



**BERKSHIRE
ORNITHOLOGICAL
CLUB**

**Newsletter
No 87
April 2022**

CONGRATULATIONS
Berkshire Ornithological Club
On 75 years of bringing people together
for the love of birds!

Many Happy Returns
as you continue advocating for birds
and for the natural world.

From the
Baird Ornithological Club
Berks County, Pennsylvania, USA
February 2022



New/Returning Features This Month

P2 – Swifts
P3 – Walks: Keyhaven/Moor Green
P4 – BTO Main Survey Season
P5 – Walk: Wishmoor Bottom
P6 – What’s That Bird?
P7 – House Martin Conservation
P9 – Chairman’s Chat
P10 – Trip: Stanpit Marsh

P11 – BOC Skills
P12 – Trip: The New Forest
P13 – The Indoor Season
Our Regular Articles
P2 – This Index/Editorial
P6 – Puzzles Parade (Solutions)
P7 – BOC Photo Competition 2022
P12 – News Headlines
P14 – Gallery

Editorial

Iain Oldcorn bocmembershipsec@hotmail.co.uk

We hope you enjoy this milestone 87th BOC Newsletter in our 75th year. There’s a very welcome plethora of reports on BOC trips and walks; I think the contributors must have sharpened their pencils. Robert has had a very busy year: not only chairing meetings, working hard on preparing the latest published Annual BOC Report, then leading a number of trips himself, but also finding the time to produce trip reports (or spending time cajoling participants to write up the trips) and also summarising some highlights in his “Chairman’s Chat”. Sean T Murphy, our BTO Rep, again brings us up to date and seeks survey volunteers. And don’t miss the continuation of Ray Reedman’s guides! Enjoy.

Swifts

Renton Righelato

The BOC has now provided over 100 boxes for people to install and provide a home for Swifts. Some are on schools, libraries and other public buildings and others on houses. It usually takes a year or two for Swifts to find and accustom themselves to new sites and, to attract them, it helps to play their calls close to the boxes around their arrival time (late April/early May) and again in July before they leave. Swifts are colonial birds, so it would be helpful if people whose boxes have already been occupied were to put up more boxes, as these will have a much better chance of being taken up by the birds. If you are lucky enough to have had a box occupied in the last two years, and you have space for more boxes, please contact me. We have a just a few boxes left. (Renton Righelato, 63 Hamilton Road, Reading, RG1 5RA, Tel: 0787 981 2564)

(For one source of information on recordings of calls and for playback equipment visit: <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/groups/images/21022016125352.pdf>)

Meanwhile, the Moor Green Lake Group saw the fruition of their plans to install a Swift Box Tower “hotel” this March. (Photos courtesy of Moor Green Lakes Group.)





BOC Walk: Keyhaven Marshes, 4th Dec 2021

Robert Godden

Keyhaven Marshes offers a variety of wetland habitats which hold plenty of birds especially in winter. Looking out to sea, one is faced with the western end of the Isle of Wight, so depending on the state of the tide, the view is either of a wide sea channel, the Solent, or extensive mudflats and saltmarsh. Inland, there are flooded fields and lagoons.

Six of us met at the large car park in Keyhaven, and we got off to a good start when we discovered that the car park charges had been temporarily waived. Not far away we looked over a freshwater lake and saw an amazing flock of some 50 Little Grebe, while a Black-tailed Godwit gave close up views. We then took the path along the seawall and saw Reed Bunting, Rock Pipit, Linnets and a pair of Stonechat. Further away a Marsh Harrier was hunting over the reeds, a Raven was seen and a Kingfisher flew past eluding most of us. Not far offshore, Dark-bellied Brent Geese were feeding on the mud that was rapidly being covered by the incoming tide, while about ten smart Pintail were half-hidden in the spartina grass. Flocks of waders including Redshank, Curlew and about 20 Knot continued to feed until the tide moved them on.

