

# THE DIPPER



## THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Registered charity number 1088830

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

Newsletter No. 130

March 2014

### CONTENTS

1	- AGM Commentary	7	- 'If you go down to the woods today...'
3	- Committee Members 2014	8	- Wildlife sightings needed - Hamar Bursary - Volunteers Needed for Summer shows
4	- Situations Vacant - River Surveys	9	- BTO News
5	- GOS Library Report 2013	10 11	- Newport Wetlands Reserve Report - Gwent UKBS Report

### AGM COMMENTARY 2014

As a prelude to opening the meeting, GOS President, Steve Roberts, reflected on the past year, which had been the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Society. He singled out the highly successful GOS/WOS Conference, held in Monmouth, on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, because he had received plaudits for the showpiece event, not only for the smooth organisation, led by Alan Williams, but also for the warm, friendly welcome attendees had received from GOS members. The launch of the excellent GOS publication "*Birdwatching Walks In Gwent*" was hugely successful and sold 80 copies that day! It made him proud to be President of an organization that could rise so enthusiastically to such an ambitious occasion.

Treasurer, Keith Roylance, was pleased to announce that a surplus was achieved for the second year running, due to income from survey work and strict control over expenses including electronic delivery of The Dipper. The disappointing news was that membership had diminished in 2013, down 25 to 312.

The printing cost of the Birdwatching Walks in Gwent book was significant at £4,135.00 though income from the book sales was significantly higher than was expected so soon after publication [*book sales exceeded 500 by the end of January. Ed*].

Expenditure on Goytre House Wood included sums for ground preparation, sowing of a seed crop in our adjoining field and a safety inspection of trees close to the public rights of way. The latter will lead to additional expenditure early in the 2014 financial year for any remedial work to be done before the breeding season for birds and bats. A grant application has already been submitted [*and has succeeded – Ed*] in an effort to reduce the burden on our funds.

GOS Chairman Verity Picken also focused on the two outstanding achievements of the year, the publication of the 'Birdwatching Walks in Gwent' book, under the editorial guidance of Al Venables the celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a joint GOS/WOS Conference in November. She recalled that in the conference, Al had walked us down memory lane with a potted history of GOS, whilst Jerry Lewis had given a fascinating update on his work on Hawfinches and Steve Roberts brought the house down recounting his latest research on Honey Buzzards.

Two new species for the County were recorded in 2013, bringing the total to 302. Both the Lesser Scaup at Bryn Bach Country Park and the fabulous Penduline Tit at Newport Wetlands gave excellent views and, though not new to the county, the Rose-coloured Starling at Uskmouth was the first record for 76 years.

The 13 indoor meetings and the out-of-county trips proved as popular as ever but sadly 2013 was the second year running that no applications had been received for the Bert Hamar bursary for any bird-related research project by a member.

Of all of this year's retirees from the Committee, Verity made special mention of Chris Jones who retired after an astonishing 24 years as County Recorder. His efficient organisation of the many thousands of records submitted to the Society every year has given us an invaluable picture of Gwent's birds and as chairman of the Rarities Panel he introduced the electronic circulation of records, speeding up and simplifying the vital process of verification. He has been involved in many commissioned surveys over the years and organised the Wales Coastal Path survey in the county. He will be missed and as a token of our appreciation Verity presented Chris with an engraved tankard in recognition of his unstinting long years of service. Apart from Chris, our Treasurer, Keith Roylance, stood down after 10 years in office; Rob Parsons also wished to resign as Indoor Secretary and Publicity Officer; and Mark Stevens decided to put down his pen and stop writing his birding articles for the Argus. We will miss their valuable and various contributions.

