

THE DIPPER



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Registered charity number 1088830

GOS WEB SITE: www.gwentbirds.org.uk

Newsletter No. 121

December 2011

The Dipper December 2011 - Contents

Page		Page	
1	Chairman's Chatter	7	Newport Wetlands Report
2	Committee Commentary	9	GOS List of Speakers 2012
2	Annual General Meeting Notice	10	Request for 2011 Records
3	Apology to Ray Armstrong	11	Request: Freelance Work
3	Canada Geese in Gwent	11	GOS Bird Walks in 2012
4	Birding in Transylvania	12	Gwent UKBS Report
6	Notes on a Trip to Galapagos		

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dave Brassey

I think that I am now in a position to confirm that the statement 'the time goes faster the older you get' is absolutely true. How can that be, Dave, I hear you say? Simple! Because I have now reached the end of my stint as Chairman of the Society. That's right - I've completed five years in the post and this is the last Dipper in which you'll read my 'Chatter'. And if you too think these five years have flown by, then double-check your date of birth and think again...

I've enjoyed my time in the chair but at the time of writing the one thing that has disappointed me is the failure to find a successor. Maybe by the AGM the whole matter will have been sorted out but whatever happens there will be at least one vacancy on the committee that needs to be filled. If you feel you have something to offer the Society then please come and have a chat. There are plenty of ways you could help and many of them, thankfully, do not require any knowledge whatsoever of ornithology.

Whilst you're contemplating how you may help, let me wish you all a very Merry Christmas; and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

COMMITTEE COMMENTARY**Trevor Russell**

The November meeting is traditionally very busy being the last meeting before the AGM in January. The AGM is the opportunity for Committee members to be exposed to re-election or retirement, not that I can remember any position being challenged by more than one candidate. Indeed, January will see Chairman, Dave Brassey, stand down after an unbelievably short five years with no successor in sight. This is worrying because it means we may have to modify the Constitution to cobble together an interim arrangement. More worrying is why Committee positions are not attracting any volunteers. Dave will have more to say about this in his Chairman's Chatter.

The **Treasurer's Report** revealed that Indoor Meeting expenditure year-to-date, exceeds income by some £400. While this may correct itself by year-end, a review of the programme for 2012 suggests that the exciting programme will be more expensive than 2011 because of the high calibre speakers that have been booked. **It was agreed to increase the entrance fee to indoor meetings to £2 per person after the AGM.**

Llandegfedd continues to draw comments from members who are dismayed at the lack of maintenance to access paths and hides and the general air of dereliction at the site. Even the Sailing Club buildings look neglected. We will be asking if plans exist to improve birdwatching facilities at the reservoir.

There's still no progress on building a shingle beach at **Blaen-y-Cwm** reservoir.

A book, "**Where To Watch Birds In Gwent**", is in preparation with publication targeted to mark our 50th Anniversary in November 2013.

John Coleman was congratulated for producing the excellent **2010 Annual Report**. Copies have been sent to the major birdwatching magazines for review and publicity.

A proposal was made to **stop the Concession rate of Membership fee from 2013** because, at £12, it barely matches the cost of membership (and postal increases are imminent). This means that Adults (£15) and Families (£18) are, in effect, subsidising OAP's who can, in general, afford the Adult fee. The tiny difference is also difficult to administer. This proposal will be put to a vote at the AGM.

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2012**Trevor Russell, Secretary**

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 14th, 2012, in the Village Hall, Goytre, starting at 7:30pm.

Chairman Dave Brassey retires this year after having served five years. We have no nominations to replace him and if all else fails, we may have to amend the Constitution at an EGM to accommodate ways to get around this problem.

The other Officers and members of the Committee have volunteered to stay in their posts for another year but many are finding that changing circumstances are forcing them to give up or modify their roles and we would like to introduce some succession-planning. Please help by volunteering to join the Committee, otherwise an increasing burden will have to be borne by the diminishing remainder. This is unfair and without your help and contribution there is a risk that your Society could founder.

Whilst other Officers and Committee Members have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THESE PLACES CANNOT BE CONTESTED! New nominations for any and all positions are always invited and new faces would be a most welcome sight!

The Constitution allows for up to 8 Committee members in addition to the Officers and there are still several gaps to fill. If you would like to volunteer to have a say in the way your Society is run please submit your name for nomination –all this needs is a proposer and seconder. Both the Proposer and Secunder should sign nominations with the agreement of the nominee, or e-mail me with details. (see Contacts list for details). Nominations must be received by January 1st 2012. In the event that any position or seat is contested, selection will be made by a show of hands at the AGM.

