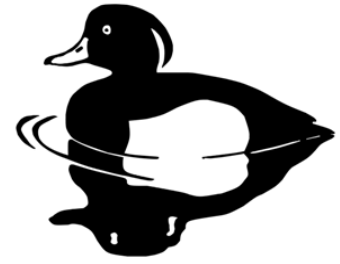


Newsletter No 96

April 2025



Editorial

Iain Oldcorn (bocmembershipsec@gmail.com)

Welcome to our 96th BOC Newsletter. Neil Kicks off with our latest local Conservation news while Sean follows with a national BTO update. Elaine muses on why M F M Meiklejohn isn't credited in the latest Collins Bird Guide; and I hope you can unscramble her own sightings. John Roberts fondly remembers Times Past while Liz Carr takes us on a recent walk in our "Introduction to Berks Birding" series. Sally is enthusiastic about the BOC/RSPB trip to Slimbridge. Peter Driver seeks practical graphics design help and then reports on Robert's guided trip to Keyhaven/Pennington. Ray Reedman reminisces on his "weird" past. Ken brings us up to date with the story of "The Newbury Peregrines. Jane reminds us of the results of our 2025 Photographic Competition with its revised "Rules"; and there's also a reminder about the "Photographers Code of Practice"; before finally, another Gallery of Andy's excellent photos! (Ed. Unless otherwise stated, photos are copyright of the author of the article in which they appear.)

BOC CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE – SPRING 2025

Neil Bucknell

1 – Peregrines Funded

We have approved two more Peregrine-related grants. One is for a camera that has been installed on the nest-box at the BT building in Newbury; that will help monitoring the nest, although no live streaming will be available. Hopefully pictures will be available on our social media soon.

The second is for a new nest box. Members may recall that Peregrines used to nest on the gas-holders, which have now been demolished, on the east side of Reading town centre. As a temporary measure, a box was erected on the top of a tall pole, which has been used. This year this box has been closed-up as construction works are commencing in the vicinity. It is hoped that the resident pair may move to a box on the Blade office building nearby, but the box here is nearing the end of its life. A new box has been paid for so that this can either be replaced for future years, or deployed elsewhere if they decide to move to another site.

2 – Tern Rafts for Lavells Wetland Trust

We have also approved a grant to LWT to fund the purchase of two more tern rafts (to be coupled to make one larger one), these join one installed successfully last year to replace two previous ones which had deteriorated and needed replacement.

3 – Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The six Berkshire unitary local authorities (led by Windsor and Maidenhead) undertook a consultation exercise on a draft strategy, prepared after a lengthy consultation exercise in which the club participated. This closed on 24 March, and the sub-committee submitted some representations before the deadline. There is now a process of considering all representations received, in which we are also participating, with the objective of the councils adopting a revised plan this autumn. We have highlighted a few matters we think need more thought, including adding our birds of wetlands as target species for conservation action, and placing more emphasis on taking advantage of the opportunities in our river valleys for wetland habitat creation as there is plenty of potential for networks of sites with good connectivity.

4 – Padworth Lane Gravel Pit

Progress on this site remains very slow. We had hoped to see revised restoration proposals from the minerals company that carried out the gravel extraction, but we have been told that the ecological consultant that they have employed to prepare it has been off work for an extended period after being seriously injured in an accident.

In the meantime, agreement has been obtained in principle from the Canals and Rivers Trust, owners of the site, for works to be carried out to restore a gravel beach at the site to improve its suitability as a nesting site.

5 - COLOUR-RINGED CORN BUNTINGS – SIGHTINGS PLEASE.

Corn Buntings are known to form non-breeding season flocks in winter which appear to roam quite widely over the higher and more open areas of the Downs. In an attempt to find out more about these winter flocks, and the breeding areas from which the birds originate, the West Oxfordshire Farmland Bird group has been carrying out colour ringing of birds in the Lambourn area. They would welcome details of sightings of colour-ringed birds, preferably with details of the numbers/letters on the rings. Please send them to Noah Walker at westoxfarmlandbirds@gmail.com. It is not known how far they might move, so please keep an eye open for them anywhere on the Downs!

