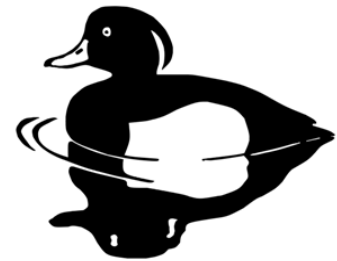


**Newsletter No 86
December 2021**



New/Returning Features This Month

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Editorial

Iain Oldcorn bocmembershipec@hotmail.co.uk

We hope you enjoy this 86th BOC Newsletter. Here’s another roundup of birding delights and information. Robert whets the appetite by introducing our serendipitous discovery of “The other BOC”; as one of its Reading members reported in the winter 2020/21 Newsletter of their BOC: “In December I counted 312 mergansers on our lake” [what the heck!]. Later Robert tries to sell you something; while Sean Murphy, our BTO Rep, brings us up to date and later Sally goes Batty. And don’t miss the start of Ray Reedman’s guides!

The Other BOC

Robert Godden

Last week we received a brief message in which an observer reported a Bald Eagle carrying a rabbit and being chased by a Red-tailed Hawk. Thinking that Marek, our County Recorder, would require a bit more detail I was ready to discard the message, but then wondered how it had reached us. It turned out that the location, Wyomissing, was in Berks County, Pennsylvania, USA. With further delving, I learnt that Berks County is home to another BOC (the Baird Ornithological Club) and that explained how the message had inadvertently come to us. The club is based in the state's main town, Reading - where else?! Given these coincidences, we have contacted this other BOC, congratulated them on celebrating their 100th anniversary this year and suggested the possibility of developing some links between the two clubs, to which we have received an encouraging response.

Watch this space!

Possible Avian Flu at Hosehill

Cathy McEwan

Sadly four dead Swans were found at Hosehill on the morning of 26th November. This is highly unusual. The birds have been removed for examination but at the time of writing the cause of this incident isn’t known.

Because of the current national outbreak of Avian flu strain H5N1, BBOWT and DEFRA have been advised. This strain can be contracted by humans so if you come across any dead birds you should not touch them and it’s also a good idea not to let your dog near them.

Updates on the cause will be posted on the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group Facebook page, advised to TABCG members by email and displayed on the BOC website.

Any sightings of multiple dead wild birds should be reported directly to DEFRA (on 03459 335577).

At our AGM in November, Bob Lyle was elected to the BOC Committee. Bob has been a birdwatcher since he was a boy and he has become increasingly active in the last twenty or so years both at home and abroad. Newbury based, he is Vice Chair of the Newbury District Ornithological Club and is a very active member, looking after the Club's interest in Lower Farm Gravel Pit and organising Monday trips to the coast and occasional weekend trips. As well as his work at Lower Farm, he has been organising conservation work parties at Aldermaston GPs, and elsewhere, and is a keen contributor to bird surveys.

We are delighted to have him on the BOC Committee, to which he will bring considerable experience and greater knowledge of the west of the County.

**Books For Sale****Robert Godden**

The BOC has been offered the following books to sell in aid of its Conservation Fund:

Pfarr, M, Limbrunner, A. The Breeding Birds of Europe - A Photographic Handbook: Sandgrouse to Crows. Croom Helm, London 1982. hbk, vgc.	£3
Pfarr, M, Limbrunner, A. The Breeding Birds of Europe - A Photographic Handbook: Divers to Auks. Croom Helm, London 1981. hbk, vgc.	£3
Flegg, J. A Notebook of Birds 1907-1980. Macmillan 1981. hbk, vgc.	£4
Robinson, P. The Birds of the Isles of Scilly. Christopher Helm, London 2003. hbk, vgc.	£3
Hollom, P A D. Popular Handbook of British Birds. Witherby 1980. hbk, vgc.	£3
Hollom, P A D. Popular Handbook of Rarer British Birds. 2nd edition. Witherby 1980. hbk, vgc.	£4
Cooper, J. Birdfinder: A Birder's Guide to Planning North American Trips. ABA 1995. Spiral Bound, vgc.	£4
Hayman, P, Marchant, J, Prater, T. Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World. Christopher Helm, London 1986. hbk, vgc.	£5
Smout, A M. The Birds of Fife. John Donald Pubs 1986. sbk, vgc.	£2
Keith, S, Gooders, J. A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. Collins 1980. sbk, vgc.	£2
Svensson, L. Identification Guide to European Passerines. 3rd edition. Stockholm 1984. sbk, vgc.	£4
Woolley, S. Birding by Bike - the Hampshire Big Year 2005. Private 2005/6. sbk, vgc.	£1
WeBS. Waterbirds in the UK 2006/07. BTO, Thetford 2007. sbk, vgc.	£3
WeBS. Waterbirds in the UK 2008/09. BTO, Thetford 2009. sbk, vgc.	£3
WeBS. Waterbirds in the UK 2009/10. BTO, Thetford 2010. sbk, vgc.	£3