If you feel cautious about committing yourself, why not come along to a meeting and sit-in as an Observer? There would be no commitment and who knows, you might even enjoy it! We meet only five times throughout the year.

The AGM will be followed by a Finger Buffet. The trick here is to bring some finger food to be shared by everyone but then select something that looks far more appetising than your own offering!

Following the buffet John Coleman will be re-living his recent birding experiences in Costa Rica. Shorts and flip-flops are allowed.....

Apology to Ray Armstrong

In the last edition of the Dipper (September 2011) we printed an article by Ray Armstrong, entitled "A Deafening Silence" which due to an unfortunate set of circumstances was printed in an edited format with neither Ray's knowledge nor agreement.

Although the article was well received Ray was upset by the lack of consultation and also by the edited version not wholly reflecting the tone he wished to convey. In order, therefore, to make amends the committee has decided to publish his original article on the GOS website. Those without web access wishing a copy can contact our Secretary, Trevor Russell, on 01600 716266.

Needless to say we have offered Ray and full and unreserved apology which he has graciously accepted.

Canada Geese in Gwent : The Early Years.

Keith Jones

When comparing the distribution maps of the breeding Canada Geese in the county of Gwent, the difference of the two periods of 1991-1995 and 1998-2003 is striking, to say the least. The early map shows just a solitary breeding dot while the later map sports a rash of 60 dots! This represented an increase of greater than 600%, which is remarkable by any stretch of the imagination. Although there were numerous double-figure counts recently, there were 104 three-figures counts between 2000 and 2010; which compares with just five during the decade after 1990. The earlier decades show pitiful maximum numbers in comparison, just 12 birds in the late 1960s, (at Undy in 1967); 20 in the 1970s and 21 in the 1980s. This then is the early story of the spread of the Canada Goose in our county up to the 1970s.

As an introduced species, the Canada Goose has been known as a semi-domesticated goose in this country for close on 300 years. It was pointed out by Latham in 1783 that the free-flying birds

were breeding on ornamental waters in many 'gentlemen's seats.' Indeed, Canada Geese were found as early as 1678 when it was numbered among the King's Wildfowl in St James's Park.

In Gwent, although G.C.S.Ingram and H.Morrey-Salomon (1937) supply a record of one bird being killed, out of a party of five at the mouth of the Rhymney River in 1866, none were located in the county during the BTO survey of 1953. The first 'bird watching' record for Canada Geese for the 20th century was by the Pontypool Ornithological Society and appears in the Number One bulletin of the 'Monmouthshire Bird-Life and Society Activities' published in January 1963. The report was by either Miss B. Thorne, or a Mr B. Trott (B.T) and, judging by subsequent reports at the same site, Miss B. Thorne would seem the more likely. The report reads, "1 (one) seen in same area of Undy, 13th January, 1962. Frequently seen since introduced by Newport Wildfowl Club". In report Number Two (December 1963), Amy Heathcote noted seven flying over Rumney Flats on 3rd February, while Pat Humphreys recorded flocks of 20 to 40 at various times in the winter. Just one record appeared in the 1964 bird report, increasing to four records in 1965, while the 1968 report recorded a decrease in numbers 'probably as a result of heavy shooting along the coast'. However, in that year the first breeding in Gwent was confirmed at Llantrisant and Undy Pool. There was another record of breeding at Newbridge-on-Usk in the 1969 report.

The writer was fortunate enough to trace the last surviving member of the group who released Canada Geese in the 1960s, Roger James. He informed me that the West Monmouthshire Gun Club, in combination with the Newport Wildfowlers, decided to release Canada Geese into the county during 1960. The first introduction, involving about 10 birds or so, failed. Learning from their mistakes and taking advice from the Wildfowl Trust, the exercise was repeated again during August or September 1964. On that occasion a group of about 10-15, including Roger, drove up to the Marquis of Queensbury Estate in Shropshire, taking with them a collapsible canoe, nets, several crates and a Veterinary Surgeon. With great difficulty they eventually herded and caught about 20 birds that were in eclipse plumage at the time.

The Canada Geese, although free, had been used to the ornamental life style, but seemed to settle quickly into their new home. Both the 1960 and 1964 birds were released at the same site, the Ornamental Lake at the Tredegar House in Newport when it was a school. The Societies had taken over the most easterly of the lakes as a reserve, in order to breed wildfowl, mostly Mallard, to restock birds that had been shot. Taking advice from the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust, the birds were identified as the common variety of Canada Geese and were given food such as rotting potatoes. It seems the released birds quickly settled into sedentary behaviour, appearing reluctant to leave their new home. At the same time Canada Geese, which were reported from the local shore, were thought not to have originated from the resident birds at Tredegar Park, but rather from the expanding UK population.

