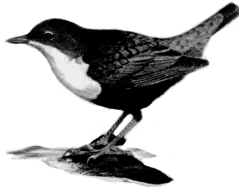


# THE DIPPER



## THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Registered charity number 1088830

G.O.S./WELSH WATER INFORMATION LINE: 01495 769284

GOS WEB SITE: [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk)

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December 2002

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### MEMBERSHIP NEWS & SUBSCRIPTION UPDATE

#### RENEWALS

Many thanks to those of you who have already renewed/signed Gift Aid/ updated Deed of Covenant payments. As of 11<sup>th</sup> December, 4 members have switched to standing orders and there have been 38 cash /cheque renewals. However, as these are subscriptions for 2003, I shall not be paying the money in until the beginning of January, so don't panic if your cheque hasn't been cashed yet.

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS; how to delay an increase in rates.**

The proposal to be taken to the 2003 AGM is that rates will not increase in January 2004 despite increasing copying charges resulting in a slight loss against membership income. If you are a standard rate tax payer paying tax equal to or greater than your current GOS subscription, we can treat your subscription to GOS as a donation, and claim back tax that you will have paid on your subscription at a rate of 28%. Gift Aid costs you nothing, but increases the value of your GOS subscription as follows:

**£7.00 becomes £8.96      £10.50 becomes £13.44,      £13.00 becomes £16.64**

So, the more of you who sign Gift Aid declarations, the longer we keep our current membership rates.

**If you don't pay tax, we cannot claim the tax back, so you should not sign a Gift Aid Declaration. Similarly, if you stop paying tax we will be unable to claim tax, so please notify the treasurer.**

## Annual General Meeting 2003

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Village Hall Goytre at 7:30pm on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2003

All Officers of the Society have to be elected annually.

### Change of Officers:

**Vice Chairman** (currently vacant): Jeff Fisher has volunteered for this post.

**Membership Secretary:** Gill Jones stepped down during 2002. Helen Jones has volunteered for 2003 and is willing to continue beyond that. However if you would like to be Membership Secretary from January 2004 she is as willing to step down at the end of 2003, so nominations for 2004 are welcome for consideration at this AGM.

**Dipper Editor:** Would anyone like to take over *The Dipper* for 2003 in the first instance but for longer if Helen continues as Membership Secretary beyond 2003?

**Field Secretary:** Brian King steps down at the end of the 2002 programme. Steve Butler has volunteered for 2003, and has produced the programme for 2003. As above, he is willing to continue beyond 2003, but if you would like to be Field Secretary from January 2004, nominations for 2004 are welcome for consideration at this AGM.

Jeff, Helen & Steve need to be nominated and elected for their roles in 2003 at the AGM.

All other Officers have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election, though new nominations are always welcome.

### Committee Members (3-year term)

Steve Williams retires but has been invited to remain on the Committee as a co-opted member due to his role as Policy Officer, Sustainable Development, with Merthyr Tydfil CBC. Brian King has been invited to remain on the Committee as a co-opted member. (Co-opted members advise but do not have voting rights at Committee)

The Constitution allows for up to 8 Committee members in addition to the Officers. Due to changes outlined above, **we need 4 more Committee members**. Nominations have so far been received for:

Verity Picken (Llangybi), Chris Hatch (Abersychan) and Rob Moeller (Abergavenny)

If you would like to volunteer and make a contribution to the way your Society is run, or would like more information, please contact:

Trevor Russell, The Pines, Highfield Road, Monmouth, NP25 3HR  
Tel: 01600 716266, e-mail: [trevor.russell7@virgin.net](mailto:trevor.russell7@virgin.net)

Both the Proposer and Secunder should sign nominations with the agreement of the nominee, or e-mail me at the above address with details.

Nominations must be received by January 11<sup>th</sup> 2003

In the event that a Committee seat is contested, selection will be made by a show of hands at the AGM.

**The AGM will be followed by a "Members' Evening" which will be an opportunity for you to get rid of those mince pies and sausage rolls left over from Christmas, and to show and discuss your birding slides and experiences.**

Let Andrew Baker or Trevor Russell know should you wish to show any of your slides.

## INDOOR PROGRAMME UP TO March 2003

Trevor Russell

All meetings are held in the Goytre Village Hall and begin at 7:30

**January 18<sup>th</sup>, AGM and Members' Evening, including BYO slides and snacks.** See above

**February 1<sup>st</sup>, Mike Leach ARPS, "Further Adventures of a Wildlife Photographer".** A welcome return to Mike who never outlives his welcome because of his superb photographs, and entertaining presentations. Having de-bunked the Wise Old Owl theory, this time he turns his inquisitive lens to take a light-hearted look at fresh targets far and wide.

