

THE DIPPER



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Registered charity number 1088830

GOS WEB SITE: www.gwentbirds.org.uk

Newsletter No. 150

Winter 2018

CONTENTS

Notice of Society AGM and Draft Agenda	Keith Roylance	Page 2
Committee Summary	Cathy Gregory	Page 4
Pheasants save Rabbit	Verity Picken	Page 4
Willow Tit Survey		Page 5
Decline of Birds in Wales		Page 5
Gwent UKBS Report	Chris Hatch	Page 5
Report of Indoor Meetings	Andrew Cormack	Page 6
2019 Indoor Meetings Programme		Page 7
Contacts		Page 8
Portland Bird Observatory	Janet Cormack	Page 9
Membership Renewal		Page 10

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 26th, 2019, in the Village Hall, Goytre, starting at 7:30pm

All current Officers and Committee Members have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election and can be elected en bloc.

We currently have a vacancy for Indoor Programme Secretary and for an assistant to the Report Editor – nominations for either or both positions are invited from the membership.

Nominations should be signed by both the Proposer and Secunder with the agreement of the nominee, or e-mail Catherine Gregory with details. (see Contacts list for details)

Nominations must be received by January 5th 2019

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

The formalities of the AGM will be followed by a Finger Buffet where the trick is to bring some finger food to be shared by everyone and then take the opportunity to select something that looks far more appetising than your own offering.

Following the buffet the Members Evening will conclude with four short presentations by our own members recounting their birding trips in countries around the world.

Catherine Gregory
Secretary

Calling all photographers – the members' evening following on from the Society's AGM is a chance for you to show photographs from your wildlife collections. We can accommodate up to four presentations of no more than 15 minutes each and we still have vacancies. The photos don't have to have been taken in Gwent but it would be good to see local wildlife.

If you wish to present your photos at the AGM please contact chairman@gwentbirds.org.uk with a brief description of your presentation. The four presenters will be chosen on a first come first served basis.

Presentations should preferably be PowerPoint and loaded on to a memory stick. The society will have laptop and projection equipment available on the day. If you would prefer to use your own equipment please advise us on your initial submission.



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Registered Charity Number 1088830

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

The Annual General Meeting of the Gwent Ornithological Society will be held at Goytre Village Hall at 7.30pm on Saturday, 26th January 2019

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting held on January 20th 2018, (to be distributed at the AGM).
- 3 Treasurer's Report
- 4 Chairman's Report
- 5 Election of Officers:
 - 5.1 All current Officers have agreed to stand for a further year and need to be re-elected for 2019. Vote.
- 6 Election of Committee Members:
 - 6.1 To consider any nominations for (a) Indoor programme secretary:
Hannah Daniels
Proposed Keith Roylance Seconded Trevor Russell. Vote.

and (b) assistant to Report Editor
 - 6.2 All other Committee members have agreed to stand for a further year and need to be re-elected for 2019. Vote.
- 7 To consider any motions received by the secretary prior to the meeting

The end of the AGM will be followed by a Members' Finger Buffet (approx.30mins) and then a series of slides by four members showing highlights of their memorable birding holidays around the world.

Committee Summary

Cathy Gregory

As the season of goodwill approaches, the committee approved a grant of £250 to the Goldcliff Ringing Group.

The relative merits of various bird appeals and their relevance to Gwent were discussed and the committee approved a grant of £100 to the Curlew appeal.

CF reported on the progress made with the web page. At the moment the developer is getting the structure right and has given the prototype website a fresh clean look. Eventually appropriate details of photos of local subjects provided by GOS will be added.

Hard working GOS members have been busy cleaning nest boxes in Goytre House Wood and there will be more opportunities to get involved before the breeding season.

The merits of the GWT legal challenge regarding the M4 route were discussed; the challenge is considered to be non-political. The GWT appeal for financial support requires discussion with the membership

After the Christmas break, we have the AGM to look forward to on 26th January. Volunteers are needed for Indoor Programme Secretary and also an apprentice Report Writer, and to lead 2019 walks (a good way to burn off a few calories in the New Year).