WeBS. Waterbirds in the UK 2010/11 . BTO, Thetford 2011. sbk, vgc.	£3
Bruun, B, Svensson, L. The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe . Newnes 1986. hbk, vgc.	£2
Harrison, P. Seabirds of the World: A Photographic Guide . Christopher Helm, London 1987. sbk, vgc.	£4
Gibbons, D W, Reid, J B, Chapman, R A. The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991 . Poyser 1993. hbk, vgc.	£3
Fisher, J, Peterson R. The World of Birds . MacDonald 1964. hbk, vgc.	£2
Gilbert, G, Gibbons, D W, Evans, J. Bird Monitoring Methods . RSPB/BTO 2011. sbk, vgc.	£4
Lehman, P. A Birder's Guide to Metropolitan Areas of North America . ABA 2001. Spiral Bound. vgc.	£3
Kemper, J, Taylor, D. Birding Northern California . Falcon 1999. sbk, vgc.	£3
Moore, D. Birdwatching Guide to Florida . Arlequin Press 1997. sbk, vgc.	£3
Robertson, H, Heather, B. Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand . OUP, Oxford 2001. sbk, vgc.	£4
Zim, H S, Robbins, C S, Bruun, B. Birds of North America . Golden Guide 1983. sbk, vgc.	£3
Jennings, M. Birds of the Arabian Gulf . Allen & Unwin 1981. hbk, vgc.	£3
BBOWT. Where to go for Wildlife . BBOWT 2000 (6th print). sbk, vgc.	£3
Parmenter, J, Neville, B, Emkalns, D. New Mexico Bird Finding Guide . New Mexico OS 2002. Spiral Bound. vgc.	£4
Duivendijk, N V. Advanced Bird ID Guide: The Western Palearctic . New Holland 2010. sbk, vgc.	£3
Sibley, D A. Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America . 4th edition. Knopf, USA 2008. sbk, vgc.	£4
Sibley, D A. Field Guide to Birds of Western North America . 6th edition. Knopf, USA 2007. sbk, vgc.	£4
Sibley, D A. Field Guide to Birds of North America . Knopf, USA 2001 (4th print). sbk, vgc.	£5
Peterson, R. Field Guide to Western Birds [N. America] . Houghton Mifflin 1961. sbk, vgc.	£3
Peterson, R. A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies . Houghton Mifflin 1980. sbk, vgc. (Two copies).	£3
[Photographic] Field Guide to North American Birds: Western Region . Audubon 1977. sbk, vgc.	£2
[Photographic] Field Guide to North American Birds: Eastern Region . Audubon 1977. sbk, vgc.	£2
[Photographic] Field Guide to North American Birds: Eastern Region . Knopf, USA 1994. sbk, vgc.	£2
Seago, M J. Birds of Norfolk . 2nd edition. Jarrold, Norwich 1977. sbk, fc.	£2
Gladwin, T and Sage, B. The Birds of Hertfordshire . Castlemead, Ware 1986. hbk, gc.	£3
Cox, S. A new guide to the Birds of Essex . Essex Birdwatching and Preservation Society, Ipswich, 1984. hbk, gc.	£3
Frost, R A. The Birds of Derbyshire . Moorland, Buxton, 1978. hbk, gc.	£4
Payn W H. The Birds of Suffolk . 2nd edition. Ancient House, Ipswich, 1978. hbk, gc.	£5

Taylor, D W, Davenport, D L and Flegg J J M (eds). <i>The Birds of Kent</i> . Kent Ornithological Society, 1981. hbk, gc.	£10
Radford, M G, <i>The Birds of Berkshire and Oxfordshire</i> . Longmans, London, 1966. Hardback.	£15
Clark Kennedy, A W M. <i>The Birds of Berks and Bucks</i> . Eton and London, 1868. hbk, gc.	Offers over £100

vgc: very good condition; gc: good cond.; fc: fair cond.; hbk: hardback; sbk: softback

Postage charges will be added if it's not possible to collect the books. Please contact me if interested - first come, first served except where an offer is invited when I'll take the best offer received by 31st Dec 2021.

