

THE DIPPER



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Summer 2022

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Note from the Chairman.....

Welcome to the summer edition of the Dipper. I have to start with some sad news that our membership secretary Gill Jones has decided to step down at the end of the year. I would like to thank Gill for many of years of service and hope she remains an active member of the club.

There is a lovely tribute to Gill in this edition of the Dipper by Keith Roylance. One of the standout moments this year was seeing and hearing a pair of Curlews in the Gwent area. I have to say I was initially pessimistic about the chances of seeing curlews locally, but Verity Picken told me to keep looking. I spent many cold weekends surveying this particular area and was almost ready to give up. This one Saturday I was just about to pack up as the wind had picked up and I noticed a pair of birds in the distance. Had a look through my binoculars and started to get rather excited. Could these be the elusive curlews that Verity was talking about. Then I heard the call – that distinctive call!. I did get goose bumps I have to admit. So looking forward to catching up with them again next year. If curlews are your thing then I am sure Verity would be happy to receive more sightings of these beautiful birds.

I attended my first Go Wild Event in Tredegar with Keith Roylance, Mike and Jackie Pointon and also rubbing shoulders with Richard Clarke who was manning the BTO stand. The weather was fantastic and over 2,000 people visited the event. It was an absolute blast, meeting so many people with an interest in birds. It was nice to see the kids taking an interest as well – so many talented children took part in our bird quiz. So looking forward to next year's event to be held in Parc Penallta so please come along if you have never been before.

I also took part in my first bird survey - the All-Wales Rook Survey. My patch was the area around Mamhalid and although I saw a number of nests, they were all vacant. Never mind.... I also put my name forward to carry out two BTO surveys.

If you have never taken part in a bird survey before then I would strongly encourage you to speak to our committee member Richard Clarke who will be more than happy to point you in the right direction. Make it a family event!

Unfortunately, I was unable to make the Swift Walks round Usk but was delighted to read Mark's article about how successful it was. Something to make a note in your diary for next year.

I also missed the visit to Tredegar Park and the Sand Martin Hotel but great to read Richard Clarke's write up.

I would like to thank members for completing the online survey and thanks to Andrew Cormack for putting that together. This is vital information that will be used to help us shape the future of the society.

Hope to see you at the first indoor meeting at Goytre Village Hall – Saturday September 17th – 7:30pm

Enjoy.

Iestyn GOS Chairman

COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 21st JUNE 2022 ONLINE VIA ZOOM

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Gill Jones, is stepping down as membership secretary at the end of the year; we would like to say thank you to Gill for all her hard work. GOS are now looking for a membership secretary. Gill has written a description of what she does and can provide guidance.

INDOOR EVENTS: Robin Hall is planning next year's programme of indoor events and would like to know if there is any feedback on ideas for the meetings. It is likely that the 4 meetings at the darkest time of the year would be by Zoom (last two before Xmas, first two after). The internet connection is not great in the Goytre area so it would be impractical to combine Zoom with a live meeting from GVH at the same time. The membership survey (20% response) was quite positive towards Zoom meetings.

OUTDOOR EVENTS: Participants have been enjoying the walks. The nightjar walk with Gavin Vella was well supported and there were good views of the birds. Also participants appreciated the focus on bird calls on Richard Clarke's walk; unfortunately only two people have booked onto his ringing event (now cancelled). He will invite the two people to alternative ringing sessions, so that they don't miss out.

The GO WILD event was successful, with lots of sunshine and many knowledgeable people there. The activities attracted children and adults to the GOS stall.

ANNUAL REPORT: It was suggested that it might be possible to put 2 years of the report into one report to catch up; this has not yet been decided.

GOYTRE HOUSE WOOD: GOS would like to get people involved with the Jubilee Tree planting project at Goytre House Wood, possibly inviting the local school. This will take place in early November, but the exact delivery date of the trees is not known at this time.

