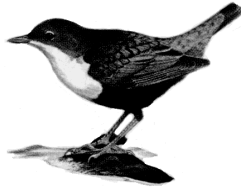


# THE DIPPER



## THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Registered charity number 1088830

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

Newsletter No. 115

June 2010

### **COMMITTEE COMMENTARY**

Trevor Russell

At the April meeting, the committee heard that in Goytre House Wood, squirrel activity was hindering the regeneration of oak saplings and that the working party was awaiting clarification of Tree Preservation Orders on several trees. Anyone interested in joining and helping the working party should get in touch with Dave Brassey on 01633 664212.

The financial squeeze is beginning to bite, with Gwent Wildlife Trust no longer funding bird crop seed for Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), Torfaen LBAP has no money to spend on environmental issues and two nature reserves are no longer being managed.

Newport LBAP is looking for someone to lead the nest box project in schools. Anyone interested in the role should also get in touch with Dave Brassey.

The 2008 Annual Report is well under way with new editor John Coleman. John is chasing for articles, and prospective authors should get in touch with him on 01600 715726. Behind the scenes work is continuing on the improvement of the GOS website.

It was agreed that despite the extra cost, the December *Dipper* should be posted separately from the AGM material. This would allow the time-sensitive AGM notices and material to be posted in good time and relieve the unnecessary pressure on the envelope stuffers who, in December 2009, only just caught the last Christmas mailing date due to the *Dipper's* late publication.

GOS will be 50 years old in 2011, and several proposals are being pursued to mark the event. One idea is to invite the BTO to hold its annual conference in Gwent with (hopefully) GOS luminaries prominent in the speaker programme. We await the BTO reaction. Another enthusiastically received idea is to publish a *Where to Watch Birds in Gwent* book as a sister publication to *Birds of Gwent*. Again, anyone wishing to promote their own favourite patch or walk in Gwent is asked to get in touch with Dave Brassey.

Finally, Mark Stevens invites anyone with material for his birding column in the *South Wales Argus* to get in touch with him on 01633 866470

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***Do you know there is only one truly blue bird?***

If you find Chris Packham less irritating than Bill Oddie on *Springwatch*, you may be interested to know that Chris will be visiting the Savoy Theatre/Cinema in Church Street, Monmouth (pedestrian precinct at the top of town) on Tuesday, July 13 at 7.30pm.

Tickets cost: adults, £15; under 16s, £7.50. Book online and reserve a seat on: [www.monmouthsavoy.co.uk](http://www.monmouthsavoy.co.uk)

The evening is described thus: "A lively, informative and entertaining illustrated show, a romp through some of the world's most peculiar, amazing, disgusting or confounding aspects of the world's wildlife.

"Using his own superb photographs, Chris Packham relates his encounters with weird and wonderful creatures and with tales of their strange lives."

He will also answer such riveting questions as:

Why do lizards sneeze?

Why do glow-worms glow?

Why were dinosaurs so big?

What is a Mollyhawk?

Do you know there is only one truly blue bird?

Enjoy!

***OUTDOOR WALKS PROGRAMME***

***CORS CARON, Saturday January 23***

**Steve Butler**

The day began at 7am in Abergavenny Bus Station, where 10 members met to share cars to drive to Cors Caron. We arrived at around 8.30am.

Our list here included: Canada Geese, Buzzard, Kite, Hen Harrier, Teal, Grey Heron, Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Wigeon, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Willow Tit, Mute Swan, Nuthatch, Blue and Great Tit, Tufted Duck, Bullfinch, Jay, Goosander, Pied Wagtail, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Little Grebe, Raven, Magpie, Jackdaw and Coot.

We travelled on to Aberystwyth, where we saw: Purple Sandpiper, Rock Pipit, Rook, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Redshank, Cormorant and House Sparrow.

We finished the day with the Starling roost, where several thousand came in to settle under the pier.

***SLIMBRIDGE, Saturday February 6***

**Steve Butler**

This trip had a good turnout. Although the weather was cold, 15 members met at Slimbridge WWT at 9.30am.