Pheasants save rabbit

Verity Picken

Glancing out of the window the other day I saw a cat (always unwelcome in my garden) tearing across the lawn in hot pursuit of a rabbit. To my astonishment, several pheasants chased after it whereupon the cat stopped in surprise and crouched low to the ground. More pheasants appeared from all directions almost, but not quite, completely surrounding the intruder. Apparently realising that it was outnumbered the cat edged its way towards the hedge, keeping a wary eye on its pursuers. No fewer than 18 pheasants continued a slow but steady advance until the cat made a sudden dash for the hedge and escaped into the field beyond.

I hope that's the last I see of him but sadly, I doubt it.

Willow Tit Survey – an opportunity

RSPB and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel are organising a survey of Willow Tits for Spring 2019. They plan to re-survey areas that have held Willow Tits within the last ten years, and are looking for volunteers to help with the survey (using playback). GOS is keen to encourage members to participate in this survey, as the species has taken a significant decline nationally and locally.

If you would like to get involved please get in touch via surveys@gwentbirds.org.uk for further information and advice as to how to take part.

New report finds a third of Welsh birds are declining

The recently published *State of Birds in Wales 2018* states that a third of our breeding and wintering bird species are declining significantly, giving rise to comments of alarm from several organisations including Rare Bird Alert. The report emphasises the urgent conservation need to protect some of our most iconic species and highlights the crucial role citizen science plays in saving our species from extinction.

Most bird monitoring in Wales is undertaken by volunteers who contribute over 5,000 hours of their expertise every year in the surveys which are utilised in this report. The breeding birds of upland farmed habitats, such as Curlew, Golden Plover, Black Grouse, Red Grouse and Ring Ouzel have all seen their numbers decline while the Corn Bunting, Dotterel and Nightingale have already disappeared from Wales. There have, however, been some successes - Bitterns, Marsh Harriers and Cranes have recently bred in Wales, proving that active conservation works.

Gwent birdwatchers have played their part in the monitoring of species but there is much still to be done if we are to reverse these horrendous declines – see the appeal for help with the Willow Tit survey elsewhere in this newsletter.

The report can be downloaded here: <https://www.bto.org/research-data-services/publications/state-birds-wales/2018/state-birds-wales-2018>

Gwent UKBS Report for November 2018

Chris Hatch

Highlights

The Baird's Sandpiper was still present at Newport Wetlands (2nd). A Pallid Swift was seen at Newport Wetlands (10th). A Grey Phalarope was also reported from the Newport Wetlands site (13th).

Newport Wetlands reserve

Up to three Water Pipits were reported (3rd to 11th). Male and female Marsh Harriers were recorded on several dates during the month. Two Little Stints were reported (10th). A Short-eared Owl was seen, (16th) and a Barn Owl was also recorded (21st). A Jack Snipe was present (17th).

Other sites

Two Short-eared Owls were reported from Collister Pill (2nd), with a single bird also reported from Sudbrook (11th to 14th). Two late Ring Ouzels were present at Pwll Du (3rd). 25 Brambling were recorded at Court Lawrence (6th). A Merlin was seen at St. Woolos cemetery (7th). At least six Water Pipits were recorded at Peterstone (9th). Two Dark-bellied Brent Geese were seen at Collister Pill (10th). Remarkably 38 Buzzards were seen together in a field alongside the River Monnow. A Mediterranean Gull was reported from Sudbrook (11th to 29th). Three Bewick's Swans were seen at Llanybi (21st). Two Barn Owls were observed near Raglan (23rd). A female Smew was reported from Usk (27th). A Jack Snipe was present at Sudbrook (29th).

Report of Recent Indoor Meetings

Andrew Cormack

Our first talk of the autumn season took us to three very different parts of Africa, guided by Marcus John. The range of habitats in Ethiopia is extreme: from 4000m mountains where lammergeiers are common, down to the Rift Valley lakes, below sea level, where pelicans, stork and ibis can be found. We're familiar with pictures of birds perched on the back of grazing animals, to feed on insects they disturb, but in Ethiopia bee-eaters use bustards for the same purpose. The mangrove swamps of the Gambia are different again, with herons and egrets on the mud between the tree roots, and best place to see passerines, unobstructed by thick foliage, being the pools around the hotel fountains. In Tanzania, coursers and secretary birds can be found among the herds of animals for which the country is better known.