**February 15<sup>th</sup>, Rod Lawrence, "The Wildlife and Ecology of Namibia".** Fresh from leading Avocet cruises on the River Exe, Rod will take us to explore staggeringly beautiful Namibia, from the Kalahari and Namib deserts in the east and west, to the Skeleton Coast and Walvis Bay and then to the renowned Etosha Game Reserve; a "must see" presentation.

**March 1<sup>st</sup>, Mike Langman "Make a Note of it – Field ID using Field Notes".** Very useful and instructive, you will learn what to look for, what to make notes of and how to quickly sketch what you see – thanks to lots of audience participation on the white board (which can be quickly rubbed off!) You can then figure out what you have seen - and drawn - at leisure, back home! Bring your own pencil and notebook, this is for real. And just in time for all those Atlas surveys!

**March 15<sup>th</sup>, Gordon Langsbury FRPS, "High on the Hardangervidda (Southern Norway)".** I don't think we can have too much of Gordon and his brilliant presentations. This time he's back with a new presentation from Southern Norway. Just what it says on the tin!

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## OUTDOOR PROGRAMME UP TO March 2003

Grid References are shown in brackets

"Map 161" etc. refers to the relevant Ordnance Survey Landranger (1:50,000) Map number.

GLWR refers to the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve.

Jan. 05	Sun	9.00	<b>Llandegfedd Reservoir.</b> Meet Tim Griffiths at the Fisherman's car park (SO333006) for an easy 2-3 hour walk for wintering water birds. <b>Map 171</b>
Jan. 26	Sun	6.30	<b>Tregaron/Aberystwyth Harbour,</b> a full day outing. Meet at Abergavenny Bus Station for car sharing, or at Cors Caron at 9am, at the car park just beyond Maesllyn Lake (SN700634) about 3 miles Northeast of Tregaron on the B4343. <b>Map 146</b>
Feb. 02	Sun	14.30	<b>GLWR Uskmouth.</b> Meet Chris Jones at the Reserve car park (ST334834) for an easy walk around the reed beds. <b>Map 171</b>
Feb. 09	Sun	8.00	<b>Slimbridge &amp; the Great West Bird Fair.</b> Meet at the lay-by on the LHS of the A466, heading towards Chepstow from the motorway, for car sharing. A full day visit possibly staying for the swan and starling roosts.
Feb. 22	Sat	9.00	<b>Kenfig/Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir.</b> Meet at Kenfig Reserve car park (SS801809) for a full day visit to the reserve and reservoir. <b>Map 170</b>
Mar. 01	Sat	8.00	<b>Glen Trothy.</b> Meet Steve Butler at Abergavenny Bus Station for car sharing to the start of this moderate 2-3 hour walk through country lanes and fields. <b>Map 161</b>
Mar. 15	Sat	9.00	<b>Gobion</b> Meet Brian King and Gary Saunders on the lane joining the B4598 (SO348091) for an easy 2-3 hour riverside walk. <b>Map 161</b>

**Programme Organisers: Steve Butler (01873 854583) & George Noakes (01873 856564)**

If you are unsure of the starting point for any of the walks on the 2003 programme contact Steve or George, ask for details at an indoor meeting or write to Membership secretary Helen Jones (enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope) stating which details you would like. Alternatively, if you have access to the internet, clicking the Map Number against each entry on the "Outdoor Programme" page of the GOS Website will pull up a map showing the starting point.

[www.gwentbirds.org](http://www.gwentbirds.org)

## REPORTS OF OUTDOOR EVENTS

Brian King & George Noakes

**Along The Canal, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October, Steve Williams.** The section of the canal from Upper Cwmbran provided a walk with rural and urban settings, and was accompanied with light rain. It was interesting to note the change in habitat along the route. Although fairly quiet, several Grey Herons were seen, and Mallard and Moorhens were present in good numbers. Steve pointed out the possible presence of Otters and noted the invasive nature of foreign water plants in the canal. Finches and tits were present in trees and a pair of Grey Wagtails was seen briefly.

**Collister Pill, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October, Chris Jones.** A good number met for this coastal walk in reasonable weather (*does this mean that Chris' directions in the September Dipper were useful? [Ed.]*).

Mixed groups of finches and tits were seen on the walk to the sea wall, and Redwings were also present. Large numbers of Curlew were feeding but numbers of other waders were generally low. Kestrels were seen and four late Swallows passed up the estuary to give a final reminder of summer.

### **Llanelli WWT, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November.**

A few very dedicated members braved the terrible weather conditions and made it to the reserve. Conditions kept them within the hides all day but they were able to report seeing Spoonbills and a Long-billed Dowitcher; ample reward for braving the elements and a lesson that it pays to get out whatever the conditions. A complete list recorded by Steve Butler, Rob Moeller, George Noakes and Tony White follows.