There was plenty to see: Shelduck, Mute Swan, Bewick's Swan, Coot, Moorhen, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Greylag Goose, Dunlin, Ruff, Redshank, Golden Plover, Canada Goose, Little Grebe, Chaffinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Cormorant, Long Tailed Tit, Lapwing, Pied Wagtail, Water Rail, Black-headed Gull, Grey Heron, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon and White-fronted Goose. A good day!

***Forest Of Dean, New Fancy View Point, Sunday March 27***

**Steve Butler**

Firstly, my apologies to John Thitchener for not meeting him at Speech House. The walk, which began at 8am had another good turnout - 13 people in all and not - thankfully - an omen for the number of birds to be seen.

Beginning at Park End Church we saw: Crossbill, Nuthatch, Long-tailed Tit, Hawfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Green Woodpecker and Goshawk.

We then moved on to Speech House to see more Hawfinch, Coal Tit, Treecreeper, Pied Wagtail, Buzzard, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Redwing.

At Fancy View, we spotted: Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Redpoll and Bullfinch, before finishing up at Cannop Ponds to see: Mandarin Duck, Moorhen, Coot, Greenfinch, Mute Swan, Little Grebe and Stock Dove.

***Craig Cerrig Gleisiad NNR, Saturday April 17***

**Rob Parsons**

Good weather comes to those who wait - this was the mantra for an intrepid trip to see one of the Brecon areas specialities, the Ring Ouzel.

After last year's heavy cloud, the weather dawned clear and bright. With a short talk about the reserve and a stiff walk up to the bowl area of the reserve, we waited in anticipation of seeing Ring Ouzel.

Well we waited...and waited...and we waited some more, even with moving onto higher ground to gain a different view. The score ended Ring Ouzel 1, GOS 0.

With this disappointment behind us, the group cut their losses and aimed for Fan Frynach summit. The stunning views were added to by contour-flying Buzzards and Ravens.

On our return leg, a very obliging stoat gave a medal winning performance for both the photographers and observers within the group along an old boundary wall.

Heading for the cars, a number of good sightings of Reed Bunting and Wheatear were made as they flitted from the boundary wall into the trees.

**St David's Vale, Saturday May 15**

**Steve Butler**

The 6.30am start to catch the dawn chorus was perhaps a bit too early for a Saturday morning – hence the small number of only seven members.

In the past, the dawn chorus walk has been in St Mary's Vale, the sister valley to St David's. This was always a good walk, with plenty of birds. But, for a change I thought we would see what St David's Vale had to offer.

We weren't disappointed, seeing: Green, Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, many Redstart, Tree Pipit, Skylark, Swallow, Meadow Pipit, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Whinchat, Stonechat, Blackbird, Sparrowhawk, Pied Wagtail, Carrion Crow, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Wood, Willow and Garden Warbler, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Cuckoo, Buzzard, Raven, House Sparrow, and Gold, Green and Chaffinch.

A pleasing day - and just as good as St Mary's!

**Highnam Wood, Gloucestershire, Saturday 29th May**

**Keith Jones**

Perhaps due to a combination of factors, such as the inclement weather during the day, reports of a rather poor preliminary walk on May 23 and Eurovision Song Contest on TV (*I think that last factor's a joke, Keith – isn't it?! Ed*), just five of us turned up at around 6.30pm.

The weather was fine, bright and mild, and we spent the first 50 minutes at the observation platform hide overlooking the pool. After checking back at the car park for late arrivals, we commenced our walk at 7.25pm - a circular route of 2km from west to east.

We were fortunate enough to hear our target bird Nightingale at 7.57pm - two birds in the same area - but failed to see them singing in the dense undergrowth.

We listened for about seven minutes, suitably impressed, until it suddenly stopped singing. Proceeding on, we heard brief snatches of song further along, but that was the last of the evening.

Arriving back at the car park at the end of our walk, we met up with two latecomers who had partly walked around but had failed to locate Nightingale, although they did see a Muntjac deer, and probable Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. A brave party of three, including the latecomers, decided to have a further walk to try to locate Nightingale.

Other birds noted during the walk were Buzzard, Pheasant, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Swift, Wren, Dunnock, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit, Great Tit, a family party of Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Chaffinch, Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, brief glimpse of a possible Woodcock roding at 8.05pm and one Grey Squirrel.

Fifteen GOS members and friends joined Mick Bailey and Keith Roylance for the annual walk along the flank of Mynydd Maen above Cwmbran.