We sat on the pebbly beach near the jetty to have lunch and a small flock of Turnstone explored the seaweed just in front of us. Then we continued along the seawall. Three Red-breasted Merganser were found fairly distantly out to sea, and then Mike picked out two Slavonian Grebe in some rough water where two currents met, their bright white cheeks contrasting sharply with a jet-black crown. The coastal path turned inland just before a channel that separated us from Normandy Marsh; on the far side we could see some distant Avocet, and there were also Curlew, Dunlin and Grey Plover. We were now heading towards Keyhaven but on a muddy path between fields where large numbers of Wigeon and Lapwing fed, while a flock of about 200 Golden Plover wheeled overhead. Our route returned us to the seawall near the jetty from where we retraced our steps back to the cars – overall it had been an enjoyable walk on a cold, bright winter's day with a good selection of coastal birds.

BOC New Year Walk: Moor Green Lakes, 6th Jan 2022

Robert Godden

I was joined by five others on a cold morning at the car park at Moor Green Lakes, having already left two cars at our Horseshoe Lake destination. With the temperature at -4°C, we were well wrapped up and keen to see if the weather had brought in anything new. The feeders in the car park had attracted a Reed Bunting and a Great Spotted Woodpecker. On the first lake, Colebrook North, three Little Grebe were constantly diving around a tight group of five Wigeon, no doubt feeding on scraps they were disturbing. Bill found a Snipe half hidden in the lakeside vegetation and a Little Egret was at the far end. East Fen was half frozen but a fine male Sparrowhawk was perched in a Silver Birch nearby. Around 20 Siskin were feeding high up in the alders near the main hide.

At the river, we walked west to view the New Workings, where there were some Redwing and a flock of about ten Linnet, but very few ducks. Retracing our steps, Elaine glimpsed a Kingfisher flying ahead of us along the river. At Grove Lake, we managed to see one of the Tawny Owl that regularly roost at the top of an ivy-covered tree, adjusting our positions to get views of different parts of the bird as it was so well hidden. Treecreeper and Goldcrest were also seen in this area and six Goosander were on the lake.

We took the path around the north side of Horseshoe Lake as it offers a better view of the lake which held Gadwall, Wigeon and Tufted Duck. The flock of feral Barnacle Geese were in a paddock behind a hedge with some Canada Geese, and we were surprised to hear the deep croak of a Raven and were lucky to see it - a bird that is only occasionally seen in the area. As we approached the car park, we encountered our final species, Egyptian Goose, just in time as it was starting to feel like lunchtime!

The BTO 2022 Main Survey Season Fast Approaching

Sean T Murphy

With the advancing spring, the BTO 2022 main field survey season is fast approaching. Those who participate in one of the main surveys, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), will be beginning to plan the 'early' and 'late' visits to their one km survey squares as these are done during the April to June period. On the other hand, those who contribute to another of the main surveys, the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), will know that March was the last of the 'priority' months for the 2021/22 season as most of our over-wintering water birds will have departed; although many surveyors continue counts during the Spring and Summer months as this provides important information on population numbers on resident species throughout the year.

These two surveys are part of a suite of interesting and exciting projects that BTO run covering projects on monitoring for tracking population trends of a number of species to more demographic type surveys that help understand the causes of changes in annual population numbers. Information about these surveys and the time inputs and skills needed can be found on the BTO web site (www.bto.org/volunteer).

As part of this, and for the 2022 breeding season, BTO are highlighting three more of its surveys where particular help is needed. The first of these is the Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows (BWWM) which has been set up to help monitor the long-term population changes of lowland breeding waders in England and Wales. This is important as some of our waders have suffered severe declines related to a set of factors, a primary one being changes in farming practices. As many volunteers in Berkshire will know, the main survey took place in 2021 and their participation helped provide data from sites across the county. This year, it is planned that the survey will continue to help fill in gaps in coverage. The aim is to cover new sites to increase overall coverage, so repeat visits to the 2021 sites will not be required. The survey requires three visits to a site between mid-April and late June and each visit can vary between 20 minutes to a few hours depending upon the size and location of the site. Further details about this survey and how to choose a site can be found at www.bto.org/bwwm.