NETTING ON BUILDINGS, presumably to stop house martins making a mess, was discussed. This is not illegal if done at right time of year, but is disappointing. The consensus was to have a conversation and encourage the use of other (perhaps less visible) parts of building for the birds. GOS might be able to provide couple of artificial nests and the advantage of having house martins is that the martins eat the biting insects.

NEWPORT WETLAND RESERVE: Breeding has been successful for Bitterns, Marsh Harriers and Barn Owls; however the waders' breeding was diabolical due to aerial and ground predation.

NRAP CONSULTATION (Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales): The Local Nature Partnerships are working through items relevant to their areas, to produce a programme of actions that will be funded. This is an improvement as the old action plans were not funded. GOS would like to see bird species featured in which we

already have an interest (such as Curlew and Swift).

BTO BUSINESS: Richard Clarke updated the committee on the progress of the bird surveys following the disruption of the pandemic. This year people have managed to get out and do surveys. The BBS survey has had the highest ever number of squares allocated ever (66 of 74). All known 'live' heronries have been surveyed. Thank you to everyone who has taken part. There will be a 2nd year of the rook survey, which is a simple survey open to everyone.

COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 12TH APRIL 2022 ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Tales from the Goytre House Woods: Keith Roylance has successfully applied to the Woodland Trust's "Plant a tree for the jubilee". This was an application for saplings for autumn planting, helped by educational value and public availability on our woodland. The 105 saplings will give medium all year round colour and will be delivered in early November for planting. Planting needs to take place within a week to ten days, so we'll be looking for volunteers to help plant these.

Scam emails: We were reminded to be on our guard against responding to scam impersonation emails; fortunately nobody was convinced by these attempts. Even if it claims to be your best friend and you're not sure about the email, ring them up to check, using a number that you know is genuine; don't reply to the fake email address. Our chairman, Iestyn Harrigan, has alerted WOS to alert other birding groups.

Gwent Green Grid: Iestyn has signed up to receive information from the Gwent Green Grid; this is a three year partnership between councils operating in Gwent (Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen) working with NRW, Forest Research and Severn Wye Energy Agency, to develop green infrastructure in Gwent.

Wildlife Crime: Mike Pointon met with the Gwent Police Wildlife Crime Officer to discuss Operation Seabird. The aim is to protect birds and other wildlife on the coastal waterways. They're in the process of printing posters and leaflets, which we could hand out at our events. The aim of the police is to educate the public, but they are also prepared to use sanctions if necessary.

Attendance numbers were up slightly at the last spring indoor meeting, when Al Venables was presented with Tara Okon's picture, in recognition of everything he has done for the society over the years.

Robin Hall (Indoor Meeting Secretary) asked Gill Jones to send out the meeting notice twice for this meeting. This seems to have been a helpful ploy for reminding people of the meeting.

We are investigating the possibility of 'hybrid' meetings, dependant on the wi-fi quality at the hall. The next two indoor meetings (in the autumn) will be in Goytre Village Hall again, then we're back to Zoom meetings again for the winter. Please let us know what you think of this.

Membership Survey: Please fill out the membership survey on the GOS website (<http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk/member-survey-2022/>). It's very short and only takes a couple of minutes.

We hope it will help us to make improvements to our activities.

Verity Picken's Curlew Project for GOS is running again this year. So far this year, Verity has 11 pairs of curlews all over Gwent; now, it's a question of checking on them and monitoring breeding and success. Numbers are slightly up on last year. Verity has been contacted by the editor of Countryfile magazine, who is interested in doing an article or podcast or similar.

Go Wild! Volunteers are requested for the Go Wild event in Parc Bryn Bach (Sat 28th May 10am-4pm).

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 21st June, 7:30 pm

also:

NEWS FROM NEWPORT WETLANDS

Update from Kevin Dupé:

Highlights of the winter were a flock of 20 pink-footed geese that were around from January into early March.