The good news was that there were nominations to fill these big shoes. Tom Chinnick volunteered to replace Chris as County Recorder; Andrew Cormack had been shadowing Keith for a couple of months as replacement Treasurer; and, in addition to his role as Report Editor, John Coleman volunteered to add the role of Publicity – but as leader of a team of contributors who will assist by writing suitable articles for local press and publications. New recruits nominated to join the Committee were Adrian Plant and Roo Perkins, whilst "old hands" Dave Brassey and Chris Field were also formally nominated. The list of all Committee members appears elsewhere in this edition.

The role of Vice Chairman has been vacant for over seven years because no-one wanted the very long commitment of several years being groomed as Chairman, followed by a further five years as Chairman. A recent committee meeting agreed we should lift the expectation of automatic succession to the Chairmanship, and on that understanding, Al Venables agreed to become Vice Chairman and stand-in for Verity when required. The role of Vice Chairman

now becomes a co-opted role. All the other Officers were willing to stand again and the whole new team was elected en-bloc.

A more mundane business matter brought us down to earth when a motion was put to the members present that the Constitution should be amended to remove the limit of 3 co-opted members to the Committee. 'Co-optees' are invited by the Committee to use their expertise to perform specific, short-term tasks - and we can foresee the need for additional co-opted expertise to help us in the future. But with Steph, Jerry and Chris Hatch already filling the three positions previously allowed in the constitution it is necessary to remove the ceiling on numbers. This motion was carried unanimously. No matters were raised during Any Other Business and the meeting was quickly closed in order to commence the Member's Evening Finger Buffet. As usual this proved generous, full of variety, and delicious! The buffet was followed by a fascinating presentation by Arthur Ball, entitled "Galapagos Wildlife", a description of an enviable holiday he spent there a few years ago.

**Trevor Russell**

## **GOS COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2014**

### **PERMANENT MEMBERS**

President	Steve Roberts
Vice President	Al Venables
Vice President	Alan Williams

### **Honorary Officers (elected annually)**

1	Chairman	Verity Picken
2	Secretary	Trevor Russell
3	Treasurer	Andrew Cormack

### **Executive Committee Members (elected annually)**

4	Conservation Officer	Andrew Baker
5	County Recorder	Tom Chinnick
6	Dipper Editor & Librarian	Keith Jones
7	Field Secretary	Steve Butler
8	Indoor Secretary	TBA
9	Membership Secretary	Lesley Watson
10	Report Editor & Publicity	John Coleman
11		Adrian Plant
12		Chris Field
13		Dave Brassey
14		Rupert (Roo) Perkins

### **Co-opted to the committee by the Executive Committee**

1	Al Venables (as Vice Chairman)
2	Chris Hatch
3	Chris Jones
4	Jerry Lewis
5	Rob Parsons
6	Steph Tyler
7	Steve Williams

## SITUATIONS VACANT

### **DIPPER EDITOR**

The newsletter is the Society's key quarterly publication and the role requires an ability to compile contributors' reports into a friendly, informative newsletter. Previous experience in this type of role would be useful as would a familiarity with email and Word, or equivalent, though any training and help required will be freely available.

If anyone would like further information, please email or call Trevor Russell, at [tj russ2010@gmail.com](mailto:tj russ2010@gmail.com), or telephone 01600 716266.

### **INDOOR MEETINGS SECRETARY**

Indoor meetings are the main social 'glue' of the Society. About 14 meetings are held annually and the role requires organisational skills to book meeting dates & speakers. There is sufficient time for a good deal of help and advice to be given. Please email or call Trevor Russell, at [tj russ2010@gmail.com](mailto:tj russ2010@gmail.com), or telephone 01600 716266.

## RIVER SURVEYS IN GWENT IN APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 2014

### **Can you help please?**

It is planned to carry out synchronised surveys again along the River Usk in 2014. The surveys will however, be in April, May and June so that we can better 'pick up' broods of Goosanders and breeding Common Sandpipers, a fast declining species in Wales. All other water birds will be noted. The surveys should give us an up to date accurate picture of the population of the target species.