The other two projects where BTO is looking for additional volunteers are: the Nest Record Scheme (NRS), which has been running since 1966; and Nesting Neighbours (NN), which is only a few years old. The NRS is field based, covering nests in the wider countryside and can sometimes involve significant time inputs, whereas NN was set up for those who had less time and who wanted to just focus on birds nesting in their gardens or local areas. However, both projects gather vital information on the breeding success of Britain's birds by following the progress of individual nests and thus help in the understanding of egg and chick survival rates. In 2020 the Nest Record Scheme reached a terrific milestone, receiving its two millionth nest record. Nonetheless, the number of nest records submitted per year has been declining slowly over the past few years, so BTO are hoping to attract more nest recorders for this Spring for both projects. To support this drive, BTO run training courses to help volunteers improve nest finding skills and further to this, now have an NRS mentoring scheme. Information about these two projects and training opportunities can be found at www.bto.org/nestrecordscheme and www.bto.org/nestingneighbours. But please do contact the project leads that are given on the above website links if you have any questions on these projects.



(Photo © Carl Flint)



(Woodlark © A. Tomczynski)

Ten BOC members met on Kings Ride, Camberley at 10am on a mild and mainly overcast morning.

We set off after a brief introduction from Robert as to the number and type of species we might expect and quickly spotted some of the more obvious species such as: Blackbird, Woodpigeon, Blue and Great Tit. A Jay followed, calling as it flew, and a Green Woodpecker was spotted landing in a nearby tree.

Turning into a more open area of heather and gorse a couple of the group detected the distant call of a Woodlark which was competing with background firing from that day's army exercise. We moved in the direction of the sound which soon became more distinct and the bird was spotted soaring high above us and singing. It then landed and showed very well on the edge of the path, giving Andy Tomczynski time to get a lovely photograph.

We quickly added Stock Dove to the list as well as Goldfinch and Chaffinch. Stopping by a marshy area with birch trees we picked up three Redpoll and a group of Siskins, all of them rather flighty.



(Siskin & Lesser Redpoll © Andy Tomczynski)



One member of the group spotted a Treecreeper which quickly crept round the back of the tree and out of sight before flying off. Robert bravely squelched through the bog in search of Jack Snipe and thankfully emerged with both wellies still on his feet but no snipe.

After passing Wishmoor Cross, we came upon five Reed Bunting in a tree and a handsome male Stonechat. While watching these a Woodlark perched high up on a conifer with his crest raised and one member of the group saw a Great Spotted Woodpecker fly past. A Red Kite flew high over the trees. At this point

Andy, who had disappeared from view in search of a friendly frond, reappeared to tell us that he had seen the unmistakable silhouette of a Dartford Warbler which perched on the top of a bush for about a minute.

Robert was an excellent and informative guide throughout, pointing out what might be seen in various areas at different times of year, including areas for chaffinch and brambling in winter, breeding redstart and spotted flycatcher in summer and migrating wheatear and whinchat in autumn. Despite having visited Wishmoor Bottom several times I certainly came away with a much better appreciation of what might be found there and when might be good times to visit. He also kept the serious county listers informed of the various points at which we crossed between Berkshire and Surrey on the walk. All in all, a delightful trip.