Winter bird numbers were low compared to previous years. The table below shows numbers on WeBS counts and our high-tide counts:

	2021		2022						
Species	07/12	22/12	05/01	23/01	04/02	20/02	04/03	20/03	
Black-headed Gull	650	41	0	11	5	2	0	5	
Black-tailed Godwit	50	38	0	12	9	0	151	94	
Canada Goose	85	144	135	218	363	277	192	201	
Curlew	130	176	281	80	93	47	88	77	
Dunlin	296	270	2	1754	183	731	292	2	
Gadwall	5	45	23	17	32	22	24	14	
Lapwing	418	636	143	220	663	27	37	10	
Little Egret	1	1	2	0	0	5	3		
Mallard	40	121	133	79	97	58	37	57	
Marsh Harrier	1	3	2	1	0	1	4	2	
Mute Swan	11	11	13	9	11	12	10	9	
Oystercatcher	28	10	21	0	30	62	20	31	
Redshank		80	51	82	87	2	18	39	127
Shelduck		75	199	12	267	174	199	91	143
Shoveler		29	76	37	46	20	56	63	61
Teal	40	243	452	207	210	114	218	157	
Wigeon	354	589	1037	447	1022	1147	762	385	

We are grateful to the many volunteers who assist us with these counts.

The fox fence was switched off at the end of last year's breeding season as badgers had dug under it and this also let in foxes and otters. The holes under the fence were repaired and maintenance on the electric fence carried out during February and so far the badgers haven't dug back in - but I'm sure they will try once there are lots of chicks about. A fox and otters that were trapped inside the fence were enticed out. The breeding waders numbers at Goldcliff have been very low so far. On this week's

survey, 5th April, there were:

Avocet - 8

Lapwing - 4, with one nest (due to hatch any day)

Oystercatcher - 2

Redshank - 30

Ringed Plover - 13

There was also a flock of 870 black-tailed godwits (our highest count ever). This flock, with most birds in breeding plumage, has been building up in numbers since the beginning of March.

Elsewhere on the reserve, there are 5 lapwing on the wet-grassland, the bittern is booming and the marsh harriers are breeding.

Winter water rail tape lure surveys carried out by Richard Clarke and Kevin Dupé, showed a peak count of 64 birds in January, with 55 birds at Uskmouth Reedbeds, 5 on the wet grassland and 4 at Goldcliff Lagoons. Breeding surveys will be carried out in the next week.

Cardiff Conservation Volunteers now do one work-task a month at Newport Wetlands. Over the winter they have mainly been coppicing willows in the reedbeds and in March helped to build a log-pile otter holt in the reedbeds, using logs from Italian alders felled to create better flight-lines for the breeding bitterns.

NRW recently purchased 3 new mobility scooters to replace the ones we bought 10 years ago. They will be available for the public to lend out (free of charge) from the RSPB Visitor Centre.

The Queen's Green Canopy – Plant a Tree for the Jubilee at Goytre House Wood

Many of you will be familiar with the Society-owned Goytre House Wood and its value as a wildlife haven. We have an opportunity later this year to add to the woodland for future generations.

Currently, before entering the wood proper, you cross over an area of rough grassland. In the past we have attempted to grow seed crops in this area to help birds through the winter months. Unfortunately, all our efforts on this front have not been very successful due in part we believe to the North facing aspect of the field and probably poor nutrient soil.

To enhance the area, earlier this year we applied to the Woodland Trust for one of their free Tree Packs and were successful in that application.

In early November we will receive a mix of 105 saplings including the following species: Hawthorn, Dogwood, Wild Cherry, Silver Birch, Rowan, and Hazel which we will plant in the field adjacent to the existing woodland.

A little nearer the time we will be asking for volunteers to help us in planting, staking,

and protecting these saplings. We hope that you will embrace this initiative and assist us as necessary.

The supply of the saplings is very dependent on weather conditions during the year so a definitive date for receipt of the saplings will be given at short notice, but early November is most likely.

Keep an eye out for additional information in the months to come. We will publicise it via the Dipper and through e-mail communication.