Updates from the BTO

Sean T Murphy

The start of the Spring months brings the start of the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and those who participate will be beginning to plan their visits to record the birds along the transects of their squares. At this time, as in previous years, we have mentioned training and other sources of information to help with the identification of bird songs and calls. However, identification by sight can sometimes be challenging for the commonly encountered confusion species and groups, especially those new to the survey. Help is at hand though, because although there are several excellent field guide books available from several publishers, BTO separately have a range of bird ID videos available on their web site which include videos, photographs, sound recording and expert advice to guide important identification features. See: [Bird ID videos | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#)

In the last newsletter mention was made of the launch of the national **Heathland Bird Survey for 2025** to assess the population incidence and distribution of the Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Nightjar. The project is now in full swing as territories for singing Woodlark began in mid-February. However, the survey periods for the other two species start later than this. The periods for all three are:

Survey Periods	Visit A	Visit B
Woodlark	15 Feb – 31 Mar	1 Apr – 31 May
Dartford Warbler	1 Apr – 15 May	16 May – 30 Jun
Nightjar	25 May – 30 Jun	1 July – 31 July

In Berkshire, as heathland is a very important part of the landscape, we have a high number of 1 km monitoring sites set up across the county for all three species. So far, there has been a great response of volunteers, but there are many sites still available. A vacant site map and other information about the survey can be found at: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/heathland-birds-survey>

If you have any questions about the survey, email me at: seantmurphy8@gmail.com or s.murphy@cabi.org

An Unusual Sighting

Elaine Charlson

I recently bought the new edition of Collins Bird Guide, but there was a species missing: *Dissimulatrix spuria*. The Bare-fronted Hoodwink was originally described by Matthew Fontaine Maury Meiklejohn in the Isle of May log on 20th September 1949, with an altered version appearing in the scientific journal "Bird Notes" in 1950, in which he theorised, after a comprehensive study of birds "partially seen or indeterminately heard", that there was a reason for all the creatures that confused birdwatchers: an unidentified species.

One peculiarity of the bird is that it is much more likely to be seen by people who have little or no experience in identifying birds, and identification is made harder by the fact that it often disappears just as you focus your binoculars.

A few photographs have been taken, but the bird always looks like a brown blur due to its extremely rapid flight away from the observer, and it often appears just as the photographers' memory card becomes full, or his battery fails.

There have been international sightings too. Benjamin Burtt wrote of it in The Post Standard (USA) in 1958, saying that the Hoodwink was either hard to see, or clearly seen but not resembling any species

that you can find in a field guide. He compared its call to a "far away train whistle or an exploding firecracker or an uncoiled hinge". It is said that in the UK it does not sing on Sundays. One woman lucky enough to glimpse the bird had described it as about the size of a piece of wood.

The number of eggs laid by the Hoodwink has never been determined. Burt wrote, "on the approach of the scientist, the bird usually lays more eggs or removes those already laid."

On April 1st 1975, the only one ever caught (prepared for display by taxidermist William Stirling) was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh with a series of photos, unfortunately all blurred.

There is an obituary of M F M Meiklejohn (1913 - 1974) in the journal of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club volume 8 no. 2 Summer 1974 for anyone who would like to read further.

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Elaine also received notification of the following unusual sightings; but managed to translate them. Her answers will be given in the next BOC Newsletter. Ed.

Arrest power	Hormone	Clap back
The slower road	Green boots	Ripped
Diner slang	Armful	Load red clove
Trialware	Skelter	All green wood
MPA rating	Bit red date	Mind poem scrap? No!
Deaf flier	She re-kicked bard	Sports rib collar

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Christmas Walk and Meal

John Roberts

Thanks to the efforts, initially of Dot Lincoln and then Carole White, the December club walk was followed by a meal in a local pub. On some occasions it fell to me to collect the money and I have the list of those who attended The Chequers after the walk around Moor Green Lakes in December 2012. I should add that some of the ladies did not complete the walk, preferring an early exit into the warmth of the pub.