#### **Llanelli WWT trip species list**

Species	Number	Species	Number	Species	Number
Little Grebe	6	Oystercatcher	80	Wren	1
Cormorant	3	Lapwing	27	Dunnock	3
Grey Heron	2	Black-tailed Godwit	22	Stonechat	1
Little Egret	8	Curlew	75	Blackbird	3
Spoonbill	2	Spotted Redshank	4	Fieldfare	17
Whooper Swan	5	Redshank	100	Redwing	10
Shelduck	6	Greenshank	3	Mistle Thrush	1
Wigeon	800	Snipe	8	Long-tailed Tit	4
Gadwall	4	Long-billed Dowitcher	1	Coal Tit	1
Teal	35	Dunlin	12	Great Tit	2
Mallard	20	Curlew Sandpiper	2	Blue Tit	4
Shoveler	4	Common Gull	1	Chaffinch	1
Pochard	2	Herring Gull	4	Greenfinch	5
Tufted Duck	2	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	Bullfinch	1
Sparrowhawk	1	Black-headed Gull	35	House Sparrow	4
Buzzard	1	Wood Pigeon	2	Starling	200
Kestrel	1	Collared Dove	1	Magpie	1
Merlin	1	Kingfisher	1	Jackdaw	30
Water Rail	1	Pied Wagtail	1	Carrion Crow	6
Moorhen	5	Meadow Pipit	2	Raven	1

*Steve, Rob, George and Tony filled a car so went straight to Llanelli. We understand that at least one other member went to Abergavenny Bus Station for car sharing, but as no one else turned up, they were unfortunately disappointed. We can only offer our apologies for this and to say that in future, a leader will turn up at meeting points whatever the conditions. If you are in doubt about a trip going ahead in 2003, phone Steve Butler or George Noakes for advice – Details on page 12. (HPJ [Ed.]*

**The Gobion, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November, Brian King & Gary Saunders.** A small group met at the bridge in quite pleasant conditions after a spell of heavy rain. Erosion of the riverbank was noted. Grey Heron, Green Sandpiper, Goosander and Cormorant were seen. Mixed groups of tits and finches, together with Redwing, Fieldfare and Mistle Thrushes moved to feed in the trees. On our return, a Treecreeper and Great Spotted Woodpecker were viewed briefly.

### **A note of thanks.**

As you know, I have decided to pass on the preparation of the Outdoor Programme to Steve Butler and George Noakes, in the main feeling that fresh ideas and expertise were needed after my five years in harness.

At the outset, I was concerned that my novice status would be inadequate to the task. However I did not appreciate the wealth of support that would come to me from walk leaders who were happy and enthusiastic to help when asked. It was always heartening to enjoy the support of members attending the walks, often in very poor conditions, and you all deserve my thanks and appreciation.

Finally, I am grateful for the friendship given to me and the skills you have taught me, and I am sure that you will support the "new management" in new measure, and they may be sure I'll be along!

Thanks again, Brian King

*I am sure that you will want to thank Brian for his Outdoor Programmes over the last five years, assisted by Gary Saunders, and to wish them both well in their "retirement" from the task. As a past Field Secretary, I know that the task, though rewarding, is very demanding of time and effort, so thanks Brian & Gary and happy birding! (HPJ[Ed.]*

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### **RECORDS WANTED FOR THE 2002 GWENT BIRD REPORT**

**Chris Jones**

It's that time of the year again and I'm making my plea for your records for 2002. It is only by the continued support of all members that the society is able to produce an annual report. For guidance on what records should be submitted, see the section on Submission of Records on pages 42-43 of the 2001 report. Hopefully, with your help, we can avoid producing a report on just the scarce and rare species recorded in 2002. This I believe would be a major backward step for the Society.

Many of you are aware that the work involved in the production of each annual report is extremely time-consuming for both the County Recorder and the Report Editor. However, you may not be aware that because of the late submission of records, it means that many sections of the systematic list have to be re-written to incorporate them, thus making the task even more time consuming. So to ensure that your records appear in the 2002 Gwent Bird Report, and to help those giving up their time to produce the report, please submit your records by the end of January.

Record Slips / Scarce bird report forms can be obtained from Chris Jones either or by post – 22 Walnut Drive, Caerleon, Newport, NP18 3SB, 01633 423439, or from the Library at indoor meetings. **Four slips are included with this Dipper**

Records can be handed in at an indoor meeting or posted [address as above].

Thank you for your support.