Puzzles Parade (Solution)

Iain Oldcorn

You may need to look back at the last Newsletter to remember the questions, but here are the answers to them, they were continuing the theme of cryptic clues, did you identify the following birds over Xmas?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Robin | 25. Firecrest |
| 2. Tree Creeper | 26. Reed Bunting |
| 3. Redpoll | 27. Yellowhammer |
| 4. Stonechat | 28. Grasshopper Warbler |
| 5. Turnstone | 29. Eider |
| 6. Fieldfare | 30. Dartford Warbler |
| 7. Oystercatcher | 31. Curlew |
| 8. Shoveler | 32. Brambling |
| 9. Partridge | 33. Snow Bunting |
| 10. Kittiwake | 34. Redshank |
| 11. Golden Eagle | 35. Mute Swan |
| 12. Hobby | 36. Storm Petrel |
| 13. Common Tern | 37. Garden Warbler |
| 14. Water Rail | 38. Nightjar |
| 15. Moorhen | 39. Merlin |
| 16. Iceland Gull | 40. Bar-Tailed Godwit |
| 17. Common Sandpiper | 41. Long-Tailed Skua |
| 18. Black Grouse | 42. Montagu's Harrier |
| 19. Nightingale | 43. Wheatear |
| 20. Snipe | 44. Siskin |
| 21. Razorbill | 45. Golden Eye |
| 22. Skylark | 46. Pintail |
| 23. Starling | |
| 24. Crossbill | |

(Ed. With thanks to Joan Pearson.)

What's That Bird?

Iain Oldcorn

Jane has now converted all Ray Reedman's PowerPoint presentations on bird identification and here are the links to the next three of his tutorials on YouTube, (the remainder are scheduled for our August newsletter):

Learn to Identify Birds with Ray Reedman - Frequent Finches and Basic Buntings (19min 47secs)

https://youtu.be/99_nqzktCo

Learn to Identify Birds with Ray Reedman - Which Warbler? (19.26)

<https://youtu.be/bjCRqbLC0GE>

Learn to Identify Birds with Ray Reedman - Who's for a Lark or a Chat? (24.11)

<https://youtu.be/YBPEfIsqJT0>

(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.)

House Martin Conservation UK & Ireland (HMCUK-IE) was formed by Ian Donovan in Kent in 2020, originally as a Facebook Group. At that time, Ian was setting up Hastings & Rother Swift Conservation Group in East Sussex whilst managing a 33-acre garden estate in Kent. Ian had become familiar with house martins, when he started working on this estate in 2013. Subsequently, major redevelopment work was carried out on the house and he became involved in securing the small seven nest colony during building work and into the present day.

It dawned on Ian during the summer of 2020, that swifts were very well represented nationally by a growing number of local groups; however, house martins weren't! The Facebook Group were involved immediately in giving advice, networking and liaising with wildlife rescuers. In the autumn, a storm hit the bird's main migration route along the south west coast and the fledgling Group closely supported the local rescuers.

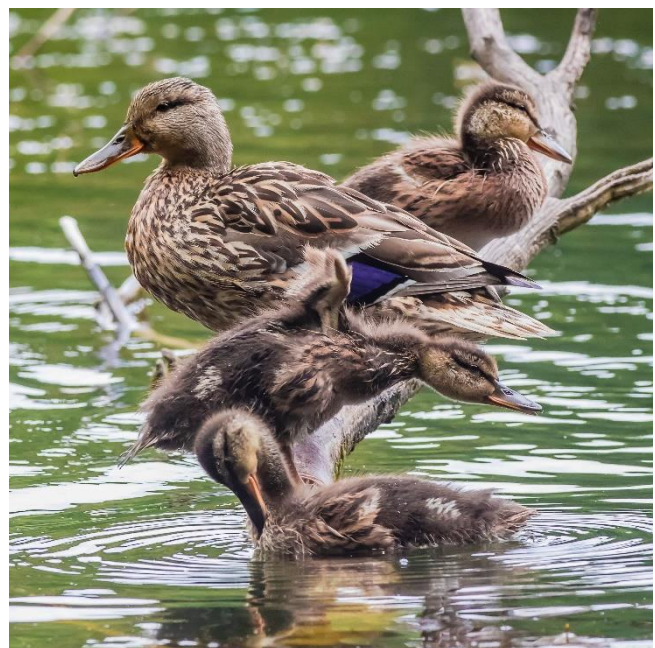
As soon as the birds had left these shores, Ian set about gathering people together from the swift conservation and social media community, to form a more formal group of house martin enthusiasts. Embryonic during lockdown, but after several video-conferencing sessions with requisite board and supporting committee members, HMCUK-IE became an official volunteer run UK charity in February 2021.

