

Introduction/Conservation Corner.....	1
Robert Gillmor Print Auction/Richard Burness	2
Trips: North Kent 25th January/Pagham Harbour 15th March.....	3/4
Beyond Birds/Bird Watching in Unprecedented Times.....	5/6
RBWM Climate Initiatives.....	7
Safeguarding/Membership Matters	8
Puzzles/End of Grouse Shooting?.....	9
IDCD.....	10
Our Newbury Peregrines.....	11
Birding Highlights Apr-Jun 2019/Gallery.....	13/14

Introduction

Iain Oldcorn bocmembershipsec@hotmail.co.uk

Welcome to the 80th BOC Newsletter. Renton explains that much Conservation activity is on hold. You again have the opportunity to bid for a signed Robert Gillmor print (edition 4 of 25). We report the sad loss of Richard Burness – a stalwart member of our BOC and the wider birding community. Robert describes the trips we didn't go on: East to Kent and South to Pagham; then he gives us many ideas for keeping entertained when events are temporarily abandoned. Brian Clews updates us on RBWM initiatives. Some boring admin precedes a page of Puzzles and a snippet on shooting while Finley reminds us to get up early on IDCD. Ken White brings us an update and closeups of the Peregrines nesting in Newbury. Then we have Birding Highlights from this time last year; as usual, this edition's Gallery is on the last page.

Conservation Corner

Renton.Righelato@berksoc.org.uk

It is ironic that, after my plea for surveyors in the last Newsletter, this spring we have had to suspend surveying; other, that is, than garden surveys! Now is the time to join the BTO's Garden BirdWatch, free this year, and perhaps take part in their Garden Wildlife Health survey. The BTO survey provides valuable information on an important bird habitat: in Berkshire, it was estimated that there are around 11,000 ha of gardens, about 8% of land cover in the county. The abundance of birds in gardens is often many times higher than in rural areas dominated by farmland (with a similar species richness, though a somewhat different species mix). So, monitoring what is happening to garden birds is important to our understanding of bird ecology. To take part in the BTO Garden BirdWatch go to <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw>. There is lots of advice on making gardens attractive to birds and other wildlife, for example <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/creating-a-wildlife-friendly-garden/>.

Another casualty of the coronavirus epidemic is our Swift box programme. Stocks are being built up by our gallant Bob Hulley, but we cannot move them or ask people to install them while the movement restrictions are in place. I hope that some of the 75 so far installed attract Swifts when they arrive at the beginning of May - if you have boxes and a suitable sound system, then is the time to start playing their calls.

It was good to hear from Ken White that the Peregrines had started using the nesting platform he had installed on the BT tower at Newbury. Hopefully, there will be webcam footage in the near future. (*Ed. See fuller article later in this edition.*)

Auction of Great Egret Artwork

J.Campbell@rhul.ac.uk

This is your opportunity to buy a beautiful and special artwork by Robert Gillmor. He is a long-standing member of the BOC and he generously donates a painting for the cover of each Birds of Berkshire annual report. Each artwork is relevant to the specific report - the Great Egret on the 2016 report cover celebrates the increasing regularity with which this lovely species is being seen in Berkshire. Robert wants the Club to benefit from the artworks so the proceeds from this auction will go to the Club's funds.



The screen print measures 22 x 19 cm, with a white surround (overall size - 35 x 31.5 cm). It is no. 4 of a limited run of 25 prints. The reserve price is £250, which is lower than Robert's prints cost elsewhere. The print will go to the highest bid received by 31st May.

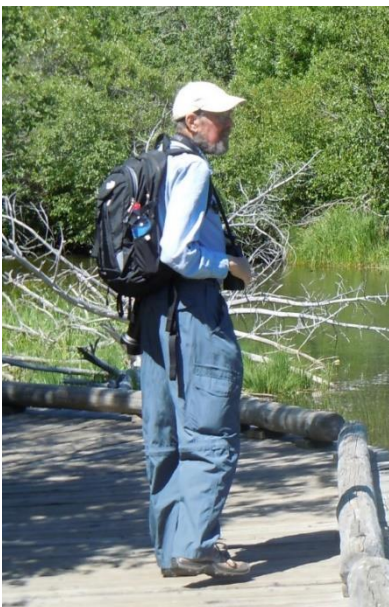
Please send your bids by phone/text to Jane Campbell on 07980076128 or email to J.Campbell@rhul.ac.uk.

Richard Burness 1943 – 2020

Renton.Righelato@berksoc.org.uk

Berkshire County Bird Recorder 2016 -20

Like many birders of his generation, Richard Burness was a birdwatcher from boyhood. As a young man living in Kent, he "stomped" the North Kent marshes in all weathers, when wildfowl numbers were larger than they are now, and was a regular "shingle basher" at Dungeness where he stayed at the Bird Observatory, in the days of Bob Scott's wardenship.