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**CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE MARCH DIPPER TO  
REACH HELEN BY MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY PLEASE  
Helen Jones, 104 Clodien Avenue, Cardiff, CF14 3NQ.  
[hp.jones@care4free.net](mailto:hp.jones@care4free.net)**

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During the first quarter of 2002, 208 different species of bird were found on the 102 sites taking part in the **BTO-Hanson Business Bird Challenge**. New sites can always be registered and each one highlights how important business and industrial sites are for birds. Members will probably recall that Llandegfedd Reservoir was highly rated in the inland water site category.

A year or so ago, a national newspaper offered a reward of £5000 for the first definitive explanation as to why the House Sparrow had declined, as over 10 million birds have been lost in the last 30 years. For 2 years the BTO has been analysing its archive of data but because the House Sparrow was often disregarded in earlier surveys (too common), the gaps in our knowledge do not help us to understand the problem. Also the declines are not uniform across the country, those in gardens have occurred later than on farmland, the changes have been more rapid in suburban gardens than in urban ones and in some parts of the country (northern England and Wales) House Sparrows are actually doing well. The key questions to answer are whether birds in some areas/habitats breed more successfully than in others, or is it simply a problem of too many birds dying each year?

The BTO has now launched a new appeal to raise funds for further research to answer these questions. You can help in 3 ways: donate to the new appeal look out for (and help with) future surveys register for **Garden BirdWatch (GBW)**.

If we can learn anything from the House Sparrow's decline it should be not to take the common species for granted.

During the 2001/02 winter, **Garden Bird Feeding Survey (GBFS)** recorded seven species visiting garden feeders in record numbers; Great Tit, Coal Tit, Goldfinch, Wood Pigeon, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch & Pheasant. The reasons are three-fold; lack of key wild fruits in our

hedgerows and woodlands, increasing reliance on gardens for winter food, and the improved seed mixes and food provisioning during recent years. Four species (House Sparrow, Starling, Reed Bunting and Black-headed Gull) were however recorded in their lowest numbers during 32 year history of the **GBFS**. During that time a total of 162 species has been recorded taking garden food and Red Kite was added to the list last winter.

Finally an Oystercatcher recently caught by the **Wash Wader Study Group** has set a new longevity record for the species. Ringed as a young bird on 13 August 1967, it was 35 years old when caught and was older than most of the ringers present (that wouldn't have been the case in Gwent!). Most Oystercatchers that winter on the Wash originate from Norway, so this bird had probably returned each spring to breed adjacent to a recently ice-free Norwegian fjord.

*Two Garden Bird Surveys have been mentioned above. **GBW** is an all-year-round survey, started in 1995, with no limit to the number of participants. There is an annual registration fee, currently £12, for which you get vouchers for CJ WildBird Foods products, newsletters etc. It is a simple survey to do from the comfort of your own home, and new registrants receive an 80-page Garden Bird Handbook.*

*GFBS started in the winter of 1970/71 and observations are made between October and March. Gardens are selected centrally and are limited to 300 sites per winter.*

*Anyone interested in taking part in **GBW** can contact The BTO*

- *tel.: 01842 750050 OR*
- *visit their website: [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org), OR*
- *send your details and a cheque for £12, payable to BTO to  
Garden Birdwatch, BTO, FREEPOST,  
Thetford, IP24 2BR*

*See page 8 for more on GBW*

Not long before Jerry sent me his latest "BTO News" contribution, I came across an encouraging article – "How to house sparrows – colonial nest boxes boost House Sparrow numbers", Tony Jenkins *Natur Cymru* No. 5, Winter 2002: 27-31.

House Sparrow decline has been attributed to a number of possible causes. In rural areas these include crop spraying, selective herbicide application and changes in farming practice - particularly the change to autumn sown cereals. In urban areas, predation, disease, garden pesticides, traffic pollution and a lack of nest sites are thought to be major contributors to the decline.

To be successful, House Sparrows need buildings for nest sites and open spaces to provide an adequate food supply. Nest

sites are reduced with modern house design and renovation of older buildings. At the National Wetlands Centre Wales (NWCW) at Penclacwydd (Llanelli), House Sparrows are breeding successfully in a "sparrow terrace" placed on the rear of the Flamingo House in 1998.

The terrace comprises 24 boxes in two banks of twelve (dimensions 140mm high x 195mm wide x 210mm deep for each compartment) sited 2 metres above ground level, and 37mm entrance hole in each compartment. To provide access for monitoring, the compartments have hinged fronts that open from the centre line between the two rows. After a slow start, the terrace has proved successful as shown below.

Numbers of:	Breeding Season				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Occupied boxes	2	1	15	20	20
Nesting attempts	4	2	21	33	33
Eggs laid	12	8	80	121	122
Young fledged	4	5	45	67	61
% breeding success*	33.3	62.5	56.3	55.8	50.0

\*number of successfully fledged young relative to eggs laid.