The formation couldn't have been better timed. In December of 2021, house martins, previously amber listed, became a red listed Bird of Conservation Concern (BOCC) in the UK, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Reasons for their decline are myriad, from lack of suitable buildings to build their mud nest cups under deep eaves, more extreme weather patterns, the ongoing insect apocalypse and a lack of understanding. HMCUK-IE have heard repeated stories of folk knocking the nest cups down thinking they are wasp or hornet nests!

You can find out more about these birds and their supporting UK and Irish group at <https://housemartinconservation.com/>

The BOC Photographic Competition**Jane Campbell**

Portrait: Winner/Blackbird/Brian Winter



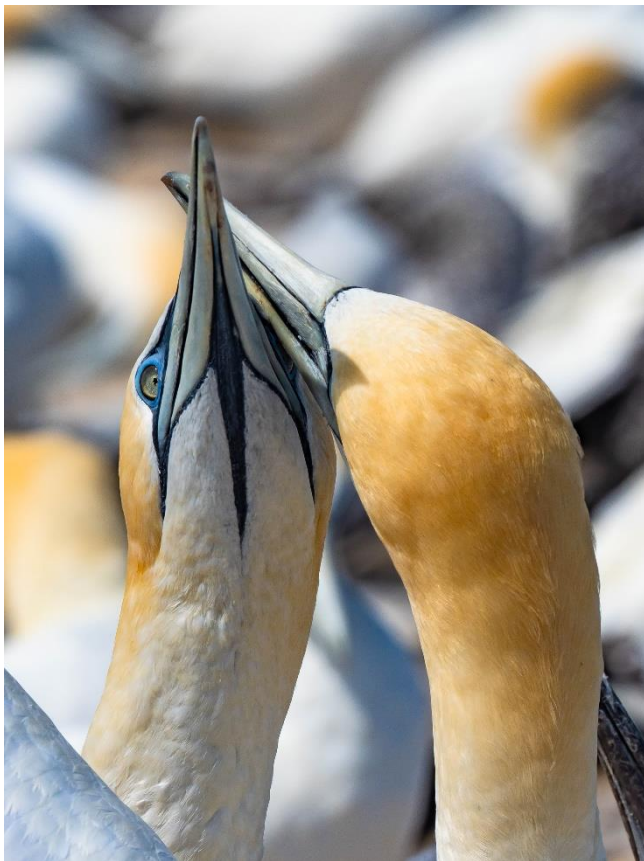
Portrait: 2nd/Mallard Family/Brian Winter



Flight & Action: Winner/Buzzard/Brian Winter



Flight & Action: 2nd/Blackbird/David Massie



Attention to Detail:
Winner/Southern Gannets/Brian Winter



Attention to Detail:
2nd/Mallard/Mike Taylor

Congratulations to Brian Winter who took first place in all three categories and so, by default also won the Gordon Langsbury Trophy.

The winner of a new category this year, for those who have not previously been placed, was Ian Silvester with his evocative shot of a Rock Ptarmigan.

(ED: Ian gave a talk to us on Oct 20th last year: "A Journey from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth".)



New Category: Rock Ptarmigan/Ian Silvester

Chairman's Chat

Robert Godden

This newsletter arrives as this season's programme of indoor meetings comes to an end. In response to the prevailing situation with the pandemic and views of some of the club's members, we have held hybrid meetings since the autumn (in person at the university and simultaneously online via Zoom and recorded for later viewing). We have become familiar with the setup required for speakers present in the lecture hall or presenting remotely, but variations on these themes continue to arise and surprise us; when meetings were completely online, we could hold trial meetings in advance, but now the setup has to be done at the start of the hall booking, so there is an element of finger-crossing! Luckily, the expertise of Sally Wearing and Chris Foster has resulted in the smooth running of these meetings.