The 1970s decade was heralded with just one record of a single bird at Undy in late autumn 1970. The species remained very scarce during the early 1970s. For example in 1973 just four were reported to Ynys Y Fro Reservoir, five at Tredegar House Lake and at St Pierre Lake, but a maximum of 20 was seen over Chepstow on 20th October. The 1974 bird report suggested: 'the status of this species in the county remains substantially unchanged: scarce.' There were three records during 1975 including a maximum of nine at Ynys Y Fro Reservoir on 15th and 22nd February, but once again no records were received for 1976 and 1977. It seems to appear that the birds introduced into Tredegar Park Lake during 1964 or rather their descendants, remained loyal to the area as they were reported there in 1972, 1973 and 1974.

With many thanks to Rogers James for details of the capture and release, the last man standing from the group.

Birding in Transylvania

Ed Hutchings

The celebrated Dracula image is just one aspect of Transylvania, whose near 40,000 square miles take in alpine meadows and peaks, caves and dense forests sheltering brown bears and grey wolves; and lowland valleys where wisent cool off in the rivers. Thanks to its antiquated agriculture and extensive areas of untouched native forest and wetland, Romania is uniquely important for wildlife in Europe. While outside its borders the image of the country is of industrial pollution, the reality is that its landscapes are considerably less polluted than much of present-day Western Europe. As you climb up into the hills, you enter a world where pesticides and fertilizers have never been used and where meadows are full of an amazing variety of birds and wild flowers – a landscape representative of the Europe of two or three centuries ago.

When one has a significant other half, whose interest in birding is limited to separating tits on the garden birdfeeder, your choice in holiday location has to strike a well-judged compromise. I knew that she would be sold on the timeless landscape and quirky Saxon towns and villages virtually unchanged since the Middle Ages, as well as the fact that some close friends own a house in a remote valley in the foothills of the eastern Carpathians. The added mention of a hammock firmly sealed the deal. I was aware that the house was in a rural location and had indeed seen photos of it, but nothing quite prepared me for the situation or its immediate surroundings. The hamlet of Ceie is mostly strung out along a single road that would give even the most hardened of suspensions a severe test. Our destination was a two-mile drive down this track off the main road and the very last house before countryside that demanded nothing short of a four by four.

On arrival we were promptly serenaded by a family of Buzzards. As we live in South Wales, I immediately felt at home. My friend Ben had mentioned before we left that an aunt had once come to stay. “She saw shrikes in the garden apparently”, he mused, “Is that feasible?” “Quite possibly”, I said quickly, wiping the saliva on my sleeve. No sooner had I dumped our bags and parked my beloved in the hammock, than I was grabbing my bins and heading straight down the track and into a world I had only imagined. The valley continued ahead for about a kilometre and then curved round to the right. Trees of varying ages dotted the landscape; a majority of scrub and tall grasses. Being midsummer, the hot air was full of the sound of crickets and butterflies teemed in every direction.

I stopped and soaked it all in. The sheer diversity and myriad of wild flowers was quite unlike anything I had seen in Europe. The buzzing intensity of the insects and the kaleidoscopic fluttering of the butterflies were mesmerising. In fact I was so caught up in it all, that it took the harsh ‘chack, chack’ call of a Red-backed Shrike to snap me out of it. I had waited a long time to see this bird, but I knew precisely what it sounded like. Perched upon the top of a gorse bush it was obviously alarmed and understandably so. A short distance away was a pair of juveniles feeding on an impaled lizard. I savoured the moment, expecting it not to last. I needn’t have. The truth is that the Romanian countryside is awash with Red-backed Shrikes, with a breeding population of roughly three million pairs. So much so, that by the end of the fortnight I was tired of the sight of them.

Once I had reached the end of the valley and followed the track round to the right, I was faced by an even larger valley with extensive deciduous forests on other side. Whereas oak rules the roost in most of Britain, beech is king here. I came to a junction of numerous tracks, but no obvious footpath. My conversation with Ben had advised me of this moment. He had given me various walks from the house, but no clear cut details of routes. Now I knew why. Footpaths don’t exist in Romania. It is near impossible to distinguish one piece of land from another and to comprehend who owns what. Essentially, you walk where you like, until someone or a large savage-looking dog (of which there are many) takes offence. This took some getting used to, but once you had, the feeling was liberating. I decided to walk to the end of the valley plain and then head back via the forest. If all went well, I would see plenty of birds, whilst avoiding becoming vittles for any local bears.