As well as a survey on the River Usk it is hoped to also count water birds along the whole of the River Monnow and lower Afon Honddu and that part of the River Wye in or bordering Monmouthshire. We hope also to cover the western rivers such as the Rhymney, Ebbw and Sirhowy and the various northern reservoirs where Common Sandpipers might also breed.  
**So, we need lots of volunteers!**

We almost have enough observers on the River Usk but do need volunteers along the other rivers. It would just be for three mornings one in late April, one in late May and one in June, when you would take part in a synchronised all-river count. Stretches of rivers for each volunteer are only 3-5 km long and all one has to do is walk along slowly and record all water birds seen. Full instructions will be sent to volunteers nearer the time. The Usk survey will take place on 26<sup>th</sup> April and the Monnow survey on 27<sup>th</sup> April and these will be repeated on 24<sup>th</sup> May and 25<sup>th</sup> May. Other rivers and reservoirs will also be covered that weekend. The surveys will be repeated again on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June. You can always help on successive days on more than one river!

If interested in taking part please let Steph Tyler know ([steph\\_tyler2001@hotmail.com](mailto:steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com)) (Tel 01600 7619890) and say which river or reservoir you would like to survey. Ideally if you have time you could also carry out a survey on your stretch in late March when pairs of Goosanders are on territories and the females may already be incubating.

**Steph Tyler**

## GOS LIBRARY REPORT FOR 2013

Library use during 2013 was up significantly on the previous year. During 2012, 17 items were borrowed from the library, which compares with 43 borrowed during 2013. **Just 6 items taken over the 2010-12 period have still not been returned: 'Birdwatching in Europe', 'Collins Bird Nests and Eggs', 'Birds of Switzerland', 'Bird Songs and Calls', 'The Redstart,' and 'Lesbos in the Spring.'** Do please look to see if they have migrated to your own book collection by mistake.

Several additions were added to the library this year including the following 13 DVDs, all donated by the librarian:

**'The Minsmere Year'**. A one hour DVD featuring the 2392 acre RSPB's flagship reserve Minsmere seen during the four seasons. Including not only birds but mammals, plants, butterflies. Moths. Dragon flies and damselflies, narrated by David Attenborough, filmed and produced by Hugh Maynard. GOS number 829.

**'The Eagle Odyssey'** A 49 minute DVD featuring the story of the return to Scotland of the United Kingdom's biggest bird of prey, the White-tailed Sea Eagle. Donated by the librarian, GOS number 830.

**'Finding Birds in Mallorca'**, a 72 minute DVD featuring a Dave Gosney guide to the best 18 birding sites, and gives you a real 'feel' for what it's like to go there. GOS number 831.

**'Finding Birds in Andalucia'**, a 78 minute DVD by Dave Gosney which is a guide to the best birding sites in southern Spain featuring 25 birding sites with footage of over 60 species. GOS number 832.

**'Finding birds in North Spain'**, another 68 minute DVD from Dave Gosney which features a guide to the best birdwatching sites in north Spain. GOS number 833.

**'Finding Birds in Estonia'**, another 85 minute DVD from the Dave Gosney collection, which covers no fewer than 27 of Estonia's best birding sites featuring footage of 80 species. GOS number 834.

**'Finding Birds in the Gambia'**, another 92 minute DVD by Dave Gosney visits 30 of the most exciting sites on the coast and upriver, featuring footage of 168 birds. GOS number 837.

**'The North Norfolk Coast; A New Birder's Guide'**. A film about the pleasures & practicalities of visiting an area of outstanding ornithological interest. A very comprehensive guide which cover all the sites between Snettisham to Cley. GOS number 835.

**'Birdwatching in The Canary Islands: Tenerife & Fuerteventura'**. A 53 minutes DVD by Steve Evans which gives an introduction to two of the Canary islands which explores the huge range of habitats and bringing you footage of the Birds you can expect to find, such as Fuerteventura Chat, Blue Chaffinch Laurel Pigeon, Cream-coloured Courser. GOS number 836.