It's fair to say that attendance in the lecture hall at the start of 2022 was disappointing – (the AGM in November was surprisingly well-attended but we don't plan to make that any more frequent than annual!) – but numbers picked up naturally so that we were soon attracting healthy in-person and online audiences, and this has been further boosted by a more open approach to our meetings. Sue Charnley should be congratulated for once again attracting some excellent speakers, and the light refreshments on offer for the interval has stimulated a lively atmosphere in the hall.

The outdoor programme has produced highlights on recent trips such as Ring-billed Gull, Slavonian Grebe, Firecrest, Iceland Gull and Goshawk. Trips continue through the spring and early summer, so check out what's on offer and contact the leader for any trips you are interested in. The club would welcome some help in this respect – more leaders for walks in the local area or further afield, and someone to organise the programme. Also, if you have a local patch which you enjoy visiting, it could be somewhere that others have never been to, so an offer to lead even a short walk would be welcome.

Eleanor Pitt's plea for someone to take over from her as Treasurer was met with success when Edwin Bruce-Gardner responded. Edwin comes with considerable financial expertise through his career – he is being co-opted as the club's Treasurer and will stand for election at the AGM.

So as winter turns to spring I encourage folks, who are able so to do, to check out their local patch and their favourite places for signs of spring migration. It's always exciting to discover a passing Wheatear or Whinchat in an inland county such as ours, while even some of our most familiar summer visitors such as House Martin and Willow Warbler are showing worrying trends. Submit all your sightings, for example via berksbirds.co.uk, as the combined data forms the basis of the annual reports and can be used to inform

development decisions. The 2017 annual report has been issued recently and good progress is being made with reducing the backlog, with the three following reports at various stages of production.

BOC Trip: Stanpit Marsh, 20th February 2022

Gary Kirsopp and Karen Lynch

A small but intrepid band from BOC met up at the car park of Stanpit Marsh at 9.30 on 20th February 2022. The wind was strong, increasing and soon to be named Storm Franklin. Undaunted we set out to explore the area.

Stanpit Marsh is a 65-hectare area of saltmarsh, sandy scrub, reed bed and estuarine banks lying on the north side of Christchurch harbour with views overlooking Hengistbury Head. Paths were muddy and those who brought their wellington boots had made the correct choice.

The first birds to get our attention were a mobile group of **Goldfinch** to our right, moving from tree to tree as we approached, and a very confiding **Jay** who had obviously found a sheltered spot and had no intention of moving!

Walking through the scrubby area towards the harbour. Several **Meadow Pipit** and **Pied Wagtail** were seen on the ground as well as some **Greenfinch** in the brambles giving their characteristic "dweeeez" call. A male **Stonechat** was gamely trying to perch high up on a gorse bush but unable to hold its position due to the high winds. He eventually came a cropper and fell into the bush – much like the foolhardy windsurfers further out in the harbour. Several **Little Egret** and a **Grey Heron** were patrolling the creeks.

Approaching the water's edge, a group of perhaps a dozen **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** were feeding on the grass and more were seen on shingle banks stretching out into the harbour. A large group of **Black-tailed Godwit** were further out, some of them with signs of summer plumage but all tucked up against the wind and relatively inactive. Closer inshore, a large number of **Wigeon** were apparent and clearly audible, whistling over the sound of the wind. Keeping them company was a mixed flock of gulls. Beyond them on a shingle spit, a few **Cormorant** and **Greater Black-backed Gull** were perched trying to ignore the increasing wind. A handful of **Curlew** were also present, giving evocative calls as they flew by. **Oystercatcher** were seen among the **Wigeon** with a small group of 10 or 12 probing along the shoreline.

