

THE DIPPER



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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GOS WEB SITE: www.gwentbirds.org.uk

Due to the current restrictions this newsletter is only being distributed by e-mail

Newsletter No. 155

Summer 2020

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As we all remain birding within five miles of our homes, I hope this issue of the Dipper gives you an update of activity in some other areas of the county. Dave assures me that all the photographs in the quiz were taken in the UK.

Dragonflies always used to be referred to as “the birdwatcher’s insect”. With an upsurge of interest in all forms of insect life in recent years, that’s perhaps not the case any more, but dragonflies continue to be very popular with birders, and it’s likely that most GOS members observe and can put a name to at least a few of our local species.

Just like your bird records, details of local dragonfly sightings are interesting and useful, to help track their changing status and identify important sites. Gwent has a varied dragonfly fauna. The River Wye has an important population of the threatened Club-tailed Dragonfly along with several other river specialists. The moorlands in the north and west of the county have their own specialities such as Golden-ringed Dragonfly and Keeled Skimmer. On the Levels, as well as the localised Hairy Dragonfly, we’ve seen Small Red-eyed Damselfly colonise in the last few years. We attract rare vagrants too, such as the stunning Southern Migrant Hawker found at Llandegfedd Reservoir in 2019.



Photograph: Gavin Vella

My task as county dragonfly recorder is to pull all of this information together and feed it into the national dataset, so that it can be made available to anyone.

If you're interested in Gwent's dragonflies and would like to know how your records can be fed in, it would be great to make contact. Just drop me an email at the address below, and I can let you know more.

Thanks

Steve Preddy
Steve.Preddy@me.com

Gwent UKBS Report for March 2020

Chris Hatch

Highlights

The Glossy Ibis was still present at Newport Wetlands throughout most of the month. Five Whooper Swans were reported from Peterstone Gout (7th). A Firecrest was seen at Newport Wetlands (13th). A Great Skua was reported offshore at Newport Wetlands.

Newport Wetlands Reserve

(Sightings until the reserve closed on 23rd March)

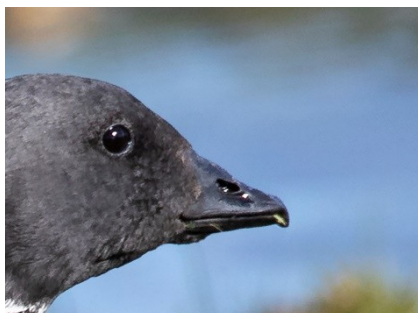
A Spotted Redshank was reported (5th). 45 Avocets were recorded (6th). A female Hen Harrier was observed. Marsh Harrier sightings were regular, with a maximum of three birds seen (20th).

Other sites

Two male Ring Ouzels were seen on the Blorengge (24th). A Barn Owl was observed at Goytre (11th). A Marsh Harrier was reported from Magor Marsh (13th). A Lesser-spotted Woodpecker was hard drumming at Wyesham (23rd). Seven male Wheatears were seen at Gilwern Hill (25th).

The last week of the month was dominated by reports from gardens and local patches, with good numbers of incoming migrants recorded throughout the county.

HEADS AND TAILS



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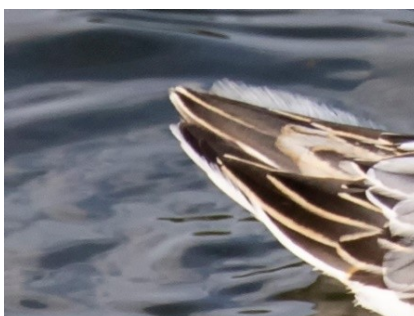
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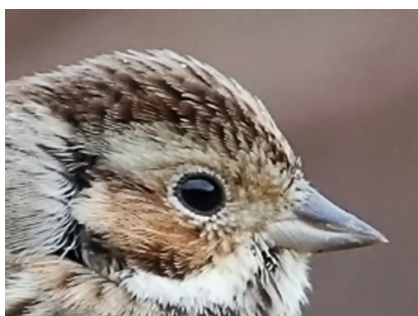
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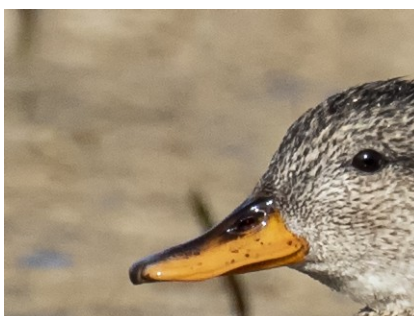
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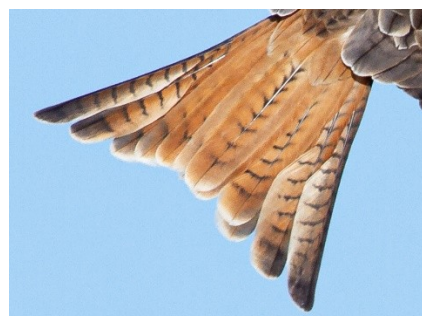
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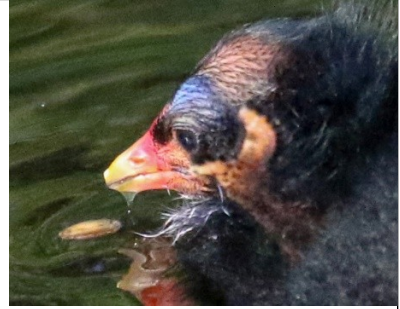
HEADS AND TAILS Part 2