The weather was ideal for a leisurely - if at times steep - walk up from Penmaes Road to Llanderfel Farm, then heading north and climbing, before turning south along the flank and making a slow descent towards Henlllys.

From the remains of the old mine reservoir and pump house, we then made our way back to Llanderfel Farm via the sunken track, part of the old Cistercian Way.

Good views were obtained of Cuckoo and Tree Pipit, while a family of Stonechat were busily feeding on gorse. A female Wheatear had been noted on an earlier recce visit at the 'usual' breeding site, but there was no sign of activity there on the day of the walk.

Whinchat had been seen regularly until two years ago, but were again absent this year. A Redstart gave good views as we headed back to the start point.

After a walk of 5.64km and a climb of 420m, 37 species had been seen: Blackcap, Whitethroat, Cuckoo, Wren, Blackbird, Lesser Black-backed Gull, House Martin, Song Thrush, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Bullfinch, Dunnock, Magpie, Chaffinch, Wood Pigeon, Buzzard, Swallow, Blue Tit, Garden Warbler, Collared Dove, Jay, Kestrel, Raven, Tree Pipit, Willow Warbler, Mistle Thrush, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit, Green Woodpecker, Swift, Herring Gull, Skylark, Linnet, Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit, Pied Wagtail and Redstart.

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## ***BTO NEWS***

**Jerry Lewis, BTO Regional Rep**

We are now well into the third breeding season field work for the **Bird Atlas**, and despite the cold start to the season, the weather has generally been favourable and good progress has been made.

In Gwent, we should have achieved our Timed Tetrad Visit (TTV) coverage of eight tetrads in each 10 km square. A really big thank you to all those who have contributed – but, surprisingly, there are still a few very active GOS members who have not yet contributed a single record.

Despite the good coverage, there are still some obvious gaps in the distribution of some species (see below for how to target your birding to fill these gaps). The common and widespread species are usually well recorded (but breeding evidence can often be improved), and birders are quite diligent in recording the rarer species. So it is the species that fall between these two extremes that tend to get overlooked.

As an example, there are more submissions for both Iberian Chiffchaff and the Marmora's Warbler (despite each being represented by a single bird), than there are for breeding season Woodcock.

Interesting as the two rarities may be, they will contribute very little to our knowledge of how Gwent's birdlife is faring at the present time. Have Woodcock really suffered such a catastrophic decline that we only have one breeding location left in the county?

## **Priorities for the second half of this breeding season should be:**

**Timed Tetrad Visits.** If you are carrying out TTVs, then late breeding season visits run from June 1 to the end of July. If you have been allocated a tetrad and feel you can no longer cover it, please let us know as soon as possible. And please enter your counts promptly.

**Breeding evidence.** For every 10km square, we require a comprehensive list of species found in the breeding season, together with the highest level of breeding evidence you can record. Look out for signs of confirmed breeding such as adults carrying food for young (FF). A full list of codes can be found online at [http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/taking\\_part/bevidence.htm](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/taking_part/bevidence.htm)

**Roving records.** Add casual records to build up the species list in a 10km square and add the appropriate breeding code. If you're going away on holiday, please submit Roving Records to help plug gaps. Help is especially required in Ireland, parts of Wales and the Scottish islands.

**BirdTrack.** If you submit your Atlas records in BirdTrack, please remember to add a breeding evidence code where you can. By changing the format of your list to a single column, you'll find it much easier to enter breeding evidence (click on 'My details and settings' at the top right of the page to do this).

**There are a number of online features that can help you** – log in at [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net) using your username and password to access these features:

'My Local Gaps' - this shows your local 10km squares (based on your registered postcode), indicates the proportion of species not yet confirmed breeding and gives you a species list to target for obtaining better breeding evidence.

If you are visiting another part of Britain and Ireland for a holiday, you can use the mouse to drag the map to a new location and use the shift button and mouse to select a new centre point and get the local 10km squares and lists.

'Any Square Summary' gives you a list of species and breeding evidence for any 10km square or tetrad in Britain and Ireland.

'Regional Results' pages (accessed from the home page under 'Latest Results') – select your BTO region and look at the 'species richness' in your area. This will help you target your local birdwatching effort to those 10km squares that still need help with species lists and breeding evidence.