Those who attended were:

Ken and Dot Lincoln
 John and Lois Roberts
 Gray and Chris Burfoot
 Bob and Margaret Walker
 Ted and Sheila Rogers
 John Hard John Woodard
 Alan Woods Beryl Ratcliff
 Lynne Wilson Nicki Vyvyan Robinson
 Ray Reedman John Mead
 Mick Sales

Colin Wilson, and Ron and Mavis Bryant had had to withdraw at the last minute.

Hopefully these names will stimulate memories of good friends and a very pleasant social occasion.

This trip report must start with a big thank you to the local RSPB Wokingham and Bracknell group. In 2024, they ran a coach trip to Slimbridge and kindly invited members of the BOC. That trip was successful, so we really needed to reciprocate. I am very glad we did, as the result was a coach load of birders who had a great trip on Sunday January 12th this year.

I had not organised a coach trip before, but found it was relatively straightforward, despite the number of emails. We decided to give priority to members of both groups until the end of October, which worked well, as over 40 people booked before the deadline. The bookings grew until we had filled a 61-seater coach, but we ended up with a few spare seats on the day, as people had had to drop out at the last minute due to illness. In all, 56 of us travelled to Slimbridge.



Getting everyone together and on their way was easy (many thanks to everyone for turning up on time) and, after a smooth journey, we arrived at Slimbridge at about 10 am. The WWT members entered quickly, while the non-members took advantage of the discounted price for group bookings. Some started with a coffee, but we were all soon out and about, enjoying the decent weather (dry!) and looking for birds.

They were not hard to find. Some of us headed for the South Lake first, which was teeming with life. Many ducks, plus a good number of waders – Dunlins, Lapwings, Black-tailed Godwits and, after some effort, well-camouflaged Snipe. January is an excellent time to visit Slimbridge, with so many winter specialities. There were distant views of White-fronted Geese from the Kingfisher hide. Careful searching resulted in sightings of the one Pink-footed Goose in the Canada Goose flock. Easier to see was the large flock of Golden Plovers when they took flight.

We also had good views of Common Cranes. These fly up from Somerset, where WWT released birds for the Great Crane Project, and several are now resident at Slimbridge. These graceful birds were, as usual, easy to see from some of the hides.

Most of us ended in the traditional way, packing into the Peng Observatory to watch the swan feed at 4pm. Luxurious birding: comfy seats in a heated observatory with big windows right next to the water, and a running commentary from the warden as he distributes the seed. Such a good opportunity to see wildfowl up close, including Pintails dabbling at the edge of the water. We were even able to 'compare and contrast' the one Whooper Swan among the Bewick, letting us see all the distinguishing features.

On the way back (another easy journey), we pooled our sightings. Between us, we had seen 74 different species, including all three swans, five species of geese, eight different waders, and nine ducks; just what a trip to Slimbridge should be. Some lucky people saw Water Rail, Kingfisher, Marsh Harrier, Bullfinch and/or Redpoll.



We are delighted to announce that the BOC and this local RSPB group plan to continue running this trip. They will be organising it in 2026, so put the date – Sunday 11th January – in your diary now!

Introduction to Berkshire Birding: Padworth Lane, 18Jan2025

Liz Carr

On a chilly day, starting at the Butt Inn at Aldermaston Wharf, 16 of us set out on an “Introduction to Berkshire Birding” walk; familiar and new faces amongst us. In the car park we saw Blue Tits and Goldfinch and across the road more passerines. The housing estate opposite the pub held a hedge full of House Sparrows and in the scrubland behind it Peter spotted a Redpoll. A Nuthatch was also calling loudly.

Onto Mill Lane, where a flock of Redwing was feeding on a paddock; we passed through promising woodland and eventually reached the Padworth Lane Gravel Pit. We found: Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Gadwall, Wigeon, Teal, Great Crested Grebe and Little Grebe. The river Kennet, south of us, had a mute swan on it and a male Goosander flew overhead.



Walking to the east of the lakes to Padworth Lane and then walking north, the flooded land across the Kennet held a Great White Egret and, causing much excitement, a male Marsh Harrier was spotted. This was the first sighting of Marsh Harrier on this site (to our knowledge) so it was promptly reported on Berksbirds.co.uk.