Gill will be standing down as Membership Secretary at the AGM –

Most of you will know Gill from having your subscriptions taken from you at January meetings or seeing her distributing the Annual Report at indoor meetings. Obviously if you pay your subs by standing order and don't attend indoor meetings then all you would know of Gill is her handiwork in sending out reminders, membership cards and reports to your registered address.

After six years of carrying out these functions in an exemplary manner, Gill has decided to close the spread sheets, put away the envelopes and postage stamps and take a well-earned rest.

As she took on the role of Membership Secretary just the year before I commenced my Chairman's term of office in 2017, I have worked with Gill on all aspects of communicating with members – letters, e-mails etc. I've also had the pleasure of being in a group birding trip to Hungary in 2018 with Gill who showed her birding knowledge as well as a sense of humour as we stood out in the pouring rain viewing Ruff in their extravagant breeding plumage.

Thank you Gill for providing six years of sterling service to the society. We hope you will continue to support us as we move forward in 2023 and continue to enjoy your birding experiences.

We wish Gill well for the future.

We now need to look for a new Membership Secretary. All you members out there come along and help the society to maintain its momentum by volunteering to join the committee as Membership Secretary. Gill has promised to guide any new recruit in the fine art of membership communications.

Keith Roylance, June 2022

Saving Usk's Swifts

Mark Mogford

Having always had a fascination, even obsession, with Swifts, when I moved to Usk several years ago I set about finding how I could help with their plight. They're in steep decline – numbers have plummeted by 58% in the last ten years and one of the causes of this is thought to be the lack of nest sites in modern buildings.

I subsequently discovered that a survey of nesting birds had been conducted in Usk in 2014 by GOS members Verity Picken, Chris Field and others but as no further surveys had been undertaken, I made the decision to do all I could for these marvellous birds.

I knew that the best way forward would be to engage with the community, with the emphasis on education and awareness, and give people an opportunity to help the cause.

Verity and I produced a concise and informative flyer inviting anyone who cared to come to join us on 'Swift walks' round Usk; we gave two dates, a time (8pm) and a meeting point. Both walks were extremely successful with around 20 people attending on each date, including some very enthusiastic children, whose knowledge of Swifts astounded me. I gave a short talk about the incredible life of a Swift before we set off round town.

The objective of the walks was not only to locate active nests and establish approximate numbers of birds within Usk, but also to ascertain the suitability of any buildings which weren't currently being used for nesting for hosting nest boxes. We confirmed that many of the nest sites discovered in 2014 were still in use, and also found quite a few new sites. So far this summer we've located roughly 20 nest sites, some of which held several nests. Many of those who participated in the walks have spread the word about the plight of Swifts among friends and neighbours and there's a growing list of people eager to help by putting boxes with callers on their houses. GOS sees this as a pilot/case study which could possibly apply more widely across Gwent in future years so has offered financial support to the project.

With the breeding season soon coming to an end and the birds returning to Africa, our priority this autumn and winter will be installing nest boxes on suitable buildings ready for the arrival of the birds next May.





This model Swift was made to the exact size and weight.

Gwent UKBS Report for March 2022

Chris Hatch

Highlights

A Spoonbill was present at Newport Wetlands (17th, 30th and 31st). A Black Redstart was seen at Caldicot Pill (17th to 21st). A Great White Egret was recorded at Newport Wetlands (26th). A Red-crested Pochard was reported from Ynysyfro reservoir (28th). A Glossy Ibis was present at Newport Wetlands (28th). Marsh Harriers were seen throughout the month.

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A Spotted Redshank was reported (1st onwards). 62 Avocets were present (5th). A Pale-bellied Brent Goose was recorded (12th). A Ring Ouzel was seen (26th).

Other sites

Twelve Hawfinches were reported from Mitchel Troy (9th), with a single bird seen at Magor (14th). A Jack Snipe was present at West Pill (12th). A Ring Ouzel was seen on the Bloreng (23rd). A female Merlin was recorded at Peterstone Gout (26th), with 50 Pintail also present at this site on the same date.