**'Portrait of an Estuary.'** This 4 hour DVD features the birds and other wildlife found in and along the English side of the Severn Estuary. It outlines 118 species of birds, commonly and not so commonly seen in this exceptional area. Originally divided into 4 separate DVD's, Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn. Narrated by Barry Paine, and filmed by Nigel Tucker who describes his DVD as a project which started as a way of getting out of the house, and turned into an epic. Although the footage focuses on the English side of the estuary, it is still

of interest to birders on the Welsh side of the river. Originally released as four separate DVDs we have placed all four on one DVD for convenience. GOS number 838.

**'Birding Sweden – Take 1'**. This is a two DVD set, both 2 hours long created by Malcolm Rymer. The first DVD gives a general overview of Sweden and its wildlife looking at winter birding, and early summer introducing birdlife which has adapted to cope of eagles, the grey-headed and white-backed woodpeckers, nutcracker and more. Also includes butterflies, dragonflies, mammals, and flowers. Areas covered include Svartadalen, Fulufjallets, Flatruet Plateau, and the Storsjon Reservoir. GOS number 841.

**'Birding Sweden – Take 2'**. Malcolm Rymer's second 2 hour DVD covering such as birds as Slavonian grebes, long and short-eared, tengmalm's, hawk, and great-grey owls, bluethroats, Lapland bunting, old squaws, velvet and common scoters, geese, waterfowl and cranes. The areas explored include Vindelfjäljen Nature Reserve, of central Lapland, Sami, and the Black River Valley in Vastmanland of Central Sweden. GOS number 842.

**'The Red Kite of Wales'**. Features 3 short films 'Back from the Brink', 'A Kite Recorder's Year', and 'The Welsh Feeding Stations'.

Seven new books were added to the library this year, namely:

**'1992 edition of 'Bird Census Techniques'** by C.J.Biddy, N.D.B, Burgess, David A Hill, Simon Mustoe and Sandra Lambton, donated by the librarian. Published by Academic Press, 257 pages. A concise guide to the various census techniques and their opportunities and pitfalls. According to British Birds "... an extremely valuable book. It is a 'must' for any bird surveyors, volunteer and professional alike". (GOS number 839).

**'A Field Guide to the Bird Songs and Calls of Britain and Northern Europe'**, by Dave Farrow. Donated by the librarian, as our other book of a similar nature 'Bird Songs and Calls' has been missing since October 2011, and has been requested several times recently. Published in 2008 by Carlton Books, a 226 page book including two CDs. Disc 1 contains 99 birds from Bewick's Swan to House Martin, and Disc 2 with another 99 birds features Tree Pipit to Corn Bunting. GOS Number 840.

**'Bird Watching in Mallorca'** which was kindly donated by new member Neville Davies. This book which was written by Neville in 2013 is a complete guide, covering the main sites and any others including maps and directions. Landscape and colour bird images, full species check list and year round guide to residents and migrants. Also includes tips on vehicle hire, local flora and fauna and much more. This will be a useful addition to the library as the two previous books on Mallorca published in 1983 and 1999 are both out of print and not in our library. GOS number 841.

**'Wildflower Meadows in Monmouthshire'**. Ten years of conserving and restoring flower rich grasslands Monmouthshire Meadow Group. GOS number 842.

**'The Breeding Birds of North Wales'**, edited by Ann Brenchley, Geoff Gibbs, Rhion Pritchard, and Ian M. Spence. GOS number 843.

The Society also received the long-awaited new 'BTO atlas **'Bird Atlas 2007-11: The Breeding and Wintering Birds of Britain and Ireland'** (BTO) by Dawn Balman, Simon Gillings, Brian Caffrey, Bob Swann, Iain Doward and Rob Fuller. This book will be placed in the library for reference purposes. GOS number 844.