We crossed the swing bridge and followed the towpath back to Aldermaston Wharf to complete the circular walk; a satisfying morning's birding, with 44 species seen and a welcome hot meal and drink back at the Butt Inn.

Help Please

Peter Driver

Request for help: do you have basic graphic design skills?

We need some assistance with layouts and design for BOC leaflets and publicity material. If you have any skills with InDesign or similar tools, and would like to volunteer a bit of time to helping promote the Club, please contact me, Peter Driver to discuss at: <mailto:berksocpublicity@gmail.com>

A group of nine BOC members enjoyed a good day's birding at Keyhaven/Pennington on Saturday 22 March. The early-birders took the opportunity to drive round to Hurst spit for views of the Gannets around the Isle of Wight's Needles. A few moments of squinting into the murky light produced distant views of adult and juvenile Gannets. With a year-tick already under their belts, the early-arrivers joined the rest of the trip in the Keyhaven car park.

On leaving the car park we first looked and listened for Kingfisher in Keyhaven harbour but we didn't find the usually obliging birds. Across the road we looked over Avon Water from the small viewing platform next to the hide run by The Milford Conservation Volunteers. From that vantage point we spotted Snipe, Avocet, Marsh Harrier and Greenshank. Robert picked up the call of a Mediterranean Gull flying overhead, the first of several we saw during the day.



Avocet Copyright Karen Lynch

We followed the sea wall, with the Solent on our right and a series of lagoons and marshes on our left. It was a cool spring day with a south-easterly breeze coming off the Solent on a rising tide. Quite quickly William picked up a bird on top of a gorse bush, which turned out be everyone's first Wheatear of the year, a handsome male. It relocated to a nearby part of the marshes, where a second male was also seen.