The conclusion is that in gardens where house sparrows are regular visitors, nestboxes with entrance holes of 32-37mm diameter may encourage them to breed. If you want to help sparrows by providing suitable nesting sites, you can make your own terrace, or purchase one that can house up to 3 families from the suppliers below

Schwegler Woodcrete Sparrow Terrace available from Jacobi Jayne @ £34.95 to house 3 families. Overall dimensions 245 x 430 x 200mm and weight 13kg, so not suitable for fences and sheds. Free order line 0800 072 0130, [www.wildbirdnews.com](http://www.wildbirdnews.com)

Wooden House Sparrow Terrace available from Garden Bird Supplies @ £20 to house 3 families. Tel: 01939 232233, [www.gardenbird.com](http://www.gardenbird.com)  
Exterior plywood House Sparrow Terraces available from CJ Wildbird

Foods @ £19.95 to house 3 families. Overall dimensions 300 x 380 x 145 mm (h, w, d). Freephone 0800 731 2820, [www.birdfood.co.uk](http://www.birdfood.co.uk)

Other possibilities might be:

Haiths, 0800 298 7054, [www.haiths.com](http://www.haiths.com)

Or Ernest Charles 0800 7316770, [www.ernest-charles.com](http://www.ernest-charles.com)

## GARDEN BIRDWATCH (GBW)

Mick Bailey

In the last Dipper Jerry Lewis made a plea for more people to join the **GBW** scheme. I must confess to having been a bit snooty about the **GBW** for many years, considering it to be merely a ploy by the BTO to inveigle inexperienced birders into organised surveys: definitely not the sort of thing for hardened Common Bird Census (CBC) workers like me! How wrong I was. Since joining the scheme in Jan 2001 I realise that it is a valuable complement to other surveys (as Jerry pointed out) and, moreover, is great fun.

My garden backs on to a wood and one of my neighbours, like many on our estate, runs a veritable restaurant for the birds, while I do not feed them at all. You've guessed it: many birds simply overfly my garden as they commute between wood and feeding station. Others just stay in the wood. After a few months, I decided that as

well as the **GBW** records that I send to the BTO, I would keep personal records of the species seen or heard near but not in my garden. I merely note their presence, because counting is not feasible. I store both the GBW "in garden" and this "nearby" data on an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate long-term comparisons.

I wonder if any GOS members who are existing or prospective GBW participants do, or would consider starting to, collect "nearby" data. I would be glad to hear from them. If we cover enough gardens, we may be able to throw further light on the relationship between gardens and their surrounding bird populations.

Mick Bailey, 17 Wellington Drive, Cwmbran, NP44 5HH,  
Tel 01633 869580  
Email [personal@mickbailey.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:personal@mickbailey.fsnet.co.uk)

*Mick put his idea to Mike Toms of the BTO and received an encouraging response so if you can help Mick in his venture, please do. (HPJ, Ed.) If you want to join GBW, see page 6 of this issue.*

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## LIBRARY UPDATE

George Noakes, Librarian

I have recently received the following titles as a donation from one of our members, Gillian Capper, whom I would like to thank on behalf of the society. The books will be displayed and available for loan at the next indoor meetings.

Bird quest	James Steel
Bird behaviour	Robert Burton
The birds of Israel	Uzi Paz
Antarctic wildlife	Eric Hosking
The year of the Greylag Goose	Konrad Lorenz
Birds of prey	Leslie Brown
Ethiopian episode	Leslie Brown
Encyclopedia of birds (7 volumes)	Orbis
A wealth of wildfowl	Jeffrey Harrison
Watching seabirds	Richard Perry
A field guide to Australian birds: non- passerines	Peter Slater
A field guide to Australian birds: passerines	Peter Slater
Birds of Australia	Peter Rowland
Ornithology: an introduction	Austin L. Rand
Last of the curlews	Fred Bodsworth
Birds in peril	John P.S. Mackenzie
The Birds of Gwent	GOS
Wading birds of the world	
A paddling of ducks	Dillon Ripley

Since the last update I have also purchased "The North American Field Guide", written and illustrated by David Sibley (Pica Press).



The report from this year's Breeding Bird Survey, carried out by Henderson Ecological Consultants, makes interesting reading. Numbers of pairs include: little grebe 12 pairs, shelduck *circa* 17 pairs, mallard 85-129 pairs, lapwing 37 pairs, oystercatcher 3 pairs, little ringed plover 8 pairs, ringed plover 2 pairs, redshank 22 pairs, skylark 31 pairs, Cetti's warbler 13 pairs and linnet 39 pairs. Next year a lot more effort will be put into monitoring productivity.