BTO Surveys in Full Swing Again!

Sean Murphy

First and foremost, a big thank you to all of those who take part in the surveys; many thanks for your contributions!

After the major lockdowns as a result of the pandemic, contributions to the BTO surveys have made a major comeback on a national scale. For example, as of early October, data for 2778 survey squares across England had been submitted for one of BTO's 'core' surveys, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). This tremendous effort was reflected across the Berkshire BTO region with over 60 (87%) of the allocated squares covered in 2021. Similar efforts by volunteers have been made for other major BTO surveys, such as the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). All of the individual surveys make an important contribution to keeping track of how bird populations are faring in these times of changing landscapes, climate and other factors.

Just looking at the top few species, a few 'early' summary statistics from the 2021 BBS, Berkshire, indicate that the most numerous reported (in terms of total number of individuals, in descending order) were: woodpigeon (100% squares), blackbird (100% squares), rook (52% squares) and blue tit (100% squares). The first two species, along with the blue tit, were clearly also the most widespread across the county but species such as the song thrush and chiffchaff were also reported as widespread with these particular two falling in 9th and 10th places (both from 94% of squares). Considering only land bird records, sadly the rarest species reported for the BBS included the grey partridge and corn bunting (both from just 2% of squares), two farmland species which many will know were more numerous in previous decades; these declines reflect national declines which have been linked to changes in farming practices. However, one farmland species which is also declining nationally, the skylark, seems to be doing well in parts of west Berkshire with 10 or more individuals reported from at least four independent squares in that area.

For the WeBS, there are no early data summaries for the 2020-2021 season, but the data for this time last year (the 2020 Berkshire November count) indicates that coot, followed by tufted duck, gadwall, and then pochard, were the most commonly recorded species for that month. Interestingly, there were also a few records of red-crested pochard.

Finally, and just to note, the BBS team at BTO HQ have recently made some additions to improve the functionality of the on-line data system. In particular volunteers can now see the average dates of their previous years' 'early' and 'late' surveys to facilitate planning of future dates. This can be accessed via a 'blue button' that lies next to the box that shows the survey squares allocated to the volunteer after logging in. Those who participate in the BBS survey will know that as far as possible, it's important for data quality to try and keep to the same date for the surveys year on year.

The first BOC outdoor trip of the 2021-22 programme was an evening bat walk at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve, led by Elaine Charlson. I don't particularly enjoy walking around unfamiliar territory after dark, but I couldn't resist the chance to accompany an experienced bat watcher and conservationist for an introduction to the bats of the area. Elaine is involved with the Berks & South Bucks Bat Group; see <http://berksbats.org.uk/> for information about the group and its activities.

I am very glad that I went. The walk was delightful – not only did we see and 'hear' many bats, but we learnt a lot about them, including some tips on how to identify them. We were lucky with the weather; the forecast was not good, but it turned out to be warm and almost dry.

We met at the duck feeding platform at the lake and Elaine started the evening by telling us about the bats she was hoping would be around. She had some bat detectors with her, so we could each have one to use during the walk. She also gave us some leaflets about bats from the Bat Conservation Trust, about identifying and encouraging them to visit our gardens.



After the introduction, we took a slow stroll around the woodland and the lake. We soon heard and saw our first bats, Common Pipistrelles. These lived up to their name, as it was the species we heard most on the trip, but there were also some Soprano Pipistrelles around. Elaine gave us excellent descriptions of the sounds they make, including how to tell when they catch something. Both species sound like a "wet slap", but at different frequencies. Elaine showed us the difference in the sonograms on her tablet, showing us the pattern and the frequency. For both the Pipistrelles, the sonogram was shaped like a hockey stick,

but the Sopranos were at a higher frequency.



The third species of the evening put in an appearance when we reached the lake itself; Daubenton's were hunting for insects over the water. They sounded like rapid machine gun fire! We were also able to see how fast and low they fly when Elaine briefly illuminated them with her torch.