Birds were a passion that he managed to weave into his work life as a meteorologist. He served for 15 years as a meteorological observer on North Atlantic Ocean Weather Ships, from which he provided data on seabirds and cetaceans for research on their populations and he published occasional articles in *The Marine Observer*. On the *MV Quattro Venti*, he worked on a seabird and cetacean census of the Mediterranean, the islands of the British Isles and upwelling areas of the continental shelf for WWF and the Edward Grey Institute. This was important work in the years leading up to the international whaling ban in 1986. For ten years, he lived and worked in Fife, where he was a founder member of the Fife Bird Club in 1985. There he was a WeBS counter for the southern Tay Estuary and low-tide counter at Fife Ness.

Holidays were spent on birding trips across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. As a rather hippie young man in the 1960s, he was something of a pioneer of many of the areas that have since become popular destinations for British birders, like eastern Poland and Morocco. He went several times to the Middle East. One year, with a few friends and his cousin Peter, he drove overland through Europe and Turkey to northern Iran to spend a month recording spring migration along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, something that could not easily be done now. Later, he and Patricia, who he married in 1986, made a series of trips to California, which they loved and to some of the east coast US birding sites.

Scilly had a special place in his life. He made the autumn pilgrimage annually from 1968 to last year. For many years he stayed on the island of St Agnes; he was part of that group of people who made Scilly the birding Mecca that it was to become in the 80s and 90s. More recently, he and Patricia would stay on St Mary's, along with birding friends from Berkshire and across the country.

A few years after they were married, he and Patricia moved to Berkshire, where he worked at the Meteorological Office in Bracknell. After retiring from the Met Office (as Manager of Upper-air Observations and Thunderstorm Location), in 2003, and despite his problem with a rare anaemia, he threw himself into local ornithology, in the field and at his (not always reliable) computer. He was a prolific surveyor and meticulous record keeper. He was a long-standing WeBS counter here as he had been in Scotland and he was an important contributor to the county atlas and to our annual reports.

Four years ago, he took on the job of County Recorder, a crucial role in turning the myriad observations of amateur bird watchers into good citizen science. It is a role that demands knowledge, judgement, sensitivity and, above all, the ability to command confidence and respect from the community. Richard did this wonderfully. His unassuming manner encouraged collaboration. He brought transparency to a sometimes-opaque system. Quietly, he brought together an expert team and reset the county's recording system. He built something we can be proud of and he gained the gratitude and respect of all of us who worked with him.

Richard died suddenly on 29th January 2020, aged 76, with complications arising from thrombocythemia, a bone marrow disease that had required intermittent hospital treatment, but which he did not let dampen his love of birding. He leaves his wife Patricia and his sister, Susan.



BOC Day Trip to North Kent – 25th January 2020

Robert Godden

Six BOC members assembled on a murky Saturday morning at Funton Creek, where a layby on a minor road not far from the crossing to the Isle of Sheppey affords extensive views over mudflats between the Chetney and Barksore Marshes. It was high tide and there was a scattering of common waders and a few Avocets in the middle distance, with Brent Geese and various ducks further out, and in the far distance Marsh Harriers and Common Buzzards were quartering the grazing marshes beyond the mudflats.

We moved on to Elmley NNR for a quick diversion to look for a species that was high on everyone's wish list – Long-eared Owl. In recent days two or three of these birds had been roosting close to the car park. The reserve is no longer owned by the RSPB and we paid our £5 fee at the entrance gate. We took the long approach track slowly, but the large numbers of ducks, Lapwings and Golden Plovers usually present were not apparent this time, and we made do with Marsh Harriers and a Brown Hare. We scoured the bushes behind a pond by the car park without success, but a helpful volunteer who knew the best places to look very quickly struck gold. In reality, the owl wasn't that far away and only a few layers of branches were in the way, but it proved very difficult to see. Over time we were able to combine our views of a handful of feathers and a left eye and turn them into a Long-eared Owl – a typical view of this secretive species. We scanned the adjacent fields as up to nine Short-eared Owls had been present recently, but apparently afternoon was the best time for these.

Our next stop was Shellness at the eastern tip of the Isle of Sheppey, where a rough track passes a line of shacks on the way to the remote Shellness Hamlet community at the far end, with towns of the North

Kent coast ahead across the open sea and the River Swale. This river often provides shelter for sea-going species in rough weather but we found around six Red-throated Divers despite the calm weather. With high tide just an hour away, numbers of waders at the high tide roost were building up – initially many hundreds of Oystercatchers which were later joined by Grey Plovers, Turnstone and Knot. A walk along the seawall in the hope of finding wild geese just yielded Little Egrets, Linnets, many Marsh Harriers and huge flocks of Curlew and Brent Geese. The lack of ducks was surprising, with very few Wigeon, Shoveler and Gadwall, and no Teal or Pintail – maybe they all go to Oare Marshes on the other side of the River Swale these days.