Also, distribution maps and breeding evidence for selected species. Link: [http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/latest\\_results/regionalresultsnav.htm](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/latest_results/regionalresultsnav.htm)

If you are entering TTV records online, please remember to complete page 5 - even if you did not record any colonial nesting species. Submit a blank page and confirm.

It's important that completed TTVs have all five pages submitted. Please check all your completed TTVs and submit page 5 if necessary.

The Rook, *Corvus frugilegus*, is a colonial breeder with clearly visible nests and a noisy disposition. This means they are easy to spot and are unlikely to be overlooked.

Although described in the 2008 *Birds of Gwent* as a common and widespread resident, it is not present in all parts of the county and is less well represented in the western tetrads. In 2008, a small rookery of three nests was established in an oak tree across the railway line from Goytre Village Hall where the GOS indoor meetings have been held for over 40 years.

There is no breeding record shown in the vicinity, tetrad SO30H, in either of the Gwent Atlas studies as shown in *Birds of Gwent*. One of the nearest rookeries is in SO30E near to Llanover Church, and this is counted by myself each year as part of the BTO BBS. It has had around 20-25 nests over the period that BBS surveys have been carried out.

The Goytre rookery increased to four nests in 2009, but these were blown out in high winds in December 2009. In mid-February 2010, four nests were reconstructed in the original tree. At the same time, I counted 26 rooks in this tree and an adjacent one.

Over the three week period up to March 5, nests spread to an adjacent tree and had increased to seven in each tree a total of 14. Subsequently, the rookery has further increased in size up to a maximum of 24 nests.

One can only speculate on the reason for the establishment of this new rookery. One theory could be there has been an increase in the population and birds have had to move to an alternative location.

Another reason may be that some other rookery has become unsuitable or the trees have been destroyed. It is probably a coincidence, but the nearest rookery mentioned above has only 12 nests at present.

One feature of the location of the Goytre rookery is that it is visible from a window in my house. In fact, I can sit at my desk and see the developments as they occur. This is a bonus for the lazy birdwatcher and I intend to keep the reader posted of developments as they occur.

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*Gwent UKBS report*

**Chris Hatch**

## **SIGHTINGS, MARCH 2010**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

A Great White Egret was seen at Peterstone (11<sup>th</sup>). The female Smew was again present at Newport Wetlands (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>). A Black Redstart was reported from Sudbrook (25<sup>th</sup>).

#### **Newport Wetland Reserve**

Up to 26 Avocets were present (13<sup>th</sup>), up to two Spotted Redshank were present (20<sup>th</sup>), and a female Marsh Harrier was reported (27<sup>th</sup>).



## Other sites

Two Short-eared Owls were present at Sluice Farm (2<sup>nd</sup>), with a single bird also present there (17<sup>th</sup>). A single Short-eared Owl was also seen at Caldicot Pill (20<sup>th</sup>). Water Pipits were reported from Sluice Farm (two on 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Collister Pill (one on 21<sup>st</sup>). Two Mandarin Ducks were seen at Llandegfedd reservoir (14<sup>th</sup>), with single birds at Bryn Bach Park (24<sup>th</sup>) and Bedwellty Pits (31<sup>st</sup>). Two Sandwich Terns were at Llandegfedd reservoir (31<sup>st</sup>), with a single bird at Peterstone Gout on the same date.

Spring migrants such as Wheatear, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Sand Martin and Swallow were reported from a number of locations. Three Ring Ouzels were seen near Abersychan (27<sup>th</sup>). Red Kites were recorded at a number of locations and other sightings of note included a Mediterranean Gull at Caldicot Pill (2<sup>nd</sup>), a Spotted Redshank at Peterstone Gout (7<sup>th</sup>), a Hawfinch at Slade Woods (10<sup>th</sup>) and 16 Red Grouse on the Blorenge (19<sup>th</sup>).

## APRIL

### HIGHLIGHTS

Two White Storks were reported from Rogerstone (9<sup>th</sup>). The Great White Egret was again seen at Peterstone Gout (6<sup>th</sup>) and Newport Wetlands (8<sup>th</sup>).