As you can tell, I enjoyed the whole evening. Bats are easily overlooked, but it is well worth seeking them out and learning more about them.

(Ed. Photos of Common Pipistrelle and Daubenton's bats courtesy, and copyright of: James Shipman.)

Here's the answers to the last edition's "another twist on an old theme, hidden words now hiding birds". There were 18 words hidden in the grid that are anagrams of well-known birds; for example, the word 'octaves' appeared in the grid running from square F10 to L10, being an anagram of 'Avocet'. (The numbers and letters round the edges are to help spot the location of the answers.)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	A	B	E	S	E	U	G	O	R	Y
B	O	G	J	S	C	N	C	I	I	V
C	T	N	N	A	C	R	E	B	P	R
D	B	I	K	P	N	O	G	O	P	P
E	R	R	L	U	I	N	R	B	E	O
F	E	E	A	T	P	N	E	T	D	O
G	T	D	A	W	S	N	E	N	L	C
H	L	N	U	A	L	R	T	S	U	T
I	E	A	I	O	I	E	S	U	F	A
J	K	L	E	S	A	T	R	S	M	V
K	S	S	E	T	T	S	U	R	R	E
L	L	D	T	E	S	S	K	U	A	S

- 1 A9-A3 Rogues (Grouse)
- 2 K1-E1 Skelter (Kestrel)
- 3 K2-B2 Slandering (Sanderling)
- 4 K5-D5 Tailspin (Pintails)
- 5 K6-F6 Stern (Terns)
- 6 A9-F9 Ripped (Dipper)
- 7 A3-F8 Escort (Scoter)
- 8 D4-H8 Pines (Snipe)
- 9 L2-G7 Desire (Eiders)
- 10 E1-A5 Rinse (Serin)
- 11 L6-H1 Steal (Teals)
- 12 D7-H7 Greet (Egret)
- 13 C3-C7 Nacre (Crane)
- 14 C1-G5 Tilts (Stilt)
- 15 F10-L10 Octaves (Avocets)
- 16 L9-G9 Armful (Fulmar)
- 17 L6-L10 Skua (Auks)
- 18 D1-J7 Brawler (Warbler)

And over xmas, continuing the theme of cryptic clues, can you identify the following birds:

- 1. Petty or grand at hostelry (5)
- 2. With stealth through a copse (11)
- 3. East European with some rouge (7)
- 4. Gossip on a boulder (9)
- 5. Flippin' sea shore visitor (9)
- 6. Meadow food (9)
- 7. Expensive seafood - grabbed! (13)
- 8. Practiced at backfilling (8)
- 9. Segment of a mountain (9)
- 10. Small feline, Arise! (9)
- 11. Precious and impressive golf score (6,5)
- 12. Pastime (5)
- 13. Abundant Rotate (6,4)
- 14. Aquatic track (5,4)
- 15. Encore chuck (7)
- 16. Opportunistic promenade thief used to the cold (7,4)
- 17. Littoral Scottish Musician; many (6,9)
- 18. With a grievance and a face like thunder (5,6)
- 19. Sometimes after supper in a hooley (11)
- 20. Verbal attack (5)
- 21. The cost of a close one (9)
- 22. Tomfoolery at height (7)
- 23. Famous heather (8)
- 24. Upset invoice (9)
- 25. Burning ridge (9)
- 26. Flags etc. over wet ground (4,7)
- 27. Blonde peen ball (12)
- 28. By arrangement, a singing rags shopper (11,7)
- 29. Contributes to a comfortable night (5)
- 30. Found singing, perhaps, at a Thames crossing? (8,7)
- 31. Roll a sheep (6)
- 32. A stoker with value to hand (9)
- 33. Pennants above the white stuff (4,7)
- 34. With legs from LFC and a manager namesake (8)
- 35. Regal and says nothing (4,4)

36. At a pump near the top end of the scale to 12 (5,6)
37. Listens to GQT upon arrival from the South (6,7)
38. Beer in the evening? No, later (8)
39. The magician (6)
40. The almighty entered a pub and told an amusing story (3-6,6)
- 41 With no short anecdotes and a sharp end (4-6,4)

42. This runner is well dressed from the high street (8,7)
43. One of the five in arable country (8)
44. Female relative (6)
45. Valuable observer (9)
46. Sharp story (7)

(Ed. With thanks to Joan Pearson.)