Mick Bailey has kindly donated a book '**The World of Roger Tory Peterson**' by Elliot Richardson, John C. Devlin, Grace Naismith and illustrated by Roger Tory Peterson. GOS number 845.

Finally two boxes were received in October last year from Helen which contained a number of items including several past Gwent Bird Reports, and some back-issues of Birds in Wales, All the reports were handed to Jerry Lewis who keeps a stock of the annual Bird Reports, while the following books were also added to the library:

**Where to Watch Birds in Holland, Belgium and Northern France.** Arnoud Van Den Berg and Dominique Lafontaine. 1996. (GOS number 846).

**Where to Watch Birds in Britain and Europe.** John Gooders. 1988. (GOS number 847).

**Where to Watch Birds in the West Midlands.** Graham Harrison and Jack Sanker. 1987. (GOS number 848).

**Birdwatching by Train: Where to go in Britain.** Alison Mo and Nigel G. Harris. 1992. (GOS number 849).

In addition the following reports were also received by the society:

- Birds in Wales Vol. 9 No. 2: Welsh Bird Report no. 25 for 2011 (2 copies).
- Birds in Wales Vol 10 No. 1. Welsh Ornithological Society 2013. (2 copies).
- 'Revista Catalana d'Ornitologia: Catalan Journal of Ornithology'. Volume 29 (2012)
- Somerset Birds 2011
- Avon Bird Report 2011
- Glamorgan Bird Club. Eastern Glamorgan Bird Report No. 50. 2011
- Breconshire Birds Annual Report 2012 Vol. 6 No. 7
- Gloucestershire Birds Report 2011
- Avon Bird Report 2012
- Somerset Birds 2012

**Keith Jones**

**COMMITTEE COMMENTARY**  
**or**  
**"IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY"**

The March committee meeting learned that recent record-breaking winds and rain had wreaked havoc in Goytre House Wood. Safety work had only just started on two diseased Beech trees which had been ear-marked for severe pollarding to make them less top-heavy, when the wind and rain stopped play. Only one Beech had been 'monolithed' before the storms struck, but in its wake we found the second designated beech tree uprooted, another Beech severely damaged and a mature Oak snapped off, leaving an eight-foot stump. The tree surgeon has made safe the fallen trees but has strongly recommended that after such a catastrophic storm another safety inspection should be carried out in the Spring, when lack of re-growth could reveal other dangerous trees or branches. Thanks to Steph Tyler, we managed to obtain a Natural Assets grant from MCC, to cover most of the cost of the tree felling.

We also received a request from an expedition holiday group for permission to camp in Goytre House Wood, but this was declined on safety grounds and for fear of setting too enticing a precedent for local youngsters.

Wentwood Forest also suffered catastrophically recently, though not so much because of storm damage, but because of the virulent disease *Phytophthora ramorum* affecting Larch

trees in South Wales. The felling of all larches in Wentwood is already underway to try to limit the spread of the disease to other larch plantations. This has prompted the Woodland Trust (WT) to launch an appeal for £35K to assist with the costs of re-planting with broadleaf. During our discussion whether to donate (and if so, how much?) Steph and Jerry made the point that in order to increase the diversity of bird and other species in the area, we should press the WT to consider creating say, 2 hectares of open heathland or, alternatively, to allow natural regeneration, to see what would re-grow. We would prefer to donate to support increased avian diversity rather than merely contributing to something the WT would do anyway. Such a dramatic habitat change is being viewed as an opportunity to monitor avian adaptation to their changing environment and surveys are being planned, as are surveys to monitor the strong presence of Firecrest in the area. Stay tuned!

Gwent Wildlife Trust has launched a 'Hidden Corners' Appeal to assist with the maintenance of some of the lesser-known woods and reserves within Gwent. We decided to donate £150 to be spent specifically on Strawberry Cottage Wood, which we sponsored a few years ago when GWT launched their "Nature Reserves" book.