It was time to move on to Capel Fleet where each afternoon in winter birds of prey gather to roost in the reedbed, and where a viewpoint has been made offering a slight height advantage over the flat landscape. Marsh Harriers and Kestrels were common here, and there was a brief view of a ringtail Hen Harrier, and a possible Short-eared Owl was watched over a distant field. Nearby a large flock of Corn Buntings were perching on wires and bramble bushes and Red-legged Partridges scuttled along the roadsides. The morning's murk had never cleared so checking out distant swans for the rarer species was a challenge, especially with white farmyard geese present, but as we drove back we were lucky to see a small flock of Bewick's Swans hiding behind a haystack and a large flock of Russian White-fronted Geese.

Our final stop of the day was a return visit to Funton Creek. High tide had been and gone, and the mud was covered with hundreds of Bar-tailed Godwits and many Avocets. The light, such as it was, was failing but despite thoughts of calling it a day, we gave it another fifteen minutes. A buzzard flew into some trees behind us – a Common Buzzard on closer inspection, but then we got a call from some other birders and soon had our scopes trained on a Rough-legged Buzzard perched high in a tree, its pale head and upper breast contrasting with a black belly standing out well in the gloom. A perfect end to a successful day, and though our day list stood at a modest 62 species, it did include some very special species.

Pagham Harbour – Sunday 15th March

Robert Godden

The last BOC event to go ahead before the Coronavirus shutdown was the day trip to Pagham Harbour on Sunday March 15th. At that time, government advice only impacted indoor gatherings so it was disappointing that the group that assembled at the Pagham Visitor Centre numbered just two, and that included the leader. It was a chilly day that didn't offer much promise of early spring migrants, yet as we walked to the hide overlooking Sidlesham Ferry, a Chiffchaff started singing and gave good views. A selection of common duck species was on the Ferry Pool, numbers of waders such as Lapwing and Curlew were low on account of the low tide in the harbour, but a flock of gulls on the fields revealed several Mediterranean Gulls, some looking very smart in full summer plumage with jet black heads and striking white crescents above and below the eye. We returned to the car park via the tramway which gave us views of more waders including a distant group of Avocets.

Our next stop was Selsey Bill where it was extremely windy. We scoured the sea for divers and grebes without success and there was too much disturbance on the beach for waders to land. A couple of very distant auks sped past. It was soon time to head for the expected shelter of Church Norton, but with lunch and high tide in mind, we headed first for the sea where the wind was blowing as strongly as ever. We picked out a Great Northern Diver in the middle distance and after walking along the spit towards the harbour entrance, we found a tight group of four Slavonian Grebes battling the weather but very hard to observe even though they were quite close to the shore. Birds within the harbour were easier to watch – there was a fine drake Red-breasted Merganser, a Bar-tailed Godwit and groups of Brent Geese and Skylarks along with common waders and duck. From the shelter of the hedge near the hide we could hear another Chiffchaff singing, and in centre of the harbour a flock of 20 Mediterranean Gulls was continually being joined by more in all stages of plumage.

It was now mid-afternoon and there was time for one more stop, Medmerry RSPB. To protect nearby houses from flooding by the sea, the Environment Agency has constructed an inland sea wall and allowed the sea in, creating a variety of habitats. Here we saw Kestrel, Linnets and Green Woodpecker

around the fields and Teal, Gadwall and Redshank on the flood. Closest to the sea are the so-called Stilt Pools where Black-winged Stilts have bred in the past – here we found Greenshank and two Ringed Plovers allowing comparison with two nearby Little Ringed Plovers. The walk back to the car was enlivened by close views of a Barn Owl hunting and lastly by a Yellowhammer, at first zitting unseen in a hedge but eventually revealing itself with its colours further intensified by the final golden rays of the setting sun.

Although we had encountered few spring species and the weather by the sea had made for challenging viewing conditions, by the end of the day we had amassed a total of 71 species and were pleased to have made the effort.

Beyond Birds

Robert Godden

While belonging to a bird club, I'm sure we're all aware of the importance of other forms of wildlife in the world's complex ecological networks, not just for birds but for life itself. Even if we are lucky enough to have a garden, the current lockdown situation is having an impact on the variety of birds that we are seeing. Maybe now is a good time to explore what else the natural world can offer us close to home. There are many opportunities here for learning about new families of wildlife and how to identify them, for practical conservation and for recording sightings.