Highlights

Up to 5 Spoonbills were present at Newport Wetlands (1st to 15th). A Spoonbill was also reported from Peterstone Gout (21st). A Glossy Ibis was also seen at Peterstone Gout (3rd). A White Stork was reported from Newport Wetlands (3rd). An Osprey flew over Mynydd Maen (4th). An Alpine Swift was seen at Newport Wetlands (12th). Single Great White Egrets were recorded at the Nedern (17th) and Newport Wetlands (18th). A pair of Garganey were seen at Newport Wetlands (23rd). A Dotterel was present at Collister Pill (28th). A female Kentish Plover was seen (30th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Over 500 Black-tailed Godwits were recorded (2nd). Two Kittiwakes and four Gannets flew past (7th), with nine Arctic Terns and five Gannets also seen (24th). A Pale-bellied Brent Goose was present (2nd to 9th). A White-fronted Goose was reported (13th). A male Hen Harrier was reported from near the reserve (22nd).

Other sites

Three Gannets were seen at Black Rock (6th). Two Dark-bellied Brent Geese were recorded at West Pill (13th). 41 Little Egrets were present at Magor Marsh (16th). A Red-breasted Merganser was seen offshore at Rogiet (19th). A Ring Ouzel was present at the British (7th to 15th). Grasshopper Warblers were reported from a number of sites during the month.

Gwent UKBS report for June 2022

Chris Hatch

Highlights

A Bittern was seen at Newport Wetlands.

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Single Curlew Sandpipers were seen on several dates (2nd, 3rd, 17th, 19th). Over 350 Manx Shearwaters were seen offshore (4th). An adult Mediterranean Gull was present (22nd). A Barn Owl was reported (27th). Marsh Harriers were reported on a number of dates.

Other sites

An adult Mediterranean Gull was seen at Peterstone Gout (11th). Firecrests have enjoyed a good breeding season in the county. Several pairs of Long-eared Owls have fledged young in the north of the county.

Gwent UKBS Report for July 2022

Highlights

A Caspian Tern was reported from West Pill (14th). A Great White Egret was present at Newport Wetlands (11th to 30th), with another bird reported from Sudbrook (27th to 30th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Single Mediterranean Gulls were reported (2nd, and 17th). A Spotted Redshank was seen (2nd), whilst 17 Little Ringed Plovers were recorded (3rd). A Barn Owl was recorded (9th). Marsh Harriers were reported on several dates.

Other sites

A Mediterranean Gull was seen at Sudbrook (10th to 11th), whilst four Med. Gulls were reported from Black Rock (11th) and 5 were reported from Peterstone (15th). A Barn Owl was seen at Llanwenarth (29th). A Yellow-legged Gull was reported from Llandegfedd reservoir (30th).

Gwent Ornithological Society visit to Tredegar Park and the Sand Martin Hotel, 30 April 2022 – Richard M. Clarke

Thirteen members of the Society met on a glorious Spring morning to explore the Park area and to visit the newly build sand martin hotel on the bank of the river Ebbw.

Early interest was in both great-spotted and green woodpecker with the former drumming on a mature tree on the former golf course. The rattling alarm call of mistle thrush also caught the attention of the group and the presence of two magpies suggested that nesting birds were under threat of predation. Throughout the walk there were good numbers of singing territorial Chiffchaff and Blackcap and at least three singing Goldcrest.

The shingle bank of the river provided good views of pied and grey wagtail and possibly the highlight species of the morning with a common sandpiper feeding along the water's edge. Mallard ducks and a flyover goosander were also noted.

Society members had the opportunity to look inside the recently built sand martin hotel which had been provided by Newport City Council. With some 100 nesting chambers the new facility provides a safe and secure location for the local colony of birds. During the visit, a recording of sand martin call was played which encouragingly attracted a small number of sand martins to fly around the hotel. Earlier in the week some 20+ birds had been present.