I had only gone a few feet when a Short-toed Lark launched itself into the air with its undulating song-flight. This species is scarce to eastern areas, so I was lucky to see it. I was told by a local birder (of which there are very few) that the area also held Calandra Lark, though it was certainly considered rare. Continuing further ahead I heard the sound I had been eagerly expecting – a tri-syllabic hollow, muffled “oop-ooop-ooop”. The Hoopoe is common throughout Romania, occupying a

place in rural folklore owing to its tame habits and use of nest sites in village houses. By now it was midday and raptors were on the agenda. I selected a suitably-shady spot and sat down to scan the sky. Within the space of an hour I had seen Lesser Spotted and Booted Eagle, as well as Red-footed Falcon. The Carpathians hold approximately twenty percent of the global population of Lesser Spotted Eagle and it is specially protected within the area. Its conservation status and its large size territory make this bird an ideal flagship species for biodiversity conservation in the region.

Continuing down the valley and before reaching the end I had added Roller, Bee-eater and Lesser Grey Shrike to my Transylvanian tally. I reached the forest edge, thinking it couldn't get any better, and made my way in via another ambiguous track. I stood under the canopy, grateful for the shade once again. A harmony of woodland bird song and calls enveloped me. Testing myself, I picked out Chaffinch, Hawfinch, Nuthatch, Song Thrush, Treecreeper and Great, Marsh and Blue Tit – all within the first five minutes. The prevalent beech eventually gave way to swathes of oak and the ambience changed. This is the domain of the Middle-Spotted Woodpecker, the intermediate cousin of our two native *Dendrocopos*, and a male soon gave himself away with a territorial assertion by song.

I was pondering the absence of this species in Britain, when I spotted a robust, broad-tailed, rather plain brown bird skulking in a thicket. A Chiffchaff called nearby, followed conveniently by the LBJ – Nightingale. The call a soft 'hweet', similar to the Chiffchaff, but louder. Walking back through the remainder of the forest I may well have been back in South Wales, as the songs of Wood Warbler and Redstart accompanied me. I reached the cottage, my birding appetite suitably sated, and this was only day one. Black Redstart song jangled from the village rooftops. I sat on the veranda that evening and watched a family of White Storks in their large nest, characteristically built on our neighbour's chimney. Romania is a refuge for this species, as well as many others. The 21st-century is encroaching on the country increasingly, but wilderness reigns.

Notes on a Trip to the Galapagos (Part Two)

Mike Pointon

Thursday 19th November 2009

Isabela and Fernandina Islands

From the ship I saw Manta Ray - three together and then one nearer, where it was possible to make out its shape under water; a raft of 200 Red-necked Phalaropes; masses of Shearwaters and Brown Noddies; good views of American Oystercatcher, 'Espanola' Snake and Land Iguana.

Friday 20th November

Santiago and Santa Cruz Islands

Long walk to James Bay a.m. Very good day - both morning and afternoon trips were interesting. We had great views of Galapagos Hawk. In the afternoon from the ship, I saw thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes flying past in an almost continuous stream for at least twenty minutes. I had noticed the movement earlier but had not realised at the time what species they were. Initially those I saw were quite far out where there were petrels and lots of shearwater, but it suddenly struck me that the smaller birds were not petrels but phalaropes. So who knows what numbers there were? I estimated that I must have seen a minimum of 4,000 birds.

It is hard to describe the experience and a list of birds does not do it justice. Birds were flying by the boat during most of the daylight hours. Skuas in Galapagos are extremely rare, the two I saw were a long way off so it was impossible to be 100% sure of the species involved but I thought they looked more like South Polar Skua, a species that has previously been recorded there. Elliot's Petrel and hundreds of Galapagos Shearwaters are almost constantly around the boat and your eyes ache trying to identify them and other species in their midst. For those who like seawatching (and I am one) every day is special. On one of the few occasions I did not have my bins with me, a large flock of gulls flew past; not the usual suspects but, alas, they went by unidentified.

The American waders, I was assured by the naturalist on board, were all migrants with the exception of Semi-palmated Sandpiper and American Oystercatcher. Why would they be in the

middle of the Pacific Ocean 1000 miles from land? The natural world is full of mysteries and wonders and perhaps that is the reason we are so captivated by it. A number of the birds on Galapagos have now been given full species status, an example of this is the Nazca Booby which was previously known as a subspecies of Masked Booby.

Of the thirteen Darwin Finches, I encountered Large Ground Finch, Medium Ground Finch, Small Ground Finch, Common Cactus Finch, Large Tree Finch, Warbler Finch and two species of Mockingbird, Hood and Galapagos. The taxon Darwin first studied was Mockingbirds, later he moved on to the finches and, as they say, the rest is history.