Many birdwatchers look to butterflies during the summer months when bird activity is quieter. About twenty species could be expected in an average garden and all are easy to identify. Their requirement is a nectar source for the adults and foodplants for the caterpillars. A colourful flowering garden with for example buddleias, sedums, wallflowers and verbenas, and possibly an area of wildflower meadow or a bramble growing against a fence could provide plenty of nectar, but providing foodplants may require some alternative thinking, such as planting nettles in tubs for Peacocks and Commas or retaining flowering Ivy for Holly Blues. My garden has plenty of Garlic Mustard and this is popular with Orange Tip butterflies – by the summer their green caterpillars (and also those of Green-veined Whites) are evident and I try to move caterpillars onto separate plants to discourage their cannibalistic tendencies, and improve the overall chances if discovered by parasitic flies. Then I look out for the chrysalises on the dying Garlic Mustard stalks – they are triangular, brown or bright green, and in the angle



between the main stem and a seed pod. If the dead stalks need to be tidied away or are likely to get damaged, I break off those with a chrysalis, store overwinter in a cold shed, and bring them out when they start to change colour and the weather warms up in the spring (see photo). The Butterfly Conservation organisation has plenty of information about gardening for wildlife, especially pollinators, and also has surveys that you can contribute to with sightings from your garden or neighbourhood. *(Ed. There's also a garden butterfly recording system; and don't forget the local Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation.)*

For more of a challenge, how about getting to grips with dragonflies or bumblebees or ladybirds? There are good resources online to help with identification and field guides are still available from wildlife book stockists offering a mail order service. Moths with their countless number of species may seem daunting, but now is a good time of year to start with limited numbers of species flying compared to the deluge to be expected in summer – if you can operate a moth trap without upsetting your neighbours, they are still available from suppliers, and local moth groups provide helpful summaries of what species can be expected at each month of the year. Spiders, not a personal favourite of mine, may be a good group to study if you don't have a garden.

Turning to flowers our gardens may provide opportunities for seeing species that we've not noticed previously ... just before we pull them up as weeds. As well as the many excellent field guides that are available, there's an app for phones called PlantNet which can somehow identify a plant from a photo

of the plant or its flower, leaf etc. The Plantlife organisation offers many resources for identifying flowers and for creating wildlife-friendly gardens. It will be running a survey of lawns later in spring (“No Mow May”) in which everyone is invited to count the flowers growing in a random square metre of the lawn.

From time to time the Natural History Museum initiates citizen science projects, some of which may be carried out in the garden. A current project is looking into bee-flies – look out for other projects in due course.

If this has inspired you to take up the challenge of looking more closely at other forms of wildlife living near you, then I would encourage you to submit your sightings thereby contributing to the general knowledge of species’ abundance and distribution. If you can access the internet, this is made easier by the various methods on offer – I use IRecord to submit my moth sightings backed up with photos for the more interesting records. Don’t worry about making the odd mistake with identification as unlikely records are detected and queried by a friendly moderator process.

Natural History Book Service (NHBS)	Wildlife books and equipment	https://www.nhbs.com/ 01803 865913
Pemberley Books	Wildlife books	https://www.pemberleybooks.com/ 01753 631114
Watkins & Doncaster	Wildlife books and equipment	https://www.watdon.co.uk/ 0333 800 3133
Anglian Lepidopterists Supplies	Wildlife books and equipment	https://www.angleps.com/ 01263 862068
Butterfly Conservation	https://butterfly-conservation.org/ https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/recording-and-monitoring https://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/ http://gardenbutterflysurvey.org/	
Plantlife	https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/plantlife-launches-no-mow-may	
Natural History Museum	https://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part.html https://naturalhistorymuseum.blog/2020/04/02/bee-flies-are-back-citizen-science/#more-13923	
IRecord	https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/	

Birdwatching in Unprecedented Times

Robert Godden

In these unprecedented times, the health and safety of others and ourselves is the paramount consideration. We are mindful of people whose health puts them at high risk and others whose profession brings them into close contact with people. For those for whom basic survival is not the main concern, the impact of coronavirus is just a source of frustration – at one of the most exciting times of the year for birdwatchers, we cannot get out freely to pursue our hobby.

The first thing that comes to mind in response is to submit all your 2019 bird records!! Even in a normal year, we ask for the previous year’s records to be submitted by the end of March. So please enter any outstanding records for 2019, preferably via the www.berksbirds.co.uk website if you have access to the internet, but also by any of the methods described on page five of the latest annual report.