Sadly, this will be the last edition of The Dipper to be edited by Keith Jones, who has decided to step down for reasons of ill-health. In thanking Keith for his valuable contribution for more than three years, we all wish him a rapid return to good health and we are grateful and encouraged that he feels able to continue to manage the GOS library for the time being.

**Trevor Russell**

### **Post ALL your wildlife sightings on the GOS webpage**

Don't keep that sighting of an Otter, Brimstone or Slow Worm to yourself! Most birdwatchers see the occasional mammal, butterfly, reptile etc when out and about so why not let others know about your observations via the GOS website Sightings page? As no other organisation in Gwent provides such a service, the committee has decided to open up our webpage sightings page to include **all** wildlife sightings; we feel sure most members will appreciate this and it may well encourage non-members to join the Society.

We are not claiming any expertise in other forms of wildlife – this is merely a way to make known interesting sightings, but birds will, of course, remain the focus of all the Society's activities.

**Verity Picken**

### **HAMAR BURSARY**

The bursary is awarded annually and is worth £200. It is available to any GOS member who requires financial assistance with a suitable bird-related project. A condition of the award is that you should write a short report on your work for publication in the Annual Report. Please send details of your project in the first place to Trevor Russell, at [tj russ2010@gmail.com](mailto:tj russ2010@gmail.com).

## **SUMMER SHOWS: VOLUNTEER HELPERS WANTED!**

We are looking for volunteers to assist for a couple hours at the GOS stand at Summer Shows. You won't be required or expected to attend all of them (!) and you will simply be required to help run the Children's and Adult's Bird Quizzes, in which guidance/cheating is positively encouraged to foster ecological understanding and enjoyment! The more volunteers we can get to help at each event, the less time you need spend at the stand, leaving you more time to enjoy the rest of the Show.

The Shows run through the summer, from May to September; so far we've been invited to:

- Tredegar House, National Trust Children's Event, May 24/25th
- Go Wild! at Parc Bryn Bach, Tredegar, June 14th
- Usk Open Gardens Market Day, June 28/29th

Not yet invited (or we gatecrash!):

- Newport Wetlands Reserve, Date TBC, but around July 12th
- Magor Marsh, Date TBC, but around July 19th
- GWT's HQ at Dingestow, Date TBC, but around August 6th

You don't have to commit to attend any particular Show, but simply let me have your name and contact details to add to the list so that we can contact you nearer the event date to see if you would be available. Please contact me, Trevor Russell, on 01600 716266 or email me at [tjruss2010@gmail.com](mailto:tjruss2010@gmail.com)

Do please help; it reflects very badly on the Society when we have to turn down invitations simply because of lack of support from such a large membership....

## **BTO News**

As the **Winter Thrush** survey ends, the **Peregrine** breeding survey is about to start. Winter thrushes have been counted in selected 1 km squares for the last two winter periods and it's difficult to see how the weather in each winter could have been different. Neither the severe cold of 2012/13, nor the very wet 2013/14 produced particularly high numbers in the squares I visited, so it will be interesting to see what the national picture shows. Breeding **Peregrines** are one of the species that are monitored on, roughly, a 10-year cycle. There have been five previous surveys (the first in 1961) and the 2014 Survey will update this species' breeding distribution and number changes since the 2002 survey. For the first time, there are 2 parts to the survey - all known nest sites in Gwent's western valleys, will be visited (under licence) by members of the South Wales Peregrine Monitoring Group, but if anyone would like to check a breeding site in the east of the county, or along the coastal strip, please let me know. The other part of the survey requires some help - a series of randomly selected 5 x 5 km squares need to be checked and any potential nesting sites looked at - these might include natural cliffs, quarries, (derelict) large buildings and, in some cases, high pylons. The purpose of this randomised element is to check how many nesting pairs might be being missed if we only check known historic sites. Potentially, pairs of birds could attempt to breed anywhere where a suitable food supply is available. With the variety of nest sites that the birds are now using, it is the food supply that is mainly governing their distribution. This can be seen with reductions in the number of pairs in mid Wales following changes in the release points/routes taken by racing pigeons; and increases in some city centres where feral pigeon flocks are available. The 5 x 5 km squares are stratified by priority, and there are three priority 5 x 5 km squares in our area needing help - SO30 SE, SO30 NE and SO31 NE; and there are four other squares of lower priority - ST29 SE, ST38 NE, SO20 SE and SO21 NE.