### Newport Wetlands Reserve

Up to 33 Avocets were recorded (12<sup>th</sup>). Two Garganey were seen (from 10<sup>th</sup>) and up to 3 Grasshopper Warblers were recorded (17<sup>th</sup>). A Merlin was reported (6<sup>th</sup>) and a female Marsh Harrier was seen (12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>). A male Ring Ouzel was present (18<sup>th</sup>).

### Other sites

Single Ospreys were reported from Undy (4<sup>th</sup>), Gobion (4<sup>th</sup>) and Bassaleg (10<sup>th</sup>). 40 White Wagtails were recorded at Peterstone (7<sup>th</sup>), with three Whimbrels also present at this site (12<sup>th</sup>). Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers were observed at Rhiwderin (10<sup>th</sup>) and Llandegfedd reservoir (21<sup>st</sup>). A late Short-eared Owl was seen at Black Rock (26<sup>th</sup>).

Other sightings of note included three Bramblings at Pontnewynydd (1<sup>st</sup>), two Grasshopper Warblers at Llanwern (9<sup>th</sup>) and two Sandwich Terns at Llandegfedd reservoir (29<sup>th</sup>). Red Kites were reported from Usk (1<sup>st</sup>), Abergavenny (4<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>), Rogerstone (6<sup>th</sup>), Nash (10<sup>th</sup>), Caerleon (10<sup>th</sup>), Abertillery (11<sup>th</sup>), Monkswood (11<sup>th</sup>), Cwmbran (12<sup>th</sup>), Manmoel (two on 17<sup>th</sup>), Chepstow (18<sup>th</sup>), Brynmawr (18<sup>th</sup>), Blaenserchan (18<sup>th</sup>), and Garn-yr-erw (23<sup>rd</sup>).

## MAY

### HIGHLIGHTS

An Iberian Chiffchaff was present at Wentwood (10<sup>th</sup> to end of month). A Spoonbill was seen at the Newport Wetlands Reserve (18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>), with a Temminck's Stint also present there (8<sup>th</sup>), and a Great Northern Diver was reported from Llandegfedd reservoir (6<sup>th</sup>). A Hoopoe was recorded near Cross Keys (4<sup>th</sup>).



## Newport Wetlands Reserve

Up to two Spotted Redshank were present (3<sup>rd</sup>). A female Hen Harrier was reported (2<sup>nd</sup>), with a female Marsh Harrier also present (2<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>). An Osprey was observed (3<sup>rd</sup>) and other raptors included a Red Kite (3<sup>rd</sup>) and a female Merlin (4<sup>th</sup>). A Little Stint was recorded (8<sup>th</sup>) and two Wood Sandpipers were seen (21<sup>st</sup>). Sea-watching from Goldcliff Point produced 68 Manx shearwaters, four Kittiwakes, one Fulmar, one Gannet and a Guillemot (29<sup>th</sup>).

### Other sites

A Lesser-spotted Woodpecker was reported from Llandegfedd reservoir (2<sup>nd</sup>), together with a male Mandarin (9<sup>th</sup>). A pair of Garganey was seen at Caerleon (from 8<sup>th</sup>). Single Ospreys were reported from Abergavenny (12<sup>th</sup>) and Pantygoitre (15<sup>th</sup>). A Turtle Dove was seen at Caldicot (27<sup>th</sup>) and a Nightjar was heard at Wentwood (24<sup>th</sup>). A group of five Red Kites was reported from Magor (23<sup>rd</sup>), whilst single Red Kites were recorded at Abergavenny (3<sup>rd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>), Tredegar (4<sup>th</sup>), Varteg (25<sup>th</sup>), Garn-yr-erw (25<sup>th</sup>) Chepstow (27<sup>th</sup>) and Cwmbran (31<sup>st</sup>).

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## Newport Wetlands

Tom Dalrymple

### MARCH

#### Birds

The breeding season for waders is under way. There are 21 pairs of Lapwing and 11 nests so far, at least 26 pairs of Redshank but no nests confirmed, 3 definite pairs of Avocet out of a total of 24 birds and 3 pairs of Oystercatcher.

Migrants seen this month include, Sand Martin, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Wheatear and Whimbrel.

Unusual bird sightings for the reserve at this time of year were: Kingfisher 11<sup>th</sup>, Short-eared Owl 20<sup>th</sup>, two Barn Owl on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and three Golden Plover on March 27.