So, while the possibilities for birdwatching in our gardens or along our exercise route are relatively limited, we needn't give up. At the very least share your interest with others and maybe that will revive a dormant interest or sympathy with the birds around us. Those who write the species accounts for our commoner species in the annual reports have a difficult task as the coverage across Berkshire is extremely patchy. Why not take this opportunity to watch more closely and arrive at some objective assessments of the status and breeding success of such species? You can also sign up to the BTO Garden Birdwatch Survey (www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw) and enter your weekly sightings of birds and other wildlife in your garden – *normally participation requires a subscription, but this year it is free!*

The bird news services are focussing their attention on sightings from gardens to encourage birders to pursue their hobby close to home and to curtail inducements to travel further afield. It's apparent that there is considerable scope for noteworthy sightings (or hearings) and indeed for contributing to the knowledge of the migration of some species. A feature of early April has been the overland night-time migration of Common Scoters and although some birders use sophisticated recording and playback equipment, the calls of these ducks are quite audible without the use of technology. Several have been heard overflying Berkshire this spring and as spring proceeds, other species of ducks and some waders may be heard.

If you have access to the internet, a number of possibilities exist for enjoying birds remotely, and these are briefly listed here:

- Chris Packham's live stream at 10:00 am each day – watch via Facebook
- RSPB Breakfast birdwatch between 8:00 – 9:00 am <https://www.rspb.org.uk/>
- Find of the Day – Fraser Cottington's YouTube videos
- A selection of UK webcams <https://www.carnyx.tv/LiveCameras/WildlifeCameras.aspx>
- Index to bird webcams in UK and around the world, with eagles, ospreys, hummingbirds etc

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HCI2uZW0-j0vQRz2-cUT2KCJ4W_yQHxbbkN70yxbR0Q/pub

A couple of years ago, I was at a meeting of the European Butterflies Group and a speaker was talking about the importance of submitting records to one of the digital databases, the choice of database being not so important as they generally come together at the top level. But he wasn't just referring to records for the year just gone! His prediction, that after my time my notebooks may well survive being recycled but would then languish unread in a box in a loft somewhere, I could see coming true. With notebooks going back to the 1960s, the task for me is daunting, but by entering these historic records of birds and other wildlife to schemes such as BirdTrack and IRecord, those records will have a more lasting value.

Finally, the BOC committee has been working hard to come up with a programme of indoor and outdoor events for the 2020/21 season in the hope that things will have returned to normal by then. In the meantime, stay safe.

RBWM Climate Initiatives

Brian Clews

Councillor Donna Stimpson was among those who led the campaign to get RBWM to declare a Climate Emergency on the back of which real action might be taken to make at least a local contribution to tackling this. The council voted in favour in June 2019 and Donna was appointed to help front up the ensuing ideas.

I am not aware that much of a practical nature has been established yet, but plans *have* been agreed to do less mowing and to create wildflower beds around the town. We have contributed by nominating suitable sites for this work.

Two of the local Wildlife Groups I am involved with (Wild Maidenhead and WildCookham) have been active in promoting other ideas and also taking local action for wayside grassy areas, small commons,

pond creation, garden-wilding schemes and tree surveys. We are supported in these activities by East Berks RSPB and several other borough wildlife groups.

One particular location that both the above groups have been very active in is Battlemead Common, a large area of farmland recently purchased by RBWM and for which several activity groups have been formed under the wider banner of 'Friends of Battlemead'. We have ensured we are represented on all of these groups. We are using situations such as the declared Climate Emergency to hold RBWM to current understandings of the emphasis to be given to ecology on Battlemead Common as against some initial thoughts that it would be used as a 'citizen playground'; so the 'emergency' is already having effect in that regard.

Another sizeable RBWM site where we have actively engaged with RBWM to promote natural history importance is Ockwells Park/Thriftwood. We have conducted surveys, public events, tree-planting and contributed to thoughts the Environment Agency have for creating an element of wetland and flood-management on the site.

Furthermore, as the Borough has never produced a Biodiversity Action Plan, Wild Maidenhead is working to create one themselves which has been indicated as to be adopted by RBWM for implementation into the local planning procedures.

Both of our groups are also working with BBOWT on their East Berkshire Living Landscape initiative, looking at several sites which would benefit for ecological enhancement (the earlier BOA locations).

We are also harmonising the objectives and potential of land owned by National Trust, John Lewis Partnership and RBWM with the aim of maximising the ecological value of every piece of land and protecting them from the worse elements of the Local Borough Plan - which envisages 14,000 new homes in this relatively small part of Berkshire!

Another group I am involved with (and which Theresa May personally endorsed last year) is Bisham Nest Box Group which have been providing bird and bat boxes for all the RBWM parks, local schools and special sites to enhance their value to breeding creatures.