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Keith Roylance asked me to write up my observations in Goetre House Wood which as you probably know is a 12-acre woodland reserve owned by the Society. As I live in Penperlleni it is short walk for me to access the Reserve so that am complying with Government advice on social isolation. I also have an annual walk in the Society's outdoor programme so I thought I could do that in May by myself and report the results to you.

I carried out the survey on 17th May following the route set out in the Society's publication 'Birdwatching Walks in Gwent'. My first bird was whilst drawing back my bedroom curtains. I saw a Pied Wagtail sitting on the telephone wire outside. As soon as I left the house a Collared Dove was calling as was my local Blackbird. Rooks from the nearby rookery opposite the Village Hall were seen. Crossing the main road was easy as so few cars are using the A4042 at present. There was a Swallow on the wires as I walked along the lane and the first of many Woodpigeon was heard. House Sparrow are nesting in the barn and I saw a pair of Canada Geese flying down to the pond opposite the entrance gate to the Reserve. One of the pair has been sitting in the same spot for about three weeks with the other goose warily watching the Grey Heron which is a regular visitor. I have now seen four goslings with the adult birds and the Grey Heron is still patiently watching. A Little Grebe usually visits the pond and, in the past, has built a nest but the pond is shallow enough for the Heron to ensure that breeding attempts are always unsuccessful. A Raven crouched in the distance. Jackdaws are always present.

Going into the wood the first bird I see is a Moorhen on the pond and male Blackcap showing itself. A Chiffchaff is singing; Blue Tit and Great Tit are busy with their breeding, the Great Tit using Box 382. The Nuthatch, with its typical plastering around the entrance of Box 380 were frequent visitors to the box suggesting they were feeding young. Wrens were singing and a Treecreeper was seen. The air was full of Blackbird and Song thrush song. A juvenile Robin was skulking on the path ahead of me.

Leaving the wood to go along the Canal towpath I see my first Mallard of the day, a female with 4 ducklings. There were a pair of Grey Wagtail on the sluice by the farm. They bred in that location last year. I also heard and saw my first Chaffinch, a less common bird around here of late; a Pheasant was calling in the distance. House Martins were inspecting last year's nests on the house in the market garden. Another Moorhen crossed the canal and there was a Magpie in the trees. I then saw a Goldfinch on the branch of one of the Alders. By now I arrived at Goetre Warf where normally we stop at the Café for a welcome coffee. It was closed of course, so I had to make do with a glug from my water bottle.

Heading for home I finally saw a Dunnock on top of a hedge.

Other species seen/heard in the wood this spring were: Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Mistle Thrush, Jay, Goldcrest, Robin, Pied Flycatcher, Buzzard, Red Kite and Tawny Owl. On a subsequent visit the Pied Flycatcher was seen entering a nest box and a Spotted Flycatcher was seen.

Goytre Wood – An update from Richard Evans. 21st May

Checked all the nest boxes in Goytre wood a few days ago and I was a little disappointed. Not many of the new nest boxes have been used, but those that have been occupied have the usual suspects like Blue and Great tit.

When I entered the woods I immediately heard a Male Pied Flycatcher singing away above one of the old nest boxes. I checked on the nest box and there were 8 Pied Flycatcher eggs. I decided to check on all the old nest boxes and am glad I did because most of them are occupied. Unfortunately there was a failed Pied Flycatcher nest with dead chicks in. This was a very early Pied Flycatcher nest and in my opinion they got caught out with the frosty mornings we had.