What's That Bird?

Iain Oldcorn

If, like me, you have been wondering what to do in the long winter evenings then help is at hand. Following up on "Coming Soon to a Computer Near You" in our last Newsletter, Sally and Jane have worked hard on converting Ray Reedman's Powerpoint presentations on bird identification and here are the links to the first four of his tutorials on YouTube. (Please note: there is no sound in these recordings; you may adjust the playback refresh rate in the "Settings" option and the picture format by its adjacent icons.)

This is what is available at present (Dec 2021):

Introduction – a short guide to the full set of videos (1 minute 57 secs)

<https://youtu.be/XgTI093JtHs>

What's that Wader? – Part 1 (21.19)

<https://youtu.be/Cy3H8jkBMqs>

What's that Wader? – Part 2 (18.20)

<https://youtu.be/m6gcxRiC3ps>

Webbed Sights, Wildfowl, Part 1 – Ducks (29.32)

https://youtu.be/gQ_PDIhhMw

Webbed Sights Part 2, Geese, Swans and Shelducks (17.11)

<https://youtu.be/815puE0L-Rc>

Make a good job of it, as the questions will follow in our next issue. Just joking ... maybe!

Committee Notes

Jane Campbell

The committee was pleased that so many people attended the recent AGM with 70 members present either at Reading University or online.

We welcome Bob Lyle to the committee and once again thank Ray Reedman who has retired as Outdoor Programme Secretary after many years of invaluable service.

The minutes, Chairman's Report and Birding highlights can be seen at:

<http://berksoc.org.uk/about/agm-reports-and-minutes/>

Here are some of the exciting sightings around this time last year; will these next few months produce similar interesting observations. (Thanks to the photographers for permission to reproduce these: RS – Roger Stansfield, MW – Marek Walford, AT – Andy Tomczynski; all rights reserved.)



RS: Ruddy Duck (Winter season)



MW: Little Gull (April)



MW: Yellow-browed Warbler (January)



AT: Bar-tailed Godwit (April)



AT: Firecrest (February)



AT: Scaup (April)



AT: Common Crossbill (March)



MW: Spotted Redshank (April)

Red Kite Persecution?

Ken White



This Red Kite came over near BT Newbury this morning (24Oct). It is in pristine condition, or so I thought until I zoomed in the photo....looks like a .22 air rifle hole to me



Membership Matters

Iain Oldcorn

Please remember to advise any changes to your postal or email address so that we can maintain contact; e.g., to email links for our Zoom presentations and their recordings.

I experience intermittent difficulties in emailing notices to members. Typically, I get a message such as:

- The address you sent your message to wasn't found at the destination domain
- The Domain Name System (DNS) reported that the recipient's domain does not exist.

Users of Talktalk and Demon seem regularly to give me such problems, though they are not the only email service providers that seem to be unreliable; maybe there are volume restrictions on the number of emails their customers may receive or retain in their inbox!?

At the time of writing (26 Nov 2021) 23 members haven't renewed their subscription and so this is probably the last Newsletter and communication from me unless they take action.

Good News; our annual subscription rates remain unchanged for a further year!

(Disclaimer: The views expressed in articles in this Newsletter are those of their respective authors and may not be representative of those of the BOC or of any of its Committee.)

The News Headlines

Iain Oldcorn

- **Birdfair (Rutland Water's Glastonbury of Birdwatching) cancelled after 30 years** - concerns over carbon footprint of international attendees
- **Shell Pulls out of Cambo** – "economics of project uncertain"
- **Center Parcs expansion causes dismay** – concern over reported plans for a 6th UK site on ancient woodlands at Oldhouse Warren in Sussex; for details follow this link: [Center Parcs and Oldhouse Warren | Sussex Wildlife Trust](#)
- **HS2 scaleback** – some ancient woods, such as Nor Wood near Sheffield, now face a brighter future
- **[RSPB's 2020 Birdcrime report](#)** reveals that North Yorkshire is again the worst place in the UK for the illegal killing of birds of prey and tops its table for the seventh year in a row. RSPB says that much of the persecution is linked directly to driven grouse shooting and has called for it to be regulated. The figures in the 2020 report are the highest numbers recorded since the first Birdcrime report in 1990. Twenty-six of 137 confirmed incidents occurred in North Yorkshire of which two thirds were related to grouse shooting; victims in the county included: 16 buzzards, two peregrine falcons, two red kites and one goshawk.