The annual monitoring surveys - **Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)** and **Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS)** - continue. These track the population trends of our commoner species, so often quoted in various publications. Both surveys involve just three visits in the spring, one to set up/check your route and the other two to count all the birds you see and hear. There are always a number of BBS squares available and, for 2014, these are - SO 4817, ST3491, SO 3228, SO 3929, ST 2385, ST 2097 and SO 4502. We only have four waterway sections allocated to Gwent and each has its enthusiastic surveyor, but if anyone would like to survey their favourite river walk (5 km minimum length) please let me know. If you are able to help with any of these surveys, please give Jerry Lewis a ring (01873 855091) or email ([jmsl2587@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jmsl2587@yahoo.co.uk))

**Jerry Lewis**

### Newport Wetlands - Tom Dalrymple

March 2014

#### **Winter Birds**

SPA species peak counts Sept 2013 – Feb 2014 inc.

Bewick Swan	0	None since 2007	Redshank	100	Variable species
White-fronted Goose	1	Lone bird with Canada flock	Spotted Redshank	8	Record year increasing trend
Curlew	250	Similar to last year	Ringed Plover	90	Up on 2012/13 but a variable species
Whimbrel	1	More in spring	Grey Plover	40	Similar to 12/13
Dunlin	3,700	Up on last year	Shelduck	238	Up on 12/13
Gadwall	77	Very consistent	Shoveler	254	Above UK 1%
Pintail	71	3 x last 4 years	Teal	747	Average year
Pochard	35	Down on 12/13	Wigeon	1,725	Highest in 6 years
Tufted Duck	76	Similar to 12/13			

#### **Saline lagoon news**

We have been experimenting with the water levels on the lagoons this February. We raised the water levels to such an extent that part of the shingle islands were inundated with saline water. The aim was to kill or at the very least suppress vegetation so that late breeding waders have the open aspect that they need.

The high water levels also helped by flooding rat tunnels making the rodents easier to catch. It's possible that Brown Rats are taking wader eggs and chicks and inside the fox fence the rats have very few natural predators, so we'll monitor for signs of a population increase.

NRW engineers were called out to inspect the tidal flap structure that we rely on for controlling salinity and maintaining water levels in the lagoons. The anti-erosion walls facing Goldcliff Pill have moved noticeably in the last 15 years and the pipe connecting the pill to the lagoons has distorted. Happily the engineers say that the pipe movement was caused by

settlement and has now stopped and the anti-erosion walls can be repaired without causing significant disturbance to the lagoons.

Newport & District Sea Anglers fished on the lagoon sea wall on agreed dates, while we monitored for disturbance. I'm please to say not a single bird was disturbed.

We are currently trying to get permissions to carry out an in depth monitoring project for Avocet this year, in order to get some evidence for why the productivity is so poor. Predation events witnessed by GOS members are very useful so please contact me if you witness predation of wader chicks/eggs.

I will post any planned disturbance of the lagoons on the GOS website and I can be reached at: [thomas.dalrymple@cyfoethnaturiplcymru.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.dalrymple@cyfoethnaturiplcymru.gov.uk)

### **Reedbed 11 project**

A pipe has been laid from the reedbed 11 to the grassland ditches. This will give us far greater control of the habitats, especially in dry years. On an average year the reservoir collects 36,000 cubic meters of rain. A large penstock to control the water will hopefully be fitted later in the year.