Safeguarding Policy

Sally Wearing

Membership of the BOC is open to people of all ages and we want to encourage young people to be involved in the Club. To make sure that anyone under 18 who participates in the Club's activities are protected, the BOC has recently revised and reissued its safeguarding policy. It is available on our website at <http://berksoc.org.uk/about/constitution/>

Membership Matters

Iain Oldcorn bocmembershipsec@hotmail.co.uk

If you change your postal or email address please remember to advise me so that we can maintain contact with you.

Talking of emails, there are 35 members out of a total of around 270 of you that have not provided us with an email address, which is a pity. If we have your email address it is easier and quicker to contact you when necessary. Also, if we could send you this Newsletter by email rather than printing and posting it to you it would save money and allow us to spend more on conservation.

There are still a few members who have not yet paid their 2019/2020 BOC subscription that was due on 1st October 2019; they are almost all members that have in the past paid by cheque/CafDonate or by their own direct bank transfer. The Treasurer will send out a final reminder to the members concerned.

Those members with a QMR Permit will know that we have asked members not to visit QMR at present. Permits for 2020 have still not been distributed and we are looking at alternate ways of issuing them to members. We will advise members when the situation changes.

PUZZLES Page

Iain Oldcorn

Let's start with a couple of Word Searches; all the hidden words are familiar bird species and most can be seen in the UK. There are 18 in both tables. It shouldn't take long to find them.

T	T	W	W	R	E	N	K	F	O	E
I	Y	A	J	H	N	N	I	O	L	O
R	F	F	H	E	E	E	I	A	O	W
R	E	F	V	C	L	A	G	B	H	R
D	E	A	A	D	E	N	T	I	O	D
I	R	D	F	H	I	N	T	E	R	R
P	D	A	S	T	C	E	O	I	A	E
P	R	U	H	R	T	F	B	T	I	R
E	I	G	N	H	A	K	F	P	S	W
R	I	P	R	N	C	R	G	I	H	O
N	I	O	I	A	O	A	T	O	H	R
C	A	M	L	L	M	C	U	C	K	C
T	A	B	B	L	A	C	K	C	A	P

D	N	I	L	E	R	T	S	E	K	E
F	U	A	S	H	O	B	B	Y	C	I
G	M	R	E	N	N	A	L	G	U	P
M	B	T	B	B	R	M	T	R	D	I
E	E	C	A	N	A	D	A	A	L	P
Y	L	R	A	L	I	R	O	Y	E	I
E	Y	C	L	L	M	A	J	L	H	E
N	L	A	B	I	R	H	I	A	S	S
E	R	J	P	E	N	C	O	G	H	P
D	A	C	K	J	A	O	U	A	D	O
L	I	A	T	N	I	P	G	C	H	R
O	S	T	N	A	R	O	M	R	O	C
G	A	R	G	A	N	E	Y	S	A	K

OK – and now for something a bit different: BOC-U-DO!

This is like SUDOKU but using nine letters rather than the numbers 1 through to 9! Some people, me included, find this more of a challenge than Su-Do-Ku.

Here's an easy one to start with. The rules are like SUDOKU; each Row, Column and 3*3 box must contain each of the chosen letters ACFGLNORY once only.

Starting Letters

	C			Y			R	
N	L						F	Y
		Y	A		F	O		
		L		N		Y		
O			C		Y			A
		R		A		C		
		A	N		C	F		
Y	O						A	R
	N			R			C	

End of Grouse Shooting Is in Sight?

Iain Oldcorn

(Courtesy of: The Guardian 22Dec2019) The Glorious Twelfth may soon be a little quieter in Brontë country. Animal welfare groups are hailing a "landmark" decision by Yorkshire's largest landowner to review the leasing of its land to grouse shoots. Campaigners say it will improve the biodiversity and sustainability of the moors because gamekeepers will no longer burn heather to create the ideal conditions for the birds, something that can damage the underlying peat. In a major shift the utility company has confirmed that it will review the leases on 13 areas of moorland it owns – including

Haworth Moor, synonymous with the Brontë sisters – when they come up for renewal. The decision follows a campaign by the League Against Cruel Sports and Ban Bloodsports on Yorkshire's Moors. "When an existing shooting lease comes up for renewal, we will undertake a thorough review to assess the best option to deliver the required land management for the future," Yorkshire Water [confirmed in a statement](#). "This will be done using our innovative six capitals approach, which assesses the benefits to natural, social, human, manufactured, intellectual and financial capital. This approach ensures all potential benefits of an option are quantified and assessed." The league said it did not believe driven grouse shooting matched any of Yorkshire Water's six capitals and it would pursue alternative land management options.