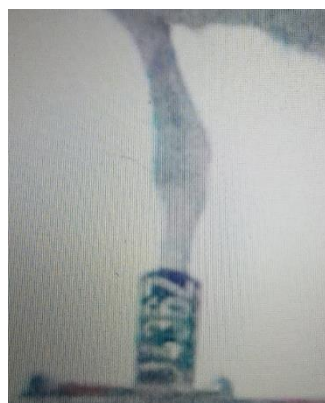
This year, Patrick Crowley organised a survey of nesting Peregrines in Berkshire. Clearly Peregrines are now well-established. There were at least seven sites with established pairs and at least three breeding attempts appear to have been successful. Bracknell, Reading, Newbury, Slough and Maidenhead all host Peregrines on tall buildings, though not all were successful this year, and there are further pairs using electricity towers in several places. Our Conservation Fund has made a grant for two nest boxes that we hope will increase chances of success.

In contrast to the advance of our Peregrine population, House Martins, at least in Reading, seem to have had a hard time in 2021. A survey organised by Sarah White for the RDNHS found no nesting House Martin in eleven 1km squares that had been occupied in a previous survey. Only one site in Reading was found to have them in 2021, though nesting was not confirmed. Let's hope 2022 will be a better year for this delightful species.

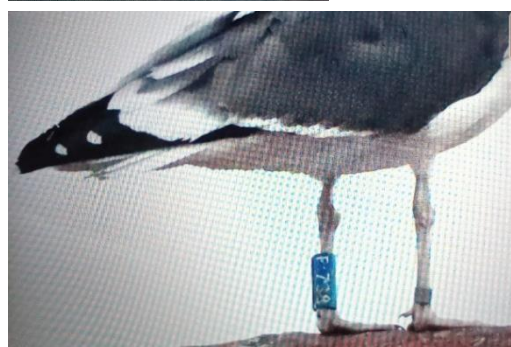
Interesting Sightings**Ken White**

It was interesting to note that Patrick Crowley found the colour-ringed Newbury Peregrine juvenile "Blue YL" (from the 2020 brood) roosting on a church in Maidenhead back in late June still sporting her juvenile plumage, but she has not been found since; the juvenile plumage will have been moulted out so she will have taken on the adult plumage by now.

Black-headed Gull "Green J0L1" has returned to Newbury Wharf & Victoria Park for the 3rd consecutive winter. It was ringed as a 2nd calendar year bird in an Oslo suburb park (with a lake and people feeding the birds) in May 2016; I first found it on 4Dec2019 while walking the dog along the Kennet after completing a Newbury Peregrine monitoring session. I do find it extraordinary that no one else in Newbury or the UK has reported it.



Lesser Black Backed Gull Colour-ring "Black J436Z" has also been seen, this time arguing with a hoard of other gulls outside Newbury's KFC at 06.30am in the morning of 19th September, while I was searching for the Newbury Peregrines. In the low light I managed to read the ring code and submitted it (4Dec2021). Again, just like the Norwegian Black-headed Gull "Green J0L1" and the Polish-ringed Black-headed Gull "Yellow T48T" that was eaten by the Peregrines last summer, this is the first ever confirmed sighting in the UK of this bird.



And finally, for now, this was another one-day sighting of a Lesser Black Backed Gull; "Blue F:739" found while monitoring the Newbury Peregrines.....any code starting with F: was ringed on Flatholm Island near Cardiff. This bird had been seen in northern Spain before turning up in Newbury (good choice). It seems that The Wharf's reputation as a gull-feeding station is becoming widespread gull knowledge thanks to the kind folk of Newbury and KFC customers.



**Hen Harrier; Compton Down; 30Aug2021
(present for several days)**



Ruff; Sulhamstead Abbots; 7Sep2021



Wryneck; Greenham Common; 3Sep2021



**Turnstone; Queen Mother Reservoir;
14Sep2021 (one of six)**



**Red-backed Shrike; Eldridge Park,
Wokingham; 5Sep2021**



**Leach's Petrel; Queen Mother Reservoir;
8Oct2021**

And finally, a message from your committee – have a pleasant Christmas and New Year.