NEWPORT WETLANDS

Tom Dalrymple

STAFF: TOM DALRYMPLE (SENIOR RESERVE MANAGER), KEVIN DUPÉ (RESERVE MANAGER), RICHARD SMITH & BRYN JONES (ASSISTANT RESERVE MANAGERS).

JULY & AUGUST

Birds

Wader breeding numbers were as followed.

Species	Lapwing	Avocet	Redshank	Oystercatcher	Ringed Plover	Little Ringed Plover
Breeding Pairs	20	17	16	6	1	0
Fledgling	4	5	10+	0	4	0

Notable bird sightings for the period were:

Spotted Flycatcher seen in the Reedbed copse on 11th July,

Mediterranean Gull 19th July and 1st August,

Hobby 4th July and 19th July and August,

Wood Sandpiper 28th July and the 1st and 3rd August

Pectoral Sandpiper on the 30th of July

Marsh Harrier 2nd & 3rd August

Cattle Egret 15th August

Management

3 new hides are being installed at the Saline Lagoons at the moment; they will allow better viewing of the best wildlife spectacle on the reserve. The hides and ramps are being built to allow access for all people including wheelchair users. Tragically after 11 years without any significant vandalism, one of these new hides has been burnt down. This is probably a one-off incident, but we've set about fireproofing the other hides just in case.

After 12 months our conservation graduate trainee, Haf Leyshon, will be leaving us tomorrow. Haf has primarily worked on breeding wader monitoring, but she's helped with many tasks including saline invertebrate surveys and sward monitoring. Haf has also helped with monitoring on other NNRs in the region including Cwm Clydach and Stanner Rocks. We wish her well with her Masters degree.

The annual hard rush cutting contract has been completed, this was again paid for by Biffaward as part of the RSPB Coastal Grazing Marsh Project.

Bryn, and Ritchie have removed all the willow saplings on the grassland islands, to reduce perching opportunities for predatory Crows.

Volunteers fitted in Ragwort pulling with their other duties this month. They have been waging a constant battle to keep the paths free from over hanging vegetation.

In addition to Ragwort, Creeping thistle was kept in check by first cutting and then weedwiping the re-growth.

The continued dry weather meant that water had to be pumped on to the saline lagoons using our abstraction licence.

Events & visits

Newport Wetlands NNR Annual Open Day, on Sunday 10th July 2011 was again jointly organised by CCW, RSPB and Newport City Council. The following organisations had stands at the event:

Gwent Ornithological Society, Swan Rescue, Hedgehog Helpline, RNLI, Gwent Amphibian and Reptile Group, the Girl Guides, the Scouts, British Trust for Ornithology and Goldcliff Bird Ringing Group.

The event was attended by 1,200 visitors including the Mayor of Newport and Jessica Morden MP. Nearly 10% (110 people) of these came by a free, open-top double-decker bus arranged by CCW. The bus was paid for by Uskmouth Power Station. Over half of the people who caught the free bus, said they would not have been able to attend the Open Day without it.

CCW again ran a stall at the Nash village fete on the 16th July. As well as the usual handouts we displayed a mini aquarium of pond life and people were invited to guess the contents of the "Feely boxes".

I gave a guided tour to RSPB political advocates from around the UK on the 10th August.

Kevin led the "Moths in the Morning" event with the help of volunteers on the 17th August and twenty people attended.

On the 24th August, Kevin led the "Damsels and Dragons" event though, unfortunately, the weather was inclement.

SEPTEMBER

Birds

Wildfowl passage migrants and wintering wildfowl seem to be much later arriving this year. So far the peak count is only 43 Wigeon, 80 Teal and 65 Shoveler. Notable bird sightings for the period were:

9 Ruff on the Lagoons 27th,

Spotted Flycatcher back in the Reedbed copse on 25th, Little Gull on 19th,

4 Sanderling and a Little Stint on the lagoons on the 18th,

Wryneck showing very well in the Reedbeds on the 17th and 18th,

Juvenile Sabine's gull seen flying up the estuary on the 12th,

Management

Almost all available staff and volunteer time this month was spent preparing the hides for opening. Brash screens were made to prevent people using the new boardwalks from disturbing the birds on the lagoons. Unfortunately limited time meant that these had to be erected in gale force conditions. Hides were fitted with fire proof boards around the bottom of the hide inside and out. Hides were painted with fire resistant paint. The Monks hide was opened at the end of the month. The Priors hide will be opened when the wildfowl return and the screens leading to the hide can be tested.

Despite the very dry conditions, there was enough water in Monks ditch to allow water to be pumped onto the grasslands for most of the month.