"This is a significant blow to the shooting industry and a major win for the people of Yorkshire," said Nick Weston, the league's head of campaigns. "At least 700,000 grouse are shot for so-called 'sport' every year in the UK."

Yorkshire Water's move reflects mounting concerns about the practice of burning as a land management technique. "Tenants will only be allowed to burn in exceptional circumstances where they can demonstrate that intervention is needed but alternative measures aren't safe to deliver," it said in its statement which acknowledged that "healthy catchments also help to combat climate change by sequestering carbon". The company is to rewrite its leasing contracts so that its land tenants will be required to restore and improve the natural environment. It will also impose a zero-tolerance approach to wildlife crime that will see leases revoked if there is evidence that birds of prey or other grouse predators have been deliberately harmed.

International Dawn Chorus Day - Sunday 3rd May 2020

Finley Hutchinson

As some of you may already know, International Dawn Chorus Day is coming up soon, every year taking place on the first Sunday of May - this year that's the 3rd. Normally, this day and the week either side is the time when local nature reserves organise early morning walks; waking up and getting out early to experience the incredible sound of nature waking up, with the summer migrants back and in full song and the chance of a winter lingerer or something rare turning up as well.

The last two years, I've got up at 4:30am and headed out to my local patch for an organised walk. These have been unforgettable experiences, hearing my first (and only) Nightingale and seeing things like Common Sandpiper and Cuckoo for the first time also. It's truly incredible to stand there in the darkness, the human world not yet polluting the air with noise, as hundreds of birds serenade you with song from every side!

Obviously, that's not going to happen this year. There'll be no organised events with groups getting together to share in the magic of the Dawn Chorus. But I'm going to get up at 5am anyway, and I'm trying to get as many people as possible to join me. Set up the deckchair in the garden, and relax as you absorb the sounds of nature. Coronavirus may have ruined the social aspect of these walks, but it can't take away the magic!

Please share this far and wide; you're more than welcome to copy and share this but otherwise write up your own experiences, tell all your friends! Let's see how many people we can get outside in the garden at 5am on the 3rd May, discovering a beautiful side of the natural world not usually witnessed.

The International Dawn Chorus Day is usually shared using #IDCD but this year I'll be using #MyGardenIDCD, please use this to spread the word and share your experience on the day. We may not be able to visit the same places as last year, or see the same people as last year, but we won't let Covid-19 bring us down!

Stop Press: Newbury BT Peregrines update 17th April 2020

Ken White

"Our" Newbury Peregrines were in possession of the BT telephone Exchange building rooftop and window ledges all winter.

Over the Christmas and New Year period I constructed a Peregrine nest box (1.0 x 0.75 metres) using a design developed by Nick Dixon of Exeter Peregrines. Using 18mm plywood, screwed batons on every joint and finished with Ronseal exterior varnish, we took the box for instalment to the Newbury BT Exchange building on the 18th January. But it was far too windy and wet to venture out onto the rooftop, so the best we could do was store it in a holding room at the top of the building ready for the final positioning and fixing into place. As you will probably recall, the severe winter weather continued almost unabated to the point where the managing agents CBRE said that they would have to use their own technicians to get the job done. This they kindly did on 6th March.



For various reasons it had proved difficult to set up a video webcam on the BT building, so as to allow us to monitor the nest box, Jason Fathers fitted a 4G Trail camera the following day which was set up to send motion-activated photos over the 4G network to a dedicated mobile phone. Sadly, the camera has failed to send out any photos, and it was mutually agreed that it was too late to inspect the camera for fear of deterring or disrupting the Peregrines from exploring their new home and so it was back to good old-fashioned observation and deduction; or was it?

On the day that the box was installed, we had just arrived on Skye to arrange and set up our book launch, planned for the 19th March, linked up to a Scottish Natural Heritage workshop day at Staffin. However, thanks to the Coronavirus pandemic that was rapidly unfolding, the event was cancelled two days before the planned date, so on the 18th we rushed home via Caerlaverock and the Nith estuary - for a picnic and brief break – before arriving home mid evening.

On the 21st March we went to the Newbury Sainsbury's for a "click & collect" from the car park to avoid having to go inside; we spent half an hour observing. Several window ledges were stuffed with carcasses, and yet Black 69 came in with another offering. He circled twice and landed on the high girder of the radio mast, and Mrs Newbury joined him there.





He then went to the high ledge and she joined him there and in a fairly dignified way took it from him; they both stood there for a while before she slipped down out of sight presumably to cache it. While she did that Black 69 flew briefly round and landed next to the new nest box. He just sat there next to it, watching the world go by.