Over the winter several surveys are being carried out by Voluntary Wardens to help assess the number and territories of predators. Corvids are being closely watched, as are foxes. I have been monitoring mink and otters for over a year and we have decided to control the large number of mink. Four have been caught in the first month of live trapping at the Uskmouth Reedbeds.

We obviously cannot, and have no wish to, control otters. They take some birds and will prey on wader chicks. However, their favoured prey is eels and we are working with the Environment Agency to improve the numbers of elvers coming into the Reserve. The idea is that if there are plenty of fish for them to eat, they will leave the birds alone. The EA will also be carrying out a survey to see what fish are already in the reedbeds and some of the ditches. The remains of an eel eaten by an otter were found next to one reedbed a few weeks ago. The eel must have been around 50cm long before being eaten!

Goldcliff seems to be the current hot spot for otter sightings. Otters have been seen twice there by GOS members recently and I saw one myself there one Friday afternoon. It was only 7m away from us and actually came towards us to get over a sluice board before diving under the water. Andy Peat, our new Temporary

Assistant Estate Worker, was with me. Despite being from Scotland this was the first otter he had seen. Fifteen minutes later he also saw his first short-eared owl flying over one of the saline lagoons. Not a bad way to round off his first week at work with us!

A bittern was seen feeding in the grass next to Reedbed 5 at Uskmouth on 25<sup>th</sup> November by Voluntary Warden Chris Hurn. It was presumably eating earthworms or other invertebrates as little egrets and herons will also do. The work to improve the elver runs will also benefit bittern. The reedbeds at Uskmouth have been designed to attract breeding bittern. They were planted up in 1999 with locally sourced 1m<sup>2</sup> reed turfs placed at 10m intervals. Three years later and they have totally closed over. This winter we will be cutting channels and small pools into the reed beds to increase the 'edge' available for bitterns to hunt along. It is hoped that the pools will also attract ducks and improve the bird watching at Uskmouth.

The old 'dry' reed bed at Farmfields is now wet! This is because we re-instated the sluice last spring. We have just installed a re-cycled plastic boardwalk in this reedbed so that the Goldcliff Ringing Group can still ring here safely. We will also be carrying out some experimental reed cutting to create pools to see if ducks will use this reedbed. With its high bund this reedbed has excellent potential to provide good bird watching opportunities.

#### *Late Update:*

Adrian Hickman watched an otter hunting and feeding for several minutes at the Goldcliff Lagoons on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December. This was on the same lagoon that I saw an otter on the week previously.

## RECENT BIRD HIGHLIGHTS

Compiled by Chris Hatch and Helen Jones from information received on the G.O.S./Welsh Water Bird Line and on the website, [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk)