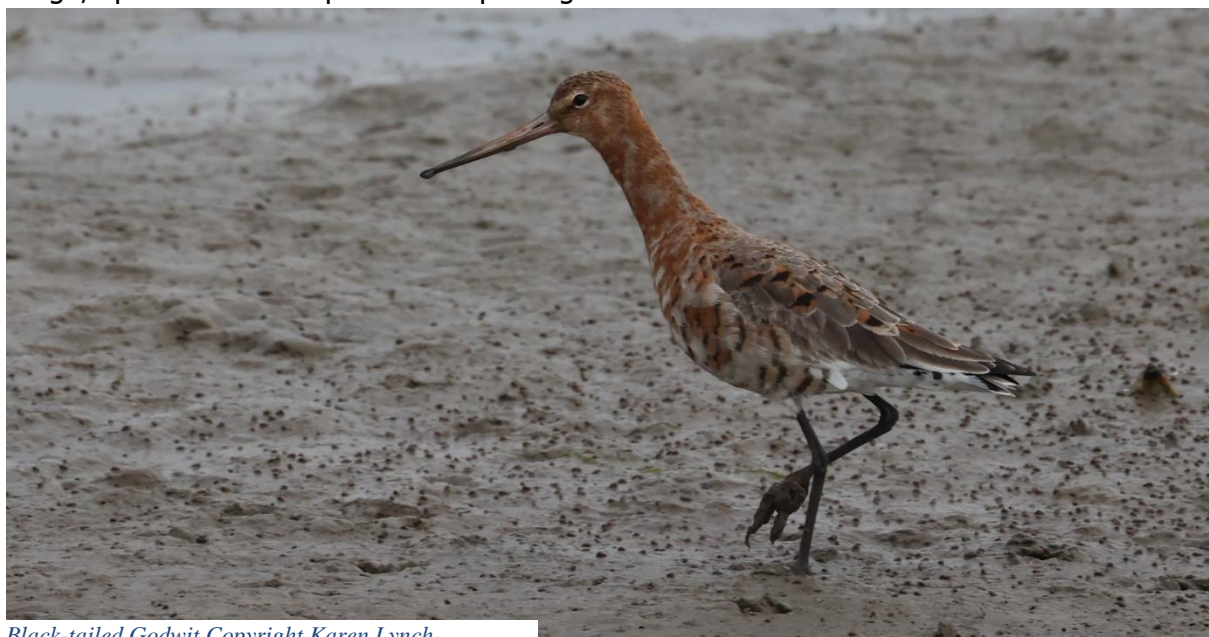
Spoonbill Copyright Karen Lynch



The Keyhaven and Fishtail lagoons held all the usual birds, with some fine views of Pintail and Spoonbill (we saw at least nine Spoonbill during the day). There were plenty of Avocets to enjoy, recalling the improved fortunes of this most elegant wader in our lifetimes, since they began slowly to recolonise the UK in the last Century.

Brent Geese were still around the marshes and on the shores of the Solent, where we got good views

of five Red-breasted Mergansers close to shore. A few ringed Plover were feeding among the Dunlin, Redshank and Oystercatchers at the water's edge. The Black-tailed Godwits were coming into their glorious summer plumage, apart from a few pale winter-plumage individuals.



Black-tailed Godwit Copyright Karen Lynch

We had hoped to find a Spotted Redshank, which had been reported on Fishtail Lagoon and looked for it carefully. We decided to move on and see if it was showing when we came back in the afternoon.

There were few birds out on the Solent, a smattering of Great Crested Grebes and Great Black-backed Gulls seemed to be all it had to offer. But as we drew close to the bench at the end of Butts Lagoon, we spotted a raft of 24 Eider bobbing in the waves and showing great interest in each other. This iconic sea-duck has recently nested at Keyhaven becoming probably the most southerly breeding Eiders in the Country.



It was just past 11am but some of the party were ready to start lunch so we watched the Eider flotilla for a few more minutes before moving on. We reached the corner of the seawall close to Oxey Marsh and had our official lunch stop, with more Eider to watch on the water and small flocks of Brent Geese, Oystercatcher and Dunlin flying past. Lunch was accompanied by the burbling of Skylark and the thin monotone tweets of Meadow Pipit over the marsh.

After lunch we retraced our steps and finally connected with the Spotted Redshank at Fishtail Lagoon. Its pale grey plumage, thin bill, long, bright red legs and clear white supercilium distinguished it very clearly from Common Redshank. On the walk back towards the car park we picked up a few more day-ticks including Jay and Buzzard, bringing our day total to 65 species. We arrived back at the cars quite tired but contented with some excellent sightings and everyone thanked Robert Godden for leading a most enjoyable trip.



Club member, John Hard e-mailed me some weeks ago with the story of being roused in his home by a very odd noise coming from the roof. Fearing the worst, he went into the garden to investigate. There, he discovered that a Great Spotted Woodpecker was using the TV aerial as a drumming post and, as a consequence, was making quite a racket. The bird had certainly succeeded in attracting attention, which was the object of the exercise.

John's story started me thinking about some of those special memories that we all have of encounters with birds. My own life is littered with memorable moments and I realise that these generally do not depend on the rarity of the bird. A few years ago, I based a newsletter article on the stylised aggression of two Green Woodpeckers, a form of shadow boxing that is preferable to the major injury that could be inflicted by a dagger-like bill. I have seen that behaviour only once. More recently I watched two Great Spotted Woodpeckers chasing each other around the canopy and was intrigued by the fact that both were females. These do apparently defend territories and compete alongside the males. And has anyone else seen the mosquito-like display dance of a Lesser Spotted pair? I saw it just once and its fascination is with me still.

It all started for me when I was just eight years old. Just after World War Two, meat was strictly rationed and we lived on a farm. Our meat came in the form of wild ducks, Partridges, Woodpigeons, and rabbits that my father shot. I accompanied him regularly with our two gun--dogs and in those sessions learned a lot about field-craft and patience. One evening, as we waited at dusk for rabbits to start grazing, I was fidgeting too much. My father hoisted me onto the lower branch of an oak where the choice was to stay still or fall off. In fact, I sat so still as dusk came on that a Barn Owl flew in to share my branch. The wonder of that moment was, to say the least, a guarantee of my future fascination with birds.