On 6th April we went for another "click & collect" and found Black 69 slumbering on a high window ledge in the spring sunshine, his eyes actually shut. Next to him a ready-meal was stashed in the corner. No sign of Mrs N; maybe she was laying an egg or maybe she was even incubating them.

If she successfully lays a clutch then, as an experienced pair, we could reasonably expect her egg laying to have commenced a little earlier than last year. I have checked numerous webcams around the UK, and while two are "on time" several seem to be running a bit later than usual. In sync with other pairs we can therefore expect the feeding of chicks to start around early to mid-May, and if this happens then the successful fledging of any young would probably be early to mid-June.

Due to the Coronavirus lockdown we are unable to make any further visits. Any observations by passing birders would be most welcome.

Here's a link to my latest photo album: [Ken White Newbury BT Peregrines March 2020](#)



Birding Highlights: April - June 2019

Courtesy Ken Moore and the photographers

Here's hoping we see similar spectacular species in the next few months this season!



[Avocet, Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP](#), 13th April 2019

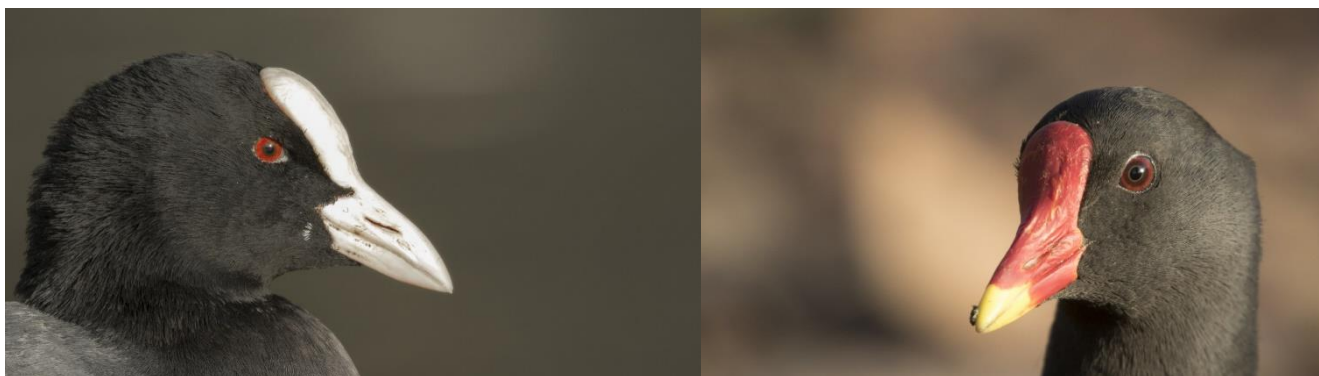
© [Andy Tomczynski](#)



[Wood Warbler, Dinton Pastures CP](#), 1st May 2019
© [Roger Stansfield](#)
iPhone record shot



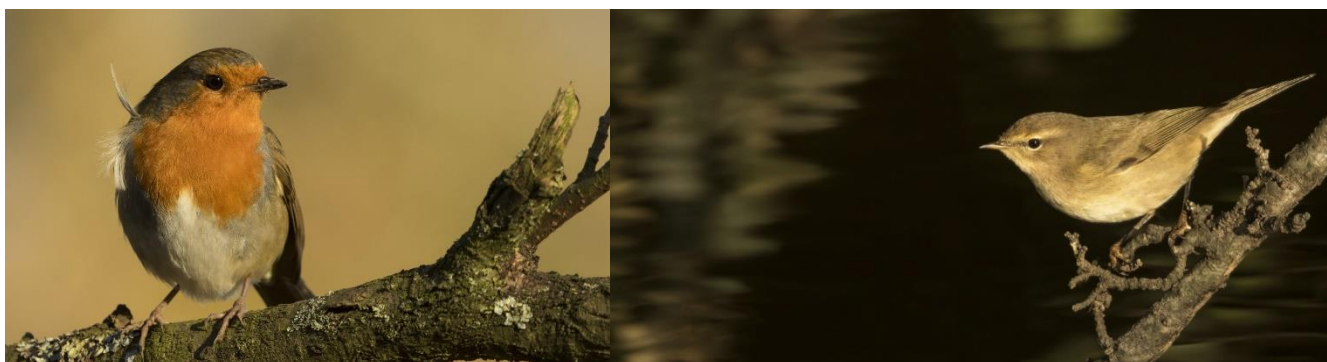
[Black Redstart, Emmbrook, Wokingham](#), 2nd June 2019
© [Andy Tomczynski](#)



Coot and Moorhen at Whiteknights Lake, Reading.



Mandarin at Whiteknights Lake, Reading.



Robin at Whiteknights Lake, Reading and Chiffchaff at Dorney Wetlands.

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.