father David Derek Andrew.

Don't Forget Your Copy of WTWBIB

Our latest publication is selling fast; you can pay and collect it at an indoor meeting later this year – but why not make sure you get yours and order it today with the following form?



To the Berkshire Ornithological Club

Please supply copies of *Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire*

*Price £6 (BOC members £5) each
Add £2 for packaging and postage of up to two copies to the same address*

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Please return the completed order form, with your cheque to:

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79 Kennylands Road, Sonning Common, Reading RG4 9JR

Or email to ebp.pitts@gmail.com

Gallery

All photographs © Ewan Jones



Common Tern at Dorney Wetland and Cetti's Warbler at Burghfield GPs



Reed Warbler at Dorney Wetland, Grasshopper Warbler at Southcote Meadow



Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat at Fobney Island