Events & visits

Kevin led a Birds and Migration walk at the Goldcliff lagoons on the 3rd September. He was assisted by Chris Hurn and Keith Thomas and they were able to show 9 visitors Avocets, Curlew Sandpipers and Greenshank as well as the more common birds.

Jill Evans MEP visited the Lagoons on the 16th with Cellan Michael and Laura Wilkinson from the RSPB.

RSPB organised a Girl Guiding event on the 24th. 732 Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers attended. Kevin, assisted by CCW Voluntary Wardens Roger and Julia James, Keith Thomas, Chris Hurn, Chris Perry, Clive Rutter, Sheila Dupé and Fiona Illing, led guided walks and manned telescopes.

OCTOBER

Birds

Wildfowl numbers are still generally low for the time of year. The peak counts for Wigeon are 460, Teal 157, Lapwing 502. Strangely the peak count for Mallard is the second highest October count we've ever had at 460. Notable bird sightings for the period were:

A flock of 50 Avocet on the 2nd,

Glossy Ibis on the 9th, Arctic Skua on the 18th, Merlin on the 20th,

A Spoonbill and 150 Golden Plover on the 28th,

Management

A lot of time this month has been spent pumping fresh water onto the reserve using a pair of electric pumps and a flow meter as permitted by our abstraction licence. The water is then raised from the ditches to create surface flooding using diesel pumps. The past couple of years have been wetter and we have been able to allow water down from the reedbeds via gravity which negates the need for electricity or diesel. Unfortunately quite a lot of time had to be spent repairing pumps.

Virtually everyone has lent a hand with the late hay cut on the miles of path edge that crisscross the reedbeds. The flowering plants that grow here are important for the Shril Carder Bees that nest in the area, and hay cutting is necessary to prevent succession into scrubby vegetation.

Events & visits

I gave a guided tour of the reserve to Okeanos on the 7th with the help of Tony Prater and Kate Jennings. Okeanos is a group that exchanges information on fish and mammal mitigation measures. They were holding their third international seminar this time hosted by RSPB.

Gwent Ornithological Society List of Speakers for 2012

Robert Parsons

14th Jan AGM John Coleman – Birding in Costa Rica. This fascinating country roughly the size of Wales is home to such exceptional birds as the Resplendent Quetzal and numerous hummingbirds and over 800 species (more than found in the whole of Europe). John has come along tonight to share his travel experiences and photos from this three week trip.

28th Jan Stephen Moss – Behind the scenes at the BBC. In his 30 year career at the BBC, much of it at the world-famous Natural History Unit in Bristol, Stephen Moss has travelled throughout Britain and the World to film Wildlife. Along the way he worked with some of the biggest names in Wildlife TV, including Bill Oddie, David Attenborough, Alan Titchmarsh and Michaela Strachen. Behind the scenes at the BBC gives an insight into the making of these programmes and is illustrated with clips of some of Stephen's more memorable TV moments.

11th Feb Roger Moss – Regreening Shapwick Moor. Talk from Roger, a local representative of the Hawk and Owl Trust will show how the restoration of this former arable farmland on the Somerset Levels to wet grassland and fen is attracting hobbies, buzzards and kestrels, as well as lapwing to this new reserve.

25th Feb Pete Carty – Wildlife in Bulgaria. The richness of Bulgarian birdlife is well known, with an estimated 400 species, of which 20 are globally threatened. The range of wildlife in the talk include Broad Billed Sandpiper, Rosey Starlings, Shore Lark and in the rivers and paddy fields, River Warblers. As a leader with the British Bulgarian Friendship Society, Peter's knowledge of this area is amazing and will give a real insight into this often forgotten country.

10th March Keith Offord – Sky Dance, experience of watching Harriers in Wales. Sixteen species of Harrier are found throughout the world and are spread as far as Australia and South America. Having studied the Welsh population of Hen Harriers since 1974, Keith will expand your knowledge of these wonderful birds with their spectacular display flights and shallow v glide silhouette.

24th March Ian Harrison – Birding in Oman

22nd Sept Steve Roberts – Working with the Harpy Eagle. Following on from his last GOS talk about the Honey Buzzard, Steve's enthusiasm for birds is remarkable and this talk will cover his explorations in South America tracking this specialist of lowland rainforests. It has such a draw on the Panamanian people that it is their national Bird and on the country's coat of arms.

6th Oct Mike Pienkowski – Promoting Biodiversity in the Overseas Territories. With an amazing array of islands including Pitcairn, South Georgia and Tristan de Cunha spread throughout the World, these commonwealth territories hold over 20 endemic birds including the Ascension Island Frigate Bird and the largest atoll in the world. It really is quite astonishing what these islands hold.