On a positive note I heard 3 separate Male Pied Flycatchers singing and a pleasant surprise managed to film a Male Redstart in the middle of the woods so obviously nesting in a natural hole (my opinion). Shame we are not able to ring the chicks although there is always next year.

(Reproduced from a facebook post on Gwent Birders)

News from Newport Wetlands Reserve.

We have received the following updates from Kevin Dupe at NWR. Kevin is allowed to visit the reserve once a week for monitoring purposes.

Information on breeding waders at Goldcliff as of 1st May 2020

Avocets - 25, 11 nests

Lapwing - 36, 3 nests and at least 3 broods (1 x 2/8, 1 x 1/8, one brood unseen - being brooded) - probably more broods, but veg is getting longer and it was very windy.

Ringed Plover - 2, 1 brood of 4 x 2/8

Little Ringed Plover - only 1 seen, no sign of the nest or brood

Redshank - 11, 1 nest (very low number, but hopefully half of them are on nests which are very hard to see).

Oystercatcher - 8, 3 nests

Also 8 Black-tailed Godwits and a few of Whimbrel.

In the 2 hours I was there, not many predators about - a couple of crows, Lesser Black-backed Gulls getting seen off quickly. No buzzard

A further update on 11th May 2020

I spent the morning monitoring the Marsh Harriers for 4 hours. They were very active - I saw both the male and female carrying reeds. The male brought prey back once and gave it to the female in the reeds. They spent a lot of time doing fake aerial food passes. I think they have a nest but aren't incubating eggs yet.

The Bittern was booming all morning, but no sign of any feeding flights yet.

A few cuckoos about.

At Goldcliff:

34 Avocets with 12 nests.

34 Lapwing with 6 nests and 4 broods: a brood of 1 5/8 and brood of 1 4/8. The other 2 broods not seen.

A Little Ringed Plover brood of 4 5/8.

8 Oystercatcher with 3 nests.

23 Redshank with a brood of 4 2/8 and a brood of 1 3/8.

Still 3 Black-tailed Godwits about.

Still a pair of Wigeon! Plenty of Tufted Ducks, Gadwall, Shoveler and a few Teal -mostly on Prior's. No sign of buzzard, but crows ever present being a nuisance. A Peregrine flew through.

Nobody about at Goldcliff and no evidence of anybody going there.

Many thanks to all responsible birdwatchers.

(Note the nomenclature 3/8, 5/8 etc refers to the status of the chicks. E.g. 4/8 is half way to fledged, whilst 7/8 is almost fledged and similarly for all other indicated status)

Additional update 13th May

Here's my wader report for Wednesday 13th May:

Avocet total 28, nests 5 no chicks seen, despite 7 nests hatching since last week.

Lapwing total 23, nests 4 no chicks seen, probably a couple of broods still though.

Oystercatcher 8, nests 4.

Ringed Plover 4, one chick 3/8.

Little ringed plover 2, 4 chicks 1/8

Redshank 18, 1 brood of 4 4/8.

There were 2 black-tailed godwit on Monk's and hundreds of swifts and a few swallows feeding over Prior's.

Further update 20th May

Wader survey:

Avocet - none on L1, 16 on L2 with 5 nests. One on the foreshore. One brood of 4 chicks on L2 about 6 days old.

Lapwing - Total of 28, 5 nests on L1 and 1 on L2. No broods seen,.

Oystercatcher - total of 10. 2 nests on L1 and 3 on L2.

Redshank - total of 29, only one chick seen 3/8 grown.

Ringed plover - 4 adults. One chick seen 7/8 grown at the back of L2 island, but could have been more.

Little ringed plover - 2 on L1, no sign of the chicks, but possibly sheltering from the heat (survey done in afternoon as very misty until 11:00hrs).

Also, one curlew on L2 and one on foreshore along with one turnstone. One Mediterranean gull on L2.

Plenty of ducks, mostly on L3, including shoveler, tufted, gadwall and teal.

Lots of dragonflies about. I saw my first Hairy Dragonfly of the year on 22nd April at Goldcliff (very early). Yesterday I saw a fresh Emperor Dragonfly hawking midges on Goldcliff Pill and a second later near the hide at Uskmouth. There are dozens of 4-spotted chasers at Uskmouth, plus Hairy Dragonfly, Azure damselfly and common blue-tailed damsel. Yesterday I saw a pair of Banded Demoiselle in the reed at the end of Chapel Lane. Elsewhere I have seen Beautiful Demoiselle and today I saw 4, Broad-bodied Chasers at Malpas and also Large Red Damselfly. Incredible to see all these species by 21st May.