Crossing the Atlantic, Oliver Smart took us on a three week tour of Cuba. Unlike the volcanic islands further east in the Caribbean, Cuba is a 40 Million year old fragment of continental rock, so has many species of endemic bird in addition to those that use it as a staging post on migration between north and south America. These include the bee hummingbird – half the size of our goldcrest, with a nest just an inch in diameter. The island is also subject to hurricanes and storm surges: woodland damaged or flooded by these provides an excellent habitat for woodpeckers; when they are finished, parakeets move into their nesting holes. Some species of cuckoo raise their own young, rather than tricking other species into doing that. Green herons catch insects, not to eat but to drop onto pools, grabbing and eating the fish or amphibians that take their bait.

Mick Jenner then brought us back home. On retirement from the police he took up wildlife photography and then filming. A determination to capture dippers fledging brought him into contact with our own Dr Stephanie Tyler. After four years on the Olchon, Honddu and Monnow – patience a virtue gained in his previous career – we were treated to a showing of the resulting film. First, he pointed out the power of the film-maker to tell different stories: depending on choice of sequence and background music, otters and woodpeckers can be cute, or voracious predators. Dippers are perhaps a simpler case, though plenty of insects were consumed during the filming. And the moment when the chicks leap out into whatever water runs below their nest was captured not once, but twice.

Len Clark gave us a tour of some of the excellent birdwatching sites on the island of Mallorca. Sites such as the S'Albufera wetlands are well known, and there were pictures of purple, night and squacco herons, little bitterns, purple swamp hen, serin, golden oriole and moustached warbler. But the nearby water treatment works at Depuradora provided bee eaters, whiskered tern, collared pratincole, Temmick's stint and bluethroat. Similarly, on the way to the Formentor Peninsula for Eleonora's falcon, Balearic and Cory's shearwaters, don't forget to look for Audouin's gull and osprey along the sea front in Puerto Pollenca. Although the birds were the main feature, the evening also provided an introduction to Mallorca's landscapes, from mountains and coastal cliffs, to plains and salt pans.

courtesy of iain Lambert on South Wales Birding Facebook page.

Scientifically, a raven has 17 primary wing feathers, the big ones at the end of the wing. They are called pinion feathers. A crow has 16. So, the difference between a crow and a raven is only a matter of a pinion.



2019 Indoor Programme

We are still without an Indoor Programme Secretary for monitoring the 2019 programme and organising the programme for 2020.

Whilst the programme for 2019 has been organised by Keith Roylance and Trevor Russell we must have help for the future otherwise indoor meetings may cease. Can you give just a little of your time to help maintain what has always been a mainstay of the society's activities. Contact Keith at chairman@gwentbirds.org.uk and he can explain how you can help.

Your 2019 Indoor Programme:

All meetings will be held at Goytre Village Hall, commencing at 7:30 pm unless indicated *otherwise

Date	Speaker	Title
Sat Jan 26 th	AGM	Members photos 4 x 15 mins
Sat Feb 2 nd	Mike Dilger	Trials & Tribulations of a Wildlife Presenter
Sat Feb 16 th	Helen Mugridge	Iceland – Land of fire and brilliant birds
Sat Mar 2 nd	Paul Bowden	The Caucasus Mountains – Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan
Sat Mar 16 th	Guy Moody	Evolution of Birds
Monday March 25 th *	Iolo Williams*	The Wildlife of Wales (Entry by ticket only) *Woodland Road Sports & Social Club, Cwmbran
Sat Mar 30 th	Ashley Grove	Jewels of the Gambia
Sat Apr 13 th	Len Clarke	A birding journey around central Spain