Location	Date	Species & Comments
<b>September</b>		
Llandegfedd Res.	7-9th 10 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	1 Osprey 1 adult Yellow-legged Gull, also present on 26 <sup>th</sup> . 1 first winter Mediterranean Gull, 2 Little Egret, Lesser black-backed Gulls of intermedius race (migrants)
Monmouth area	7 <sup>th</sup>	Hobby hunting over Osbaston
Llanwenarth	8 <sup>th</sup>	Great, Lesser & Green Woodpeckers viewed together on GOS walk
GLWR Goldcliff	11 <sup>th</sup> 14 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup>	1 Hen Harrier; 20 Little Egret 2 Hobby, also 1 on 19th 190 Knot; 140 Black-tailed Godwit; 2 Curlew Sandpiper; Hobby, 2 Peregrine 1 Temmink's Stint, also probable Temmink's on 19 <sup>th</sup> .
The Bryn	13 <sup>th</sup>	1 Little Egret, 2 Green Sandpiper, 2 Yellow & 30+ Pied Wagtails
Abergavenny	16 <sup>th</sup>	1 Red Kite
GLWR Uskmouth	18 <sup>th</sup>	8 Cetti's Warblers, also 2 on 11 <sup>th</sup>
High Cross	28 <sup>th</sup>	1 dark phase juv Honey Buzzard flying towards Tredegar Park
<b>October</b>		
GLWR Uskmouth	1 <sup>st</sup>	14 Cetti's Warbler
GLWR Goldcliff	3 <sup>rd</sup> 5 <sup>th</sup> 31 <sup>st</sup>	2 Knot, 4 Black-tailed Godwit, 1 Golden Plover, 1 Spotted Flycatcher 4 Curlew Sandpiper, 1 Little Stint, 8 Knot, 10 Black-tailed Godwit, 4 Bar-tailed Godwit & assorted duck 1 Purple Sandpiper
Abergavenny	4 <sup>th</sup> 7 <sup>th</sup> 22 <sup>nd</sup>	1 juv Goshawk Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Castle Meadows, 52 Redwing 1 Brent Goose between Pandy & Werngifford
Bloreng	5 <sup>th</sup>	1 Red Grouse, 50+ Goldfinch
GLWR	6 <sup>th</sup>	4 Green Sandpiper, 6 Snipe, 2 Little Egret, 1 Reed Warbler, 2 Chiffchaff, 24 Clouded Yellow butterflies
Peterstone Gout area	8 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup>	6 Spotted Redshank 1 Goshawk; 1 Short-eared owl
Newport	10 <sup>th</sup> 31 <sup>st</sup>	4 Crossbills over Patent Office White Jackdaw at Tredegar House, also present on 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov.
Ynysyfro Res.	14 <sup>th</sup> 25 <sup>th</sup> 31 <sup>st</sup>	1 juv Red Crested Pochard present until 31 <sup>st</sup> 1 Ruddy Duck, also present on 31 <sup>st</sup> 1 female Goosander
Llandegfedd Res.	19 <sup>th</sup>	2 Golden Plover amongst Lapwings, 1 Ruff
Caldicot Pill	27 <sup>th</sup>	1 Great Skua
Usk	28 <sup>th</sup>	1 Merlin
<b>November</b>		
Monmouth	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Male Blackcap, about 1 week earlier than recent years
Pontypool Park	4 <sup>th</sup>	1 Ring-necked Parakeet
GLWR Goldcliff	9 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> 15 <sup>th</sup>	Fieldfare & Redwing flocks, 1 Little Egret, 1 Harrier sp. 4 Short-eared Owl 1 Hen Harrier
Sluice Farm	9 <sup>th</sup>	1 Mediterranean Gull; 1 Merlin
Abersychan	17 <sup>th</sup>	20+ Crossbill
GLWR Uskmouth	17 <sup>th</sup>  25 <sup>th</sup> 28 <sup>th</sup> 30 <sup>th</sup>	Great Spotted Woodpecker; Kestrel, Merlin, (ring-tail) Hen Harrier (also present on 25 <sup>th</sup> ) & Sparrowhawk all present at Starling Roost; about 6 Cetti's singing 1 drake Scaup, 1 Bittern 1 Short-eared Owl; (ring-tail) Hen Harrier still present to at least 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec Water Rail heard, also on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec
<b>December</b>		
GLWR Uskmouth	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 Red-breasted Merganser flying over foreshore
Pontypool	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 Little Grebe Pontymoile Basin

## COMMITTEE COMMENTARY OCTOBER 10<sup>th</sup>

**Goytre House Wood.** The October meeting learned that the 'bat potential' of the wood has been assessed as "excellent" by local bat expert Ian Rabjohns and a successful grant application was made to M.C.C. for 27 bat boxes and 1 Kestrel box. *(An update to this is that the boxes have been received and will be put up shortly)*

**The Hendre.** The planning proposal for a second golf course plus accommodation facilities at The Hendre, Monmouth is not now expected to be submitted until mid-2003.

**GLWR.** Activities at the Reserve provoked a long discussion. It was reported that the use of dogs and 4WD's to inspect livestock was causing disturbance of birds at the Goldcliff Lagoons. This is particularly damaging at high tides when the birds are concentrated at their feeding/roosting sites. Not only is this practice bad for the birds it also very frustrating for bird watchers some of whom travel long distances from out of county. Chris Jones, GOS representative at the Reserve, will write to the new warden, Tony Pickup, and also to CCW, to gain support to try to change the practice to

minimise bird disturbance. Birdwatching facilities, particularly at Goldcliff, are continuing to receive much criticism, as are facilities for disabled visitors. Chairman Andrew Baker will speak to Tony Pickup to attempt to try to understand his attitude towards the disturbance, birdwatchers and our seeming inability to influence birdwatchers' interests. Watch this space!

**The Dipper.** Helen reported that changing the font size of September Dipper to Arial 11 had received many positive comments whilst Arial 14 had been found to be too large. A larger print version has been offered to members at indoor meetings, and a request for one has been received. Please let Helen know if you would like a larger print version.

**Bird Sightings in Gwent.** John Davies had noticed that there were no reports of bird sightings from Gwent in the popular birding magazines. Discussion revealed that too often, sources of information had dried up. John will attempt to resurrect reports from Gwent to see whether regular reports can put us back on the bird reporting map.