Update from 28th May

The Marsh Harriers are feeding chicks and the bittern are doing the same. At Goldcliff Lagoons - only 9 avocets seen, no chicks and 3 nests.

Lapwing - 23 seen, 3 nests, no chicks seen.

Oystercatcher - 10 seen, 4 nests and a brood of 3 newly hatched.

Ringed plover - 3 seen and one chick jumping up and down and flapping its wings, so almost fledged.

No little ringed plover seen.

I haven't seen the buzzard once on my weekly 2.5hour visits to Goldcliff Lagoons.

A female Emperor Dragonfly was laying eggs in Mireland Pill Reen (the one that runs between the Lapwing Hide and the first platform(curlew?)) with a male patrolling up and down

Update 2nd June

Waders at Goldcliff:

Avocet – total 7 (all on Lagoon 2) and 3 nests, no chicks.

Lapwing – total 19 and 4 nests, no chicks seen.

Oystercatcher – total 4 and 1 nest, no chicks seen.

Ringed Plover – total 5 and one fully fledged chick.

Blaenavon Swift Town (Article reproduced from Blaenavon T.C. Facebook page)

An endangered bird species will hopefully be making a comeback in Blaenavon, thanks to a Town Council project to try to increase their habitats.

The number of swifts in the UK has more than halved since 1995, due to a range of factors, including house renovation work meaning they have lost nesting sites.

Blaenavon Town Council is hoping to reverse the trend by installing a dozen nest boxes in and around the town centre to replace sites that have disappeared over the years. Businesses including the Lion Hotel, Forge Side Rugby Club and Jadeni hair salon have embraced the plan and agreed to have nest boxes put up under the eaves of their roofs. The Council Offices next to the Workmen's Hall is also hosting a box, as are a number of local residents.

Swifts are summer visitors to the UK, arriving from their wintering grounds in Africa in May and remaining here for three months until August.

Project Lead Cllr Jackie Huybs said: "I always thought Blaenavon had a healthy swifts population, but lots of residents have told me that they remember there being many more when they were younger.

"The main reason for the 57% fall in numbers since 1995 is that they prefer to nest in urban areas, using holes in walls and under the eaves of buildings. Demolition and renovation of buildings means the loss of many places suitable for nesting."

If successful, the Council will extend the provision of boxes to more residents across the town, as part of an ongoing campaign to encourage and improve the conservation of swifts in the community.

Pictured, clockwise from top, our first swift champions with their boxes: 1. [The Lion](#) Manager Marc Harris; 2. [Jadeni Hair Design](#) owner, 3. [Cllr Emma Louise Harvey](#); Claire

Higgins and daughter Tianna; 4.Louise White; 5.Alan Bull; 6.Cllr Jackie Huybs; and 7.Richard Lloyd Evans – thank you all! A nest box is shown at 8.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/2SUjOHx>



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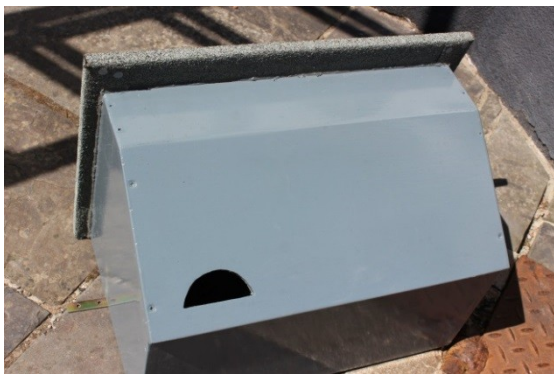
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News from the web cams

Webcams have been one way that we have been able to observe breeding habits during the lock-down. As well as the well-established cameras on ospreys and the nests in Monmouthshire that Steve Roberts has identified for SpringWatch, another Welsh one of note was that of the curlew at <https://curlewcountry.org/curlew-cam-2020/> The birds fledged on 3 June but the conservation effort continues.

Information from Monmouthshire County Council

We have been asked by MCC to distribute this information on a new website which is intended to act as a community resource.

The word community means different things to different people, one common factor is connection. During COVID-19 we have seen communities connect in the most amazing ways to support and help each other. We would like to introduce you to something that will make this even easier, an online platform that we believe can compliment the incredible work of people like the COVID-19 Volunteer Action Groups, now but also help us to build connected communities into the future. **Our Monmouthshire** is an online community network allowing people to connect, share information, exchange skills and knowledge in a

safe environment. Our belief is that everyone has something to contribute, at the moment there is a focus on things you can do to help others from your own house.