Turning away from the water's edge, a pair of **Little Grebe** were just visible above the waves. A small number of **Teal** were present in the more sheltered bits of water. We watched a **Kestrel** managing to hold its position, hovering over a reed bed. We came upon a bush festooned with curious cocoons and it was felt these could be the work of Brown-tailed Moths. Turning along the Purewell stream on our way back to the car park a **Kingfisher** showed as a flash of blue and was seen no more.

Back at the cars we made a decision to carry on to Lepe Country Park near Exbury, Southampton but on arrival, the sea conditions there were too rough. A combination of wind and high tide pushing some waves over the coastal road. Council workers there were still trying to repair damage caused by storm Eunice two days before. The car parks had also been closed so we decided to move round the coast to Calshot Marshes, a local nature reserve and SSSI.

En-route to Calshot the lead car of our convoy deftly avoided two **Red-legged Partridge** walking along the road and on arrival we had lunch.

Suitably refreshed we spend a couple of hours exploring Calshot. Walking along the shingle beach past deserted beach huts we saw **Cormorant** on a distant floating platform and close by our feet, three **Turnstone**. **Black-headed Gulls**, some approaching summer plumage, together with **Common Gulls** were drifting in the wind. Further into the marsh we came across more **Brent Geese** together with less conspicuous **Redshank** and a couple of **Shelduck** amongst the Eel grass. Two large black birds were seen half-way down an inland tree which were initially thought to be **Cormorant** but on closer inspection were **Corvids**. We speculated whether they could be **Raven** but could not get a positive I.D. and the

matter was left as a maybe. Looking further out into the Solent, we saw a group of **Pintail** and a solitary **Slavonian Grebe**, which was seemingly heading for the relative shelter of Southampton Water.

With strengthening winds and the rain starting, we headed back to the cars. A bracing but enjoyable day's birding was had by all.

Skills Wanted

Sally Wearing



Do you have skills or experience that could be put to good use for the BOC?

There are a number of things that we want to do, but they all require people with the right expertise. We are sure that there will be people among you, our members and your friends and families, who have the experience and skills that we need. Can you help?

These are the skills we are currently seeking:

1. **Graphic design** – we want to update our publicity and programme leaflets. Could you help us redesign them? This might be good experience for someone starting out in graphic design or maybe a simple task for a proficient designer.
2. **Journalist** – we would like to publicise the Club and its activities more, through the local media. Do you know how to do this? Could you write articles about birds, the BOC and what we do?
3. **Educational visits** – one of the aims of the Club is to educate the public about wild birds. We really want to include children in this, so we need people who could visit schools to talk about birds or take children on nature walks to look at them. This would suit a retired teacher or anyone else who has experience of working with children.
4. **Field trips** – we are always looking for people to lead field trips, locally or further afield. Do you have a favourite place to which you could lead a walk?

None of these tasks would be time consuming, but all can be very rewarding. If you might be able to help, please get in touch with Sally Wearing at sally.wearing@berksoc.org.uk. If you have other skills that you think might be useful, please also let us know.

I leave it to you to decide into which category each item belongs (ctrl+click on the blue):