## **Gwent UKBS Report for December 2013**

### **Highlights**

Two late Ospreys were reported from Pantygoetre (10<sup>th</sup>). A Firecrest was recorded at Newport Wetlands (15<sup>th</sup>). A possible Black-throated Diver was seen at Llandegfedd reservoir (20<sup>th</sup>). A Great Grey Shrike was observed at Twm Barlwm (28<sup>th</sup>), whilst another was reported belatedly as being present at Brynithel in late November.

### **Newport Wetlands Reserve**

Up to six Avocets were present (2<sup>nd</sup>). A Merlin was reported (10<sup>th</sup>). A male Hen Harrier was recorded (31<sup>st</sup>).

### **Other sites**

A jack Snipe was recorded at Brynmawr (1<sup>st</sup>). Two Short-eared Owls were present at Peterstone Gout (4<sup>th</sup>). A single Mediterranean Gull was reported from Newport (6<sup>th</sup>), whilst two Mediterranean Gulls and a Yellow-legged Gull were recorded at Llandegfedd reservoir (28<sup>th</sup>). Six Hawfinches were seen at Dingestow (8<sup>th</sup>). A Merlin was observed at Bulmore (10<sup>th</sup>). A female Hen Harrier was reported from Garn yr Erw (30<sup>th</sup>).

## **Gwent UKBS Report for January 2014**

### **Highlights**

A Black Redstart was reported from Newport Wetlands (6<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>). A Great Grey Shrike was recorded at Twm Barlwm (10<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>).

### **Newport Wetlands Reserve**

A female Hen Harrier was reported (25<sup>th</sup>), whilst a Merlin was also recorded (30<sup>th</sup>).

### **Other sites**

A female Hen Harrier was reported from the Bloreng (4<sup>th</sup>). A Pink-footed Goose was present at Cwmbran Boating Lake (9<sup>th</sup>). A Merlin was seen at Brynithel (11<sup>th</sup>). A Barn Owl was recorded at Llanelli Church near Gilwern (13<sup>th</sup>). Five Bewick's Swans were observed at Llangybi (19<sup>th</sup>). Several reports of Red Kites were received, together with numerous reports of Bramblings.

## **Gwent UKBS Report for February 2014**

### **Highlights**

An American Wigeon was present at Newport Wetlands (3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>). A Green-winged Teal was recorded at Peterstone (7<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>). A Little Gull was seen offshore at Newport Wetlands (9<sup>th</sup>). A Great Grey Shrike was reported from Wentwood (16<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>). An Iceland Gull was observed at the Nedern (17<sup>th</sup>). Two Black Redstarts were present at Fourteen Locks (22<sup>nd</sup>).

### **Newport Wetlands Reserve**

A female Hen Harrier was seen on several dates (4<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>). Two Water Pipits were reported (2<sup>nd</sup>). A Guillemot and two Great Skuas were observed offshore (9<sup>th</sup>), with a Guillemot, two Great Skuas, a Fulmar, two Gannets and 15 Kittiwakes offshore later in the month (15<sup>th</sup>). An early Chiffchaff was reported (28<sup>th</sup>).

### **Other sites**

Five Water Pipits were present at Sluice Farm (2<sup>nd</sup>). A Mediterranean Gull was recorded at Newport (2<sup>nd</sup>). A White-fronted Goose was reported from Peterstone (7<sup>th</sup>). Six Bewick's Swans were observed at Llangybi (16<sup>th</sup>). A male Hen Harrier was reported from Garn yr Erw and Waunafon Bog (16<sup>th</sup>). Single Jack Snipes were seen at West Pill (16<sup>th</sup>) and Wentwood (27<sup>th</sup>). Two Mediterranean Gulls were reported from Llandegfedd reservoir (20<sup>th</sup>). A Short-eared Owl was seen at Sluice Farm (26<sup>th</sup>).

**Chris Hatch**