It's often the little acts of kindness that make a biggest difference to people. We are seeing people offering to help their neighbours in so many ways – from delivering essential groceries and providing emotional support, to providing free online fitness classes.

We have been working with Made Open to create something that will not only help you but bring everything together - 'Our Monmouthshire'. This will mean no one (whether as a resident, community group or organisation) doesn't feel they can contribute, with the added advantage of everything being in one place.

Our Monmouthshire provides a free and unique combination of interactive features designed to help people share information, support each other and work together:

1. Community directory – A place to advertise local support information.
2. Timebank – A place offer and exchange small acts of kindness.
3. Project team spaces – A place to communicate and plan together.
4. Conversations – A place to share knowledge, ask for ideas and feedback.

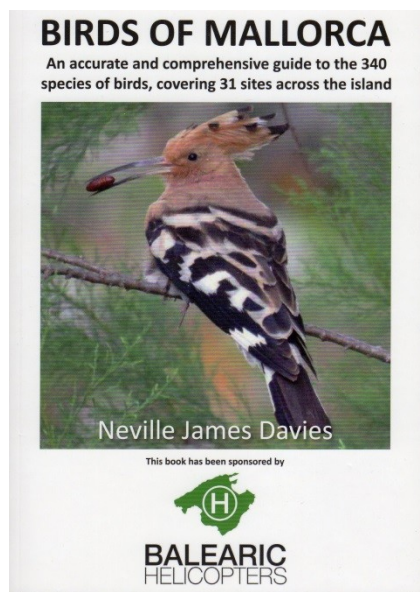
The platform is very easy to use and navigate, we are encouraging people to log onto <https://ourmonmouthshire.org/> take a look around and perhaps share your knowledge, offers or asks. If you need any help you can email partnerships@monmouthshire.gov.uk or give us a call on 01633 644696.

HOLIDAYS AND / OR BIRDWATCHING?

I'm sure a lot of us are thinking of where to go on holiday once we are out of this pandemic situation. Maybe you're thinking of staying in the UK or taking a short overseas trip with the family to somewhere.

Mallorca has always been a favourite destination for families but have you considered it as a birdwatching venue? Well, one time GOS member, Neville Davies, has been travelling there over many years and has just published 'Birds of Mallorca' a full yet concise directory of all the birding sites and species you can see in this easily accessed island.

The review printed below has been supplied by Neville and has appeared in a number of bird related publications. (We have had to edit out some detail for space considerations). The book costs £12.99 plus £1.32 P&P. To order, email Neville at: wildmajorca@gmail.com



Front Cover



Rear cover

A REVIEW

Birdwatching in Mallorca

This is the most accurate and comprehensive bird book ever done covering Mallorca, and my book covers 31 different sites all across the island and includes all 340 known species of bird. The new road numbers are included in the book along with information on driving on the island, car hire, accommodation, public transport and much more. I have included some places to eat that I recommend when out and about birdwatching all day thus saving the visitor time trying to find a suitable place.

Sites included.

This book covers spring and autumn migration, return migration, winter birdwatching, endemics, a complete species status list and tick list. Sites covered include: Albufera Marsh, Albufereta Marsh, S'Illot, S'Illot waterworks, Boquer Valley, Cap de Formentor, Cases Velles, Alburcutx Tower, Cuber reservoir, Lluc Monastery, Soller, Sallinas de Llevant (the salt pans), Castle de Santuri, Es Trenc, Far de Cap Ses Sallines, La Gola, Puerto Pollensa area, Bee Hive lane, Can Curassa, Albufereta back roads, new viewing platform, Scops Owl sites, Ternelles Valley, Cala San Vicente, Mortitx, S'Amarador, The Arta Mountains, Son Real, Alaro, Paix de Valldemosa, Porto Colom (Dartford and Balearic Warbler sites), Cabrera Island, Dragonera Island and other sites of interest.

Resident birder Michael Montier sums up how Neville feels about Mallorca in the foreword which he wrote for the book. Neville has been visiting Mallorca for so many years he is now regarded as a resident. He has found so many important species and has also been a pioneer in finding many new places to bird watch, often locations that even the locals didn't know about let alone how good they are. Neville describes these places with his usual enthusiasm and he takes you to where all the species mentioned can be found. Majorca holds many secrets and hidden places where few people venture and Neville has been to them all, expanding our knowledge of this beautiful Island. Areas like the Central Plain were not even on the itinerary of visiting birders but we now know that many gems are to be found there. Birds like Montagu's Harriers can be seen, Red throated Pipits and Dotterel are also present during migration times. There are often large numbers of Red-footed Falcons and Lesser Kestrels too.