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## NOTICE BOARD

### WINTER WARBLER RECORDS WANTED

Greg Conway is investigating the increasing numbers of warblers wintering in Britain. He is seeking counts of all warblers from all sites during December and January. Records of all warblers are needed, (but particularly Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Firecrest and Goldcrest) to determine distribution and numbers. Required details include Species, Number, Sex, Date, Location, Grid Reference, Habitat (i.e. garden, lake, sewage works, etc.) and colour (green or Grey – Chiffchaff only).

All assistance will be acknowledged. Please send records to Greg Conway, 15 Coronation Place, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 0EP. E-mail: [gregconway@beeb.net](mailto:gregconway@beeb.net).

### BIRDFOOD & ARROWSMITH TIDE TABLES 2003 FOR SALE

Peanuts, black sunflower seeds, sunflower hearts and peanut granules will be available at indoor meetings. Peanuts and black sunflower seeds will be sold in £2 bags. Hearts and granules will be sold in £1 bags. Other types of food could be ordered if there were sufficient demand.

There is also 1 copy of 2003 Tide Tables at £2.75 if purchased at an indoor meeting or £3.10 if posted. Contact Helen Jones – details on page 12.

### TELESCOPE FOR SALE

Bushnell Natureview Spotting Scope 15-45 x 60 (Extra Long Eye Relief).  
**Cost** £100 (Mint, boxed),  
**Contact:** Andrew Long, 01495 306324

## **THE DIPPER**

As mentioned in the September issue of *The Dipper*, we would like to offer a version in this size print or larger, for those members who would prefer it. If you would like to receive *The Dipper* in the print size used for this paragraph, please let Helen Jones know before the March issue is produced and distributed.

### **Who's Who in GOS December 2002**

<i>President</i> <b>Ian Walker</b>	<i>Treasurer</i> <b>Gareth Waite</b> 5 Magna Porta Gardens Abbeyfields, Llantarnam Cwmbran, NP44 3HF 01633 480242	<i>BTO Representative</i> <b>Jerry Lewis</b> Y Bwthyn Gwyn, Coldbrook, Abergavenny NP7 9TD 01873 855091
<i>Vice President</i> <b>Mr W G Lewis</b>	<i>Secretary</i> <b>Trevor Russell</b> The Pines, Highfield Rd Monmouth, NP25 3HR 01600 716266	<i>Librarian &amp; Committee Member</i> <b>George Noakes</b> 01873 856564
<i>Vice President &amp; Atlas Co-ordinator</i> <b>Al Venables</b> 111 Black Oak Road Cyncoed, Cardiff CF23 6QW 029 2075 6697	<i>County Recorder</i> <b>Chris Jones</b> 22 Walnut Drive, Caerleon, Newport, NP18 3SB 01633 423439	<i>Committee Members</i> <b>Ruth Brown</b> <b>Steve Butler</b> <b>Richard Clarke</b> <b>John Davies</b> <b>Tony White</b> <b>Steve Williams</b>
<i>Chairman</i> <b>Andrew Baker</b> 8 Glanmor, Gilwern Abergavenny NP7 0DT 01873 830539	<i>Report Editor</i> <b>Brian Gregory</b> 18 Blake Street Wyesham, Monmouth NP25 3TH	<i>Dipper Distributor</i> <b>Mrs Mary Russell</b> 01600 716266
<i>Vice Chairman</i> <b>Position Vacant</b>	<i>Acting Field Secretary</i> <b>Steve Butler</b> 59 Hereford Road, Abergavenny, NP7 5RG 01873 854583	<i>Co-opted</i> <b>Mr Chris Hatch</b> <b>Ian Smith</b>
<i>Dipper Editor &amp; Archivist, &amp; Acting Membership Secretary</i> <b>Helen Jones</b> 104 Clodien Avenue Cardiff, CF14 3NQ 029 2069 1027	<i>GLWR Warden</i> Nash 01633 275567 CCW 029 2077 2400	

Committee Members should be wearing name badges at the indoor meetings so, if you are new to the club or have a query, just make a beeline for one of us.

### **GOS e-mail ADDRESSES**

<b>Chairman</b> <a href="mailto:andrew@bakerglan.fsnet.co.uk">andrew@bakerglan.fsnet.co.uk</a>	<b>Secretary</b> <a href="mailto:trevor.russell7@virgin.net">trevor.russell7@virgin.net</a>	<b>Membership Secretary &amp; Dipper Editor</b> <a href="mailto:hp.jones@care4free.net">hp.jones@care4free.net</a> <a href="mailto:helen.jones@wbs.wales.nhs.uk">helen.jones@wbs.wales.nhs.uk</a>
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### **ATLAS CARDS**

**If you haven't already done so, please return your Atlas cards and any casual Atlas records to Al Venables as soon as possible - 111 Black Oak Road, Cyncoed, Cardiff, CF23 6QW**