Fast forward many years to Dinton Pastures and a walk with my own dog.... A common Carrion Crow sat clumsily at the top of a willow. As I watched, it broke off several green twigs, peeled off small strips of the soft bark and swallowed them, Willow, *Salix*, salicylic acid, aspirin... Was this bird taking a medicine? Who knows? I have never seen it happen again and have never found any reference to such behaviour.

On another day Mary and I watched in awe as a mature Moorhen challenged and demolished a younger bird in a duel fought with such aggression that the youngster seemed eventually to drown, exhausted.

I have had a few sightings of spectacular Peregrine behaviour, but one episode in particular stands out because it was shared by a whole BOC group. We were at the raptor viewpoint at Capel Fleet on Sheppey when a Peregrine was seen to leave a perch on a distant gate and rise high into the air. The target was a passing Woodpigeon that, when struck, disappeared into a reed-bed in a flurry of feathers. As the Peregrine braked and turned, a Marsh Harrier snatched up the pigeon and carried it off.

I also once shared with half a dozen others a unique episode that intrigues me still. Two male Cuckoos were vying for the attention of a female. One of them flew down to pick up a piece of reed which it held in its bill while executing a strange little dance on a willow branch. How many millennia have passed since a piece of nesting material mattered to the parasitic Cuckoo?

And let us not forget the hummingbird that mistook my left ear for a flower? That *was* weird and clear proof that I had eventually learned to sit still.

As always, I could go on, but I am sure there are a thousand better tales that could be shared. If you have even one story to pass on, I am sure that Iain would appreciate the chance to use it.

I am very pleased to report that THE Newbury BT Exchange Peregrines have as usual been in residence all this last winter, and so have been reported in the town centre since early April 2019, when Sarah White reported an adult pair courting on the top of the Exchange building.

Since then, we have monitored the successes and failures of these Peregrines through to this 2025 breeding season, with the wonderful help of: our Newbury Peregrines WhatsApp Group (NPWG) of loyal caring locals; the great assistance of BT and CPRE Management; and the financial generosity of NPWG members and of the BOC Conservation Fund. Overseeing the ringing and camera technicalities is Jason Fathers from Wildlife Windows Ltd.; so all in all it has been a great team effort that has helped and supported this project all along.

It is remarkable that here we are six years later, discussing the history and prospect of the very same two individual birds in Newbury as in 2019; for how many other individual birds in Berkshire can this be claimed?

Even with human activity all around them, the Newbury Peregrines are so confiding - something I have always been worried about regarding their safety – and so they have always been a satisfying subject for photography for all. The result is an almost feather for feather portfolio of both birds perched, feeding young and in flight, with a myriad of great photos appearing on social media, most recently by Dave Webster adding to a not inconsiderable number of snaps by me. The feather patterns of the dark barring on the flanks and belly are as unique as a human fingerprint. Add to that the hood pattern and the shape where it meets the pale cheek and neck feathers, together with the presence or absence of spotting on the white breast allows us with total confidence to identify individual birds - like MrsN - even without a colour-coded ring. Sadly, we will never know where MrsN came from, or exactly how old she is, but we are fortunate for the tiercel to bear a colour ring - Black 69 (we have shortened it to B69). He was ringed as a nestling, by Graham Roberts, on Chichester Cathedral in May 2016 and after leaving its natal site was not seen or reported again for nearly 3 years until he turned up on Newbury BT, where on 20th April 2019 I finally snapped a photo that enabled me to crack the code...Black 69. With the help of cr-birding.org we contacted the ringer within hours and Graham replied the same day!

As the weeks rolled along through April into May, Sarah and I became obsessed with monitoring this incredible novelty... Peregrines in Newbury town centre - and to have them perching on St Joseph's Church bell tower, which for me as a young lad living next to the Fire Station in the 1960s was an unthinkable and impossible thing to happen. But it did, and continues to do so.

In that first summer of 2019, it became clear to us that the Peregrines had nested on the BT Exchange flat roof, but as the Chelsea Flower Show came along, as usual, the heavens opened and we had a week of rain. That was the end of that breeding attempt; the eggs got wet, chilled, and failed. It was very sad to watch the pair beaver away like clockwork and then note how their routine all fell apart. However, having just read Nick Dixon's book on 25 years of monitoring the Exeter Peregrines we invited him to have a look and advise us what we might do.