20th Oct Paul Rogers – Hungarian Rhapsody. With the possibility of Long Eared Owls roosting in gardens and Common Cranes, Lesser White Fronted and Red Breasted Goose in the carp ponds, this unusual place can be none other than Hortobagy National Park. Paul's talk will also cover birds of prey such a White Tailed Eagle and a real treat the Saker Falcon.

3rd Nov Jim Almond – Birding ID. Many birds fall into the "is it or isn't it" category. Using clear images to note the key identification criteria, Jim will aid us in ID of the Godwits, Redshanks, Sandpipers and even teach us to love Gulls!!.

17th Nov Alan Martin – Exploring the rainforest reserve of Regua in Brazil. Having been a family farm with an amazing history, Regua, has set up the Guapi Assu bird lodge for visiting birders and with such wonderfully named birds as Crowned Eagle, Black Billed Scythebill and Maroon Bellied Parakeet, this is surely a talk not to be missed and will brighten up those dull depressing days ahead.

1st Dec David Lingard – LIPU – Working in Britain for Birds in Italy. Founded in 1989 and a Birdlife Partner, LIPU has been challenging the poaching measures in Sardinia and monitoring the bird migration routes through Sicily. David will explain the work of this worthwhile voluntary organisation.

15th Dec Al Venables – Birds and Islands. This talk ranges from local Welsh islands to oceanic islands in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and considers why islands are special for birds. It considers the routes taken in the colonisation of oceanic islands by birds, ecological disasters that have befallen islands and the steps being taken to avoid further bird island extinctions.

19th Jan 2013 AGM

Request for Records for 2011

Here we are again, its Christmas and nearly the end of yet another years birding.

Whilst I know that you'll all be out enjoying yourselves Christmas shopping, entertaining, partying etc there is always another pastime to think about over the festive period, especially when you're chilling out after the Christmas meal or twiddling your thumbs as you're fed up with yet another repeat on the TV

Completing your records for 2011!

Could I ask that everybody makes it a New Years resolution to write/type up their records for inclusion in the 2011 Gwent Bird Report.

The deadline for submission of the records is 31st January 2012.

Let's try and make the next, for 2011, report even larger, shhh don't tell the Treasurer!!

Records can be submitted in several ways:

- 1 Electronically via email [**preferred option**]
- 2 Hand written on 'recording slips', which are available from myself or from the Library at indoor meetings at Goytre Village Hall

For members would like to submit their records electronically, these can be entered either into an excel spreadsheet [**preferred option**], available from myself, or by typing details into a 'Word' type document. If using this latter method, members must ensure that the document is structured so that the records are grouped for each species and sorted in date order. There must be a new line for each entry for which the details need to include species name, date of sighting, location/site name, number of birds, age/sex of birds and any other details e.g. direction of flight, behaviour etc.

Any queries/advice required, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Chris Jones, 22 Walnut Drive, Caerleon, Newport, South Wales, NP18 3SB

Tel [01633] 423439 or via email at countyrecorder@Gwentbirds.org.uk

Request for Freelance work. My name is Marcus Doolan, I'm a 21 year old BA Honours Media Studies graduate of Swansea University. I'm looking for freelance work, and wildlife, especially birds which are of great interest to me. I live in the region of Gwent South Wales, and I have excellent knowledge of birds, and have done so from a young age. I'm eager to get into a career in nature journalism, therefore I'm wondering if you have opportunities in which I could provide my service to you or any other wildlife trusts/websites and so on you know of. If so, do not hesitate to contact me by calling my mobile on 07833158223. I hope to hear from you in the near future.

GOS BIRD WALKS 2012

Steve Butler

Sat 21st January 07:00. Cors Caron NWR and Aberystwth. Meet Steve Butler at Abergavenny bus station for a full day. Bring packed lunch, waterproof boots and clothing essential.

Sat 4th February 08:00. Whitford Burrows NWR. Meet Wendle Thomas at M4 Junct 47 Services for a full day. High tide 17:00. Bring packed lunch, waterproof boots and clothing essential.

Sun 19th February 08:00. Cors y Llyn NWR & Gigrin Farm nr Rhyader. Meet Rob Parsons at first layby on A470 beside Royal Welsh show ground (SO 040515). Entrance fee for Gigrin Farm kite feeding station. Full day. Waterproof boots and clothing essential.

Sat 31st March 11:30 for approx 90 minute visit. Great Bustard Group release site Wiltshire. Meet and Park at Enford village hall. (east of river) (SU 143510) (Sat Nav Post code SN96DD). £10.00 p.p. £1 for parking & toilets. Use A345 to Enford, turn at crossroads on A345 down a slight hill and over river. Turn right toward Swan Pub. Head south. Hall is set back from road last building on left. Wellies recommended. Any problems call 07817971327.