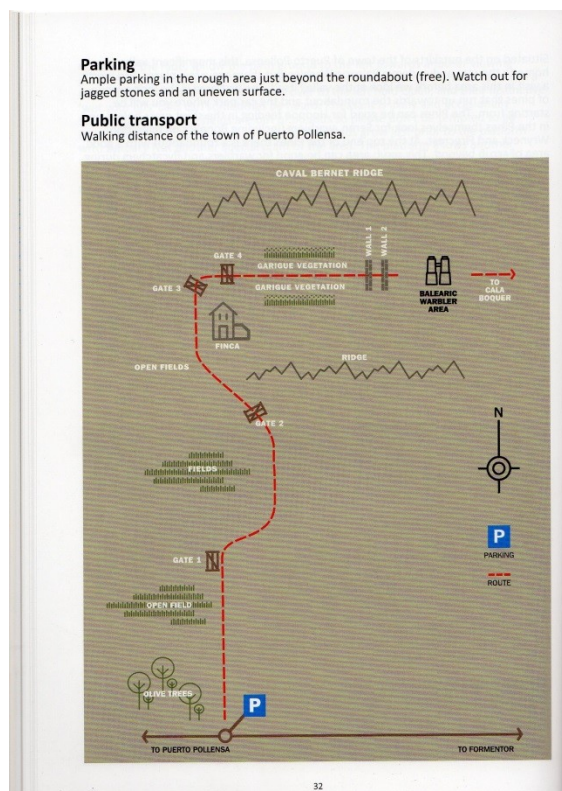
Neville's passion for his adopted Island shines from every page and he has an unrivalled knowledge of the treasures that await the visitor. I thoroughly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in Mallorca. It will be a constant companion and font of information.

About the book.

This edition dives straight into part one with the main sites and other sites worthy of a visit all covered in full detail with information on exactly where to stop at various points (identified by numbers in each site text), to see the greatest mix of birds on offer. Occasionally, plants of interest and butterflies have been mentioned at some of the sites. The book progresses to cover autumn and winter bird watching along with migration, and offers tips on vehicle hire, getting about, bus times and much more, ending with a complete and concise up to date bird species list, all of which is of interest to not just the first time visitor to Mallorca, but for regular visitors as well.

You will notice that directions to each site start from Puerto Pollensa. The reason for this is that I have always based myself there as it is nearest location to the majority of the main sites. Of course budgets may decide where the visitor may be staying and it is always advisable to purchase a good road map of the island especially if you are hiring a vehicle. There is a good bus network across the island and there are services available that go to both Cap de Formentor and past Cuber Reservoir. I know of bird watchers for example that catch an early bus that goes to Soller, and get off at Cuber Reservoir, spend some of the day there and get one of the return buses back to Puerto Pollensa (or Alcudia) depending on where they are staying. This can also be done for Cap de Formentor and is an ideal way to cover two very good sites if you are not relying on hiring a vehicle. However, hiring a vehicle is by far the best way to travel around the island and offers flexibility and freedom. This book has been based solely on my extensive knowledge of the birds and the bird sites throughout the island, and it is this love and passion for Majorca which I want to share with you. For those who already visit Mallorca, you will know what I am talking about, for those of you yet to visit; you will soon understand my enthusiasm and passion for the place.

I would personally like to thank my sponsor for the book Jonny Greenall of BALEARIC HELICOPTERS



The figure on the left indicates how locations and directions are shown in the book for all major sites.

The book is in A5 format and contains 120 pages

There is a complete Mallorca species tick list at the back of the book.

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Review supplied by Neville Davies edited for the Dipper by Keith Roylance.

Answers to Heads and Tails

1	Brent Goose	13	Reed Warbler
2	Chiffchaff	14	Ruddy Duck
3	Turnstone	15	Moorhen
4	Raven	16	Woodpigeon
5	Turtle Dove	17	Pink-footed Goose
6	Grey Wagtail	18	Long-tailed Tit
7	Grey Heron	19	Ring-billed Gull
8	Grey Phalarope	20	Tufted Duck
9	Treecreeper	21	Pintail
10	Little Bunting	22	Yellowhammer
11	Gadwall	23	Sora
12	Red Kite	24	Whimbrel