Over the years he had developed a tray nestbox with an overhang slanting roof simulating a cliff-ledge nest site. He kindly shared the design, and I added two fenceposts, one along the rooftop edge and one along the tray edge to provide the Peregrines with a comfortable perch rather than a ½ inch wide square edge of plywood! This was installed in Spring 2020. Nick recommended Jason Fathers to provide a trail camera setup and ring any chicks that the Peregrines pair produced, and the rest is history - a very exciting, eventful, frustrating, worrying but satisfying history: 13 juveniles have successfully fledged, 11 have been colour-ringed, of which two have already been reported at three locations.

The BT Exchange rooftop had to be completely refurbished last year and BT/CBRE were kind enough to follow our recommendation to do this essential work outside the breeding season; so work began last August and was completed by the autumn. B69 and MrsN still used the building at times during this project and instead simply made more use of their other favourite haunts in the town centre. When the old nestbox was deemed in need of replacement, the BOC kindly provided the spare one that I had supplied to them previously (and kept in Patrick Crowley's garage). This was then installed by the CBRE manager Dean Cleall, and Jason installed an upgraded trail camera also generously provided by the BOC

Conservation fund. This has much improved imaging, runs off a solar panel rather than a car battery, and sends the images over the mobile 4G network to a hub where I can download them onto my phone.

We were determined to follow the rules of zero disturbance to the nest site after 1st February, so Jason installed the new camera on a bitter, wet, and windy day in late January and it was not a day for making fine adjustments. We have been getting great views of the Peregrines courting and bonding in the nestbox all through February and the first half of March, and now that full incubation is well underway, we are seeing the complex behaviour and devotion these birds show towards each other and their precious clutch of eggs.



While I was writing this review, we had news of some urgent structural work that must be done to The BT Exchange regarding broken cladding falling onto the public footpath below. It was panic stations for a while after a consultant ecologist was called in who might obtain a license to permit the disturbance of the breeding Peregrines for the necessary work to be done. But thankfully an ecologist friend of mine advised that until an NSA (No Satisfactory Alternative) was declared for this site, the birds were still protected. And one solution appears straightforward: to arrange for the affected footpaths to be temporarily closed until any juveniles have fledged and shown evidence of independence, probably by the

end of June. It is fingers crossed that this can be arranged and the birds can remain undisturbed at this critical stage. Just another example of potential trouble that Berkshire's premier breeding Peregrines must have sorted out on their behalf!

All the top and notable events since April 2019 have been logged on our Newbury Peregrine (Twitter) X account, to find it just type in @NewburyPeregrin and drill down to access older and older entries. While for selected photos, visit:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/zTfS7D2H79rTa1zz5>



Stop Press

We have just had some great news, our 2022 Newbury juvenile Darcy, (ring: Blue DA) has been photographed on the Town centre Church in Henley-on-Thames (Photo by Simon Booker). If you live locally to Henley, you might like to go along and try to locate this bird and get some more photographs.

It is important that everyone taking photographs of wildlife observes the tenets of the Nature Photographer's Code of Practice. During nesting season, it is even more important to avoid disturbance and to prioritise the welfare of the birds over the photograph you may want to take.

You can read the Code at this link from the [Royal Photographic Society](#) (ctrl + click on the highlight).

The BOC Photographic Competition 2025**Jane Campbell**

We recently enjoyed an evening of fabulous photography at our annual competition.

The audience voted for Bryan Hutchings' Red Kite as the winner of the Gordon Langsbury trophy; congratulations to Bryan for retaining this award for a second year. Many thanks to judge Derek Gale and to the London Camera Exchange for providing the prizes.

Here are the leading images for each category.