- **Trained Crows** - [Swedish firm deploys crows to pick up cigarette butts](#)
- **Knepp Webcam** - the Storks have already returned to their nesting site on the Knepp estate. Since last year a [webcam has been installed](#), so we can look forward to some great views. Unfortunately, the Storks may have other ideas as they appear to be moving away from the webcam site at the previous nest to a nearby location!
- **More BTO News** - why not sign up [here](#) to the monthly BTO Newsletter?
- **Woodland Trust Supports Reading University Study** - The WT has given £20k to help a 2yr Reading study of the biodiversity at the Thames Valley Science Park. The pioneering study will use 15 cutting-edge listening devices to identify the bird and mammal species that are present, including at night. (Unfortunately, I cannot give you a link to this story.)
- **Birds killed by collisions with wind turbine blades** – research suggest that between 10,000 and 100,000 are killed annually in the U.K. A small-scale study in Norway found that painting one blade black reduced bird deaths by 70% (BBC Science Focus). It is estimated that 55 million birds are killed each year in the U.K. by domestic cats.
- **Climate change** – [study](#) shows it is fundamentally affecting European birds
- **Rollercoasters v Voles** - [‘Disney-on-Thames’ plan could devastate wildlife](#)
- **Buzzard killer is sentenced** – a gamekeeper in Notts has received a twenty-week suspended sentence and a £1000 fine after a remote camera showed the man killing two buzzards in a “large crow cage” trap.
- **New species for Moor Green?** – this was discovered in Feb 2022 when checking the reserve for storm damage. =====>>



On a perfectly cloudless day, with a brisk east wind, nine of us gathered in Acre Down car park in our quest to see Goshawk and whatever else early spring might bring us. First thing, a surprise. In birch scrub just up the hill, following a Treecreeper by the path led to a Firecrest and Marsh Tit – close, brief views not seen by all, but a good start!



Scanning the skies from Acre Down, we soon found our Goshawk. Distant at first, but at times coming much closer – large, long tail, 'flat back' profile – it remained mostly in view for the 20 minutes we were there. A Buzzard was also seen. Other birders were doing the same, one couple settled in with chairs, at this becoming well-known viewpoint for the display flights of this exciting, returned bird to the New Forest.

A second look for the Firecrest didn't reveal it again. We were also on the lookout for a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker reported earlier. We saw a Great Spotted, and early butterflies were out in the sunshine: Red Admiral, Comma and Brimstone. We continued our search for the Lesser Spotted in the broad-leaved woodland along the track below the car park, but couldn't locate it unfortunately.

Then we moved across the A31, picnicked on a great Scots Pine, fresh-fallen in the storms, and walked across Bratley Plain. A probable Dartford Warbler was seen in silhouette on the gorse, Meadow Pipits and Stonechats, but no Wheatears or Ring Ouzel (it was a Blackbird in the heather). Back under the A31 to Brackley Bottom, a shallow valley where a Great Grey Shrike had been present, and was last seen midweek. Scrutiny from both sides of the valley failed to find it, but there was compensation in plenty more Stonechat(!) and a second Marsh Tit. At the footbridge, the trickle of stream and small pool held a pair of mating toads, mass of newly hatched tadpoles, some tiny fish, and Small-leaved Crowfoot in flower (Three-lobed? New Forest species?). It was a longish walk back to the car park, 10 km in all, but the sun shone all the way. Birds of the day were the Goshawk (a lifer for me!) plus the Firecrest, and all those stonechats. Species count, never high on heathland, was about 25 in total for the group.



This Season's Indoor Events

Sue Charnley

The indoor meetings restarted in October with mixed actual attendances ranging from just nine members to a fantastic 24 for the AGM plus 62 on Zoom) and a wonderful 31 (with 37+ on Zoom) for our 75th birthday commemorative evening - possibly lured by the mention of cake!

I decided that it would be nice to have refreshments halfway through the remainder of our meetings as it creates a lovely social atmosphere so I provided biscuits and juice (as flasks of tea was not practical).

It has been such a miserable time for so many of us and it really is wonderful to be seeing each other again with renewed enthusiasm!

Look out for some details in our next Newsletter about the exciting Programme of Indoor Events that I am organising for next year!



Water Rail, Lea Farm, 6Dec2021



Dartford Warbler, Wishmoor Bottom, 17Feb2022



Pink-footed Goose, Borough Marsh, 29Dec2021



Scaup, Theale Main Pit, 6Mar2022



White-fronted Goose, Hurst, 21Jan2022



Snipe, Lower Farm, 8Mar2022

And finally, your committee says – hoping to see you on our outdoor events this 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.)