Sat Sept 28 th	Al Venables	Wildlife in Spitsbergen – Revisited
Sat Oct 12 th	Blair Jones	A year in the life of Goldcliff – a photographic study
Sat Oct 26 th	Ed Drewitt	Urban Peregrines
Sat Nov 9 th	Dave Brassey	Scotland 2018
Sat Nov 23 rd	John Coleman	Turkey
Sat Dec 7 th	Neil Glenn	Valley Parade – Wildlife of the Lower Rio Grande Valley

2020		
Sat Jan 25 th	AGM	Members photos 4 x 15 mins

GOS CONTACTS

Chairman
Keith Roylance

Chairman@gwentbirds.org.uk

Field Secretary
Dave Brassey

outdoor@gwentbirds.org.uk

General Secretary
Cathy Gregory

Secretary@gwentbirds.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Gill Jones

membership@gwentbirds.org.uk

County Recorder
Daryl Spittle

countyrecorder@gwentbirds.org.uk

Newsletter
Janet Cormack

newsletter@gwentbirds.org

Chough – Keith Roylance



Have you ever been to Portland Bird Observatory?

Each year in October, the Society organises a weekend visit to Portland Bird Observatory. It is a great opportunity for some coastal birding as well as socialising and it is not as spartan as you might imagine (although there are some bunk beds!). Obviously each year is different depending on whatever is around, there is a general pattern which allows everyone plenty of time to do their own thing or join up with small groups to car share or walk together. We have generally had surprisingly good weather, especially this year when Gwent was suffering torrential rain.

Accommodation is booked for the Friday and Saturday night. Rooms are for between two and four people and allocation is on an informal basis of there is a sheet of paper with the available rooms for you to sign up. There is a choice of rooms in the lighthouse or a self-contained annex. Beds are made up bunkhouse style so have a quilt and a pillow but you will need to bring a pillow case and sleeping bag. There are two shower rooms on the ground floor. The two evening meals are at the local pub, The Pulpit (<http://www.thepulpitinnportland.co.uk/index>), after a dusk time search for hunting owls of course. There is a well-equipped kitchen with plenty of fridge and larder space for breakfast and lunch ingredients.

The first cars will tend to start arriving around lunchtime with a customary stop at Ferrybridge to see what geese are around and for a cuppa or something more at the cafe (<https://www.tastecafeatchesilbeach.co.uk/>). The meals can be rather expensive but the fish platter was amazing. After rooms have been bagged, there will usually be a walk down to the tip of the bill and an initial bit of sea-watching. The Obs runs moth traps each night and there will be the bucket of egg boxes to check, a good opportunity to see some immigrant moths that rarely make it to Gwent. Mornings are a leisurely get up and depending on what has been caught in the mist nights, there may be an opportunity to see birds in the hand. Anyway the gardens just below the terrace are a good place to look for migrating warblers while you are enjoying a cuppa. The rest of the day can be spent exploring the Portland Bill by foot (over three years, we have worked our way round the coast) or heading out to a local reserve. This year's main attraction was a lesser yellow legs at Radipole Lake. Saturday is also a good time to browse in the bookshop.

So when you are browsing the list of outdoor meetings, why not consider a weekend in Dorset?

Membership Renewal

Your membership subscription is due on January 1st for 2019. If you pay by Standing Order you do not need to do anything, your bank will transfer the amount due to us on or shortly after 1st January 2019.

If you still pay your subscriptions by cash or cheque please complete the form below and send it with your payment to: Gill Jones, Membership Secretary, 11, Llewellyn Walk, Newport, NP20 6LY or you can pay at an indoor meeting during January.

Membership Fees remain as £15.00 for Individual Membership
or £18.00 for Joint/Family Membership.

I wish to renew my membership of Gwent Ornithological Society for 2018

Name.....

Address.....
.....

Post Code.....

E-mail.....

Telephone:.....

Membership No. (if known).....

Membership Grade: Individual @ £15..... Or Joint/Family @ £18

I enclose cheque to the value of £.....

Payable to Gwent Ornithological Society

Send payment to: Gill Jones, Membership Secretary, 11, Llewellyn Walk,
Newport, NP20 6LY

DO NOT SEND CASH THROUGH THE POST.