#### Management

Bryn and Richie have been busy replacing gateposts, hanging gates and mending fences in preparation for the stock returning to the fields in April. Unfortunately, they both lost the best part of a day clearing up after another fly tipping incident.

Crow surveys have begun to try and ascertain the population of Corvids on the reserve. We carry out these surveys so that we can compare corvid population with breeding wader egg predation.

Water levels were reduced slightly in three of our most flooded field blocks but apart from this we have retained as much water as possible.

Bryn and I attended a vehicle mounted weed wiper-training course. Now more of us are trained and we have the potential to borrow a second weed wiper from Abergavenny NNR team, the invasive hard rush doesn't stand a chance! Weather permitting...

Volunteers Richard, Rhys, Phil and Sheila have been clearing unwanted biomass from a flower rich area recently cleared of scrub, planting new hedges at the Redhouse office, repairing footbridges and clearing litter.

## Events & visits

Graham Hirons and Gareth Fisher from RSPB Conservation Science visited on the 11<sup>th</sup> to inspect and advise on habitat management. I gave a guided walk to 30 people from the Welsh Assembly Government planning department on March 24.

## April

### Birds

The Lapwing are suffering from much higher predation than last year, with Crows being a particular problem. Lapwings have made 29 nests - 12 have been predated, nine hatched and seven are still being incubated.

Avocet have 12 nests, 21 pairs of Redshank have at least nine nests, the Oystercatchers have two nests, and the Ringed Plover have two nests - one hatched three chicks.

Early surveys on Cetti's Warbler and Water Rail suggest that numbers are down on recent years, the very hard winter last year being probably the main factor. We are grateful to Richard Clarke of GOS for all his help with Water Rail surveying.

In addition to the UKBS report, unusual bird sightings for the reserve at this time of year included Great White Egret on April 8.

### Management

Bryn and Richie have been weed wiping hard rush while the fine weather lasts, which was pretty much every day they were at work.

Llinos has captured evidence of fox predation using nest cameras. Outside the fox fence, the fox has predated two out of

five nests. In the one nest that hatched, the fox was caught on camera just a bit too late from his perspective!

The first of the stock went out on to the reserve on the April 13. Volunteers Richard, Rhys, Phil and Sheila have been repairing footpaths and benches at Uskmouth.

### Events & visits

Panel engineer Dr Andy Hughes visited on the 14<sup>th</sup> to inspect our reservoirs – all were fine.

Kevin gave a talk to 45 people at a meeting of the RSPB Cardiff members group on April 16.

I gave a talk to the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) in Cardiff Bay on April 22.

Volunteers Sheila Dupe and Angela Horup joined Kev and I in assisting with the RSPB-organised Newport Wetlands Girl Guide Jamboree, which approximately 750 Guides, Brownies and Rainbows attended on the April 24.

Volunteers Keith Thomas, Chris Hurn and I gave a "wader walk" on April 24. Kev led a guided walk as part of the Newport walking festival on April 30.

## May

### Birds

Crow and fox predation continues to be a problem. Four new Lapwing nests were made on the grasslands this month and all have been predated. A fox was caught on camera eating one; the evidence for the others is inconclusive, but one was partially predated by a Crow

before it disappeared. Despite all the death and destruction, there are still two broods of Lapwing and Redshank on the grasslands.

The waders on the saline lagoons have fared only slightly better. The Lapwings have four broods and there are still two nests being incubated. Redshanks have three broods and the Oystercatchers have two.

The Avocets lost a lot of chicks to Lesser black-backed Gulls and many have now re-nested - there are now 14 nests but only one chick.

In addition to the UKBS report, unusual bird sightings for the reserve included Spoonbill from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>, two Garganey on the 9<sup>th</sup> and a Temminck's Stint on May 8.

## **Management**

Bryn and Richie managed to get a bit more weed wiping in this month before the grass grew too long. Stocking density was increased on the saline lagoons in the last week of May as all the remaining nests are on the islands. The vegetation was getting so long with the warm weather that it was getting to the point when it would have been inedible for the cattle. A temporary electric fence was erected to keep cattle away from two Lapwing nests on the grasslands. Unfortunately the Fox later destroyed one of these nests.