PORTRAIT

First: Ian Silvester, Iberian Green Woodpecker

FLIGHT or ACTION

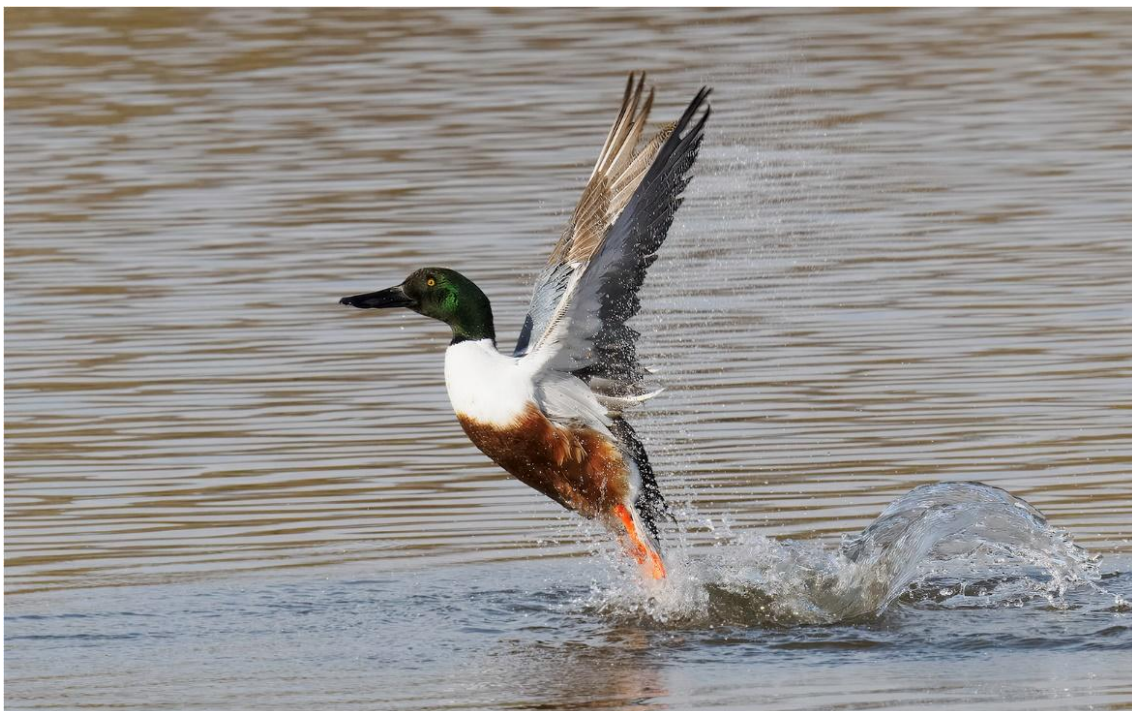


First: Bryan Hutchings, Red Kite

'The photo was taken from the tower hide on a rainy day at Gigrin farm, Rhayader in Wales. Poor lighting required an iso of 6400 with a shutter speed of 3200.'

Second: Sue Truby, Shoveler

"This male Shoveler was in front of the hide on Sandford Lake at Dinton Pastures, being pestered by a Tufted Duck. I followed him with the lens, and luckily, he decided to take off. Cropping was interesting. As it is, the Shoveler is dead centre, which I don't really like, but I wanted to retain the splash of water behind it, so dead centre it had to be. I left plenty of room in front of the bird for it to move into."



BIRDS in BERKSHIRE

First: Sue Truby, Mistle Thrush

Sue says "I was walking back along the path from the hide on Colebrook Lake North and saw two Mistle Thrushes looking for worms in the field that usually contains horses. It was just a matter of waiting until one happened to have a worm in its beak. They were quite a way away so it is heavily cropped. I wanted to focus attention on the bird and worm, so blurred the background and foreground."



Second: Dave Rimes, Treecreeper





**White-winged Black Tern;
Hosehill LNR; 9Sep2024**



**Avocet; Fobney Meadow;
19Oct2024**



**House Martin; QMR;
14Sep2024**



**Slavonian Grebe; QMR;
20Dec2024**



**Cattle Egret; QMR;
16Sep2024**



**Smew; Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CPO;
24Jan2025**

(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.)

And lastly, a message from your committee: "Best wishes for the Easter Holidays."