Sat 14th April 08:00. Collister Pill. Meet Lyndon Waters at Undy Church (ST 440869) for 3-4 hour walk along estuary. Easy walk. Waterproof boots & clothing recommended.

Sat 21st April 08:00. Llantrisant to Llanllowell. Meet Verity Picken at Usk car park at back of Twyn Square for farm land and river walk. 2-3 hours. Boots recommended.

Sun 29th April 0700. Shapwick Heath NWR. Meet Stephen Davies at Magor services M4 junction 23 for a full day on Somerset levels. Bring packed lunch.

Sat 12th May 07:00. St Mary's Vale and Parc Lodge. Meet Keith Trott at Abergavenny Bus Station for 4 hour walk in woodland, hills and valleys. Good for woodland birds. Boots essential bring drinks.

Sat 19th May 09:00. Craig Cerrig Gleisiad. Meet Rob Parsons at 2nd lay-by on leaving Libanus on A470 SN 989249. Join up with Wendall and Carmarthen Bird Club, to forest Lodge for walk along Sorn Helen. Easy terrain. Boots essential. Bring drinks.

Sat 26th May 08:00. Blaen Bran Woodland Upper Cwmbnan. Meet Keith Roylance and Mick Bailey for 3 mile walk (ST272968) on mountainside above Cwmbnan. Boots recommended.

Sun 3rd June 08:00. Goytre Wood and local area. Meet Steve Butler at Goytre Arms car park for moderate 2 – 3 hour walk (SO323046).

Fri 8th June 20:00. Wentwood. Meet John Bennet at Cadira Beeches car park for 2 – 3 hour walk for Nightjars and Woodcock. (ST422949). Bring torches for return to cars.

Sat 7th July 08:00 – 13:00 Llangattock Quarries. Meet Paul Kelly at Bridgend pub car park Brynmawr, just off A465 roundabout for mountain and moorland walk, Boots recommended, bring drinks.

Sat 18th August 08:00. Monnow Valley walk. Meet John Coleman at Monmouth Waitrose car park for 2 – 3 hour walk along river and woodland, arable fields between low hills. Boots recommended, bring drinks.

Sun 16th September 07:00. Goldcliff NWR. Meet John Davies and Steve Butler at Uskmouth RSPB car park to move onto Goldcliff, Wader watching from hides.

Sun 30th September 09:00. Ruperra Castle, near Draethen. Meet Rob Parsons at small off road car park just up road from Hollybush pub (ST228873). Easy terrain with stunning views. Boots essential.

Sat 13th October 09:00. Llanwenarth River. Meet Andrew Baker at Abergavenny bus station to move to Llanwenarth for 2 – 3 hour walk. Boots and waterproof clothing essential.

Sat 27th October 07:00 Catcottlaw and Sharpness West Somerset. Meet Steve Butler at Magor services M4 junction 23 for a full day on levels. Bring packed lunch, waterproofs and boots.

Sat 10th November 08:00. Chew Valley Lake and Blagdon Lake. Meet Steve Butler at Magor services M4 junction 23 for a full day. Small charge for permit. Superb birding venue. Bring packed lunch and drinks.

Gwent UKBS Report for October 2011

Chris Hatch

Highlights

A Glossy Ibis was recorded at Newport Wetlands (9th). A Wryneck was picked up injured at St. Julians (12th). A Spoonbill was present at Newport Wetlands (28th) and a Snow Bunting was seen at Collister Pill (30th) and West Pill (31st). A Woodlark flew over Peterstone Gout (16th), whilst a possible Icterine Warbler was at the same site (9th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Up to four Curlew Sandpipers, three Spotted Redshank and 50 Avocets were present (from 2nd). Four juvenile Bearded Tits were seen (15th), whilst an Arctic Skua was present (18th). Other sightings of note included a Merlin (20th) and a ringtail Hen Harrier (30th).

Other sites

Six Ring Ouzels were reported from Ebbw Vale (24th), whilst singles of this species were recorded at Mynydd Maen (4th) and Pwlldu (30th). Single ringtail Hen Harriers were seen at Trefil (22nd), Garndiffaith (23rd), Blaenserchan (28th), Brynmawr (29th) and Clydach (30th). Single dark-bellied Brent Geese were recorded at Collister Pill (15th) and Peterstone (17th). Other sightings included a Lesser-spotted Woodpecker at Skenfrith (8th), a late Hobby at West Pill (19th), two Common Scoters at Peterstone Gout (29th) and two Water Pipits at Collister Pill (from 28th). Red Kites were again reported from a number of sites.