Kevin attended training on the use of an amphibious reed-cutting machine. Having the skills and equipment to cut our own reed should save a significant amount of money each year. The reserve passed its Environmental Monitoring System assessment on May 18.

Volunteers Richard, Rhys, Phil and Sheila cleared up a fly tipping incident and maintained the viewing facilities at Goldcliff.

## **Events & visits**

Darryl Spittle, Goldcliff ringer and GOS member, kindly ran a dawn chorus event on May 2 for 12 people.

The Scouts had their Jamboree in the visitor centre and around the reedbeds on the May 8. Voluntary wardens Roger and Julia James gave a guided walk for 25 people from the Bristol Naturalist Society on May 9.

### ***INDOOR PROGRAMME 2010***

### **Change to programme**

The October 16 talk by Chris Hatch is entitled '**In Search of Northern Wildlife**' and not 'Orkneys and upwards', as stated on the GOS website. Chris will guide us through the rich diversity of our own northern shores.

### ***The Dipper September 2010***

The deadline for submissions for the next Dipper is August 31, 2010. Please e-mail Jackie Huybs at [jackiehuybs@btinternet.com](mailto:jackiehuybs@btinternet.com) or [newsletter@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbirds.org.uk). Thanks!

Taking advantage of the current trend in global warming - and prompted by the dismal financial situation of certain Eurozone countries - two small feathered émigrés have seemingly taken up residence in Gwent. Yes, it's true - two of *BirdGuides'* 'megs' are, as I write, currently in the county.

How they will fare when the pound starts to fall is anyone's guess, but I trust you all took the chance to welcome the Marmora's Warbler and the Iberian Chiffchaff to their holiday homes on the Blorenge and in Wentwood respectively.

If they ever manage to meet up with their families and friends in the future, perhaps they'll be encouraged to join them in visiting next year by tales of the nice suitable habitats and how their popularity meant they were always being photographed.

They say things happen in threes so I wonder what's next?

**Iberian Chiffchaff****Marmora's Warbler**

(Note: if you receive *The Dipper* by e-mail these photos will be in colour)

### **GOS CONTACTS 2010**

*President*

**Ian Walker** 01633 266382  
[irjwalker@googlemail.com](mailto:irjwalker@googlemail.com)

*Membership Secretary*

**Helen Jones** 029 2069 1027  
[membership@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:membership@gwentbirds.org.uk)

*Conservation Officer*

**Andrew Baker** 01873 830539  
[conservation@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:conservation@gwentbirds.org.uk)

*Vice President*

**Al Venables** 029 2075 6697  
[wa.venables@zen.co.uk](mailto:wa.venables@zen.co.uk)

*Secretary*

**Trevor Russell** 01600 716266  
[secretary@gwentbirds.org](mailto:secretary@gwentbirds.org)

*Librarian*

**Keith Jones**  
[ogofkj@hotmail.com](mailto:ogofkj@hotmail.com)

*Vice President*

**Alan Williams** 01873 880165  
[mochdreboy@waitrose.com](mailto:mochdreboy@waitrose.com)

*Treasurer*

**Keith Roylance** 01633 868410  
[treasurer@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@gwentbirds.org.uk)

*BTO Representative*

**Jerry Lewis** 01873 855091  
[bto@gwentbirds.org.co.uk](mailto:bto@gwentbirds.org.co.uk)

*Chairman*

**Dave Brassey** 01633 664212  
[chairman@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:chairman@gwentbirds.org.uk)

*Field Secretary*

**Steve Butler** 01873 854583  
[Steven.butler59@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Steven.butler59@tiscali.co.uk)

*Publicity*

**Mark Stevens** 01633 866470  
[publicity@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:publicity@gwentbirds.org.uk)

*County Recorder*

**Chris Jones** 01633 423439  
[countyrecorder@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:countyrecorder@gwentbirds.org.uk)

*Report Editor*

**John Coleman**  
[john.coleman@virgin.net](mailto:john.coleman@virgin.net)

**Newport Wetlands**

Nash 01633 275567  
 Visitor Centre 01633 636363  
 CCW Office 01633 275813  
 CCW St Mellons Office 02920 772400

*Dipper Editor*

**Jackie Huybs** 01495 790212  
[newsletter@gwentbirds.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbirds.org.uk)