Watching sand martins at the new nesting facility © Richard M. Clarke

Although early days, it's hoped that birds will soon be attracted to nest in the sandy chambers. Those visiting agreed that the hotel was an excellent facility and a positive development for nature conservation in the area. The Goldcliff Ringing Group would lead on future monitoring with GOS support.

Fittingly, it was the Society's logo bird species the dipper that provided the final interest of the visit. Adult birds were actively carrying food to their young at a scruffy, mossy nest sandwiched between a girder and one of the pillars of the 19th century tramroad bridge.

In addition to birds the group recorded orange-tip and peacock butterflies and the day-flying moth, the burnett companion.

In total, a very respectable 31 bird species were recorded and there was consensus among those attending that the area provided an excellent local birdwatching location.

Blackbird	Dipper	Grey Wagtail	Pied Wagtail
Blackcap	Duncock	Herring Gull	Robin
Blue Tit	Goldcrest	Jackdaw	Sand Martin
Buzzard	Goldfinch	Long-tailed Tit	Song Thrush
Carrion Crow	Goosander	Magpie	Swallow
Chaffinch	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Mallard	Woodpigeon
Chiffchaff	Great Tit	Mistle Thrush	Wren
Common Sandpiper	Green Woodpecker	Nuthatch	

Outdoor Programme – Blaen Bran Community Woodland, 11th June 2022

The two previously planned walks through this community managed woodland in 2019 and 2021 were called off on the day due to extreme weather conditions. It was therefore amazing to see a bright sunny day for the walk through Blaen Bran Woodland on Saturday 11 th June.

Nine members joined the leaders Keith Roylance & Arthur Pitcher for a three hour leisurely stroll taking in the remains of the mine buildings and the heathland on the slope of Mynydd Maen.

A steep climb from the car park with shrub and open woodland allowed us to hear Chiffchaff, Bullfinch and the distant call of the Cuckoo. The foundations of the old mine buildings were viewed whilst a Goldcrest called and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Buzzard were overhead.

The path led us behind the old buildings and upwards on a rough track through ancient mixed woodland. As we climbed, glimpses of the redundant Blaen Bran Reservoir were visible through the trees and whilst it still contains some water no birdlife was evident.

Making our way through a narrow 'kissing-gate' the woodland on the left gave way to open heathland on the side of Mynydd Maen. A wren was vociferous but the Tree Pipits seen in past visits were not seen or heard. A few of the walkers climbed a short scree slope to view the old quarry with only a Toad (under a rock) as a reward. After a short break we continued through a second 'kissing gate' to take the level path through what was once a larch plantation but since clear felling and re-planting

it is now a developing mixed broad-leaved woodland. A short deviation to view the pond on the right gave good views of Blue Damselfly and many hundreds of developing tadpoles in the water.

Many birds were noted during this part of the walk including Song Thrush, Dunnock, Nuthatch, Siskin and Blackcap and a fleeting glimpse of a Redstart. Eventually turning right down a rough track which brought us to a more level and smoother path we made our way through the conifer section of the woodland returning to the old mine buildings and re-tracing our steps to the car park.

In all 33 bird species were noted: Buzzard, Goshawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, House Martin, Grey Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Redstart, Stonechat, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Jay, Magpie, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Bullfinch. Also Toad, Blue Damselfly, Speckled Wood Butterfly, Small White Butterfly.

Perhaps next year we can time the walk for early May, potentially for more visible avian wildlife.

Keith Roylance, June 2022

Outdoor Programme – Trellech Heaths with Steph Tyler, 18th June 2022

A very overcast day with heavy rain forecast was not an ideal starting point for this walk through woodland and over heathland. Two members eventually found the start location of Nine Wells Woodland Car Park and joined Steph Tyler for a two-and-a-half-hour stroll in mid-Gwent.

Light drizzle was starting as we made our way through woodland to a Pied Flycatcher nest located in a nest box. We waited a few minutes and were delighted to see the male bringing food to the nest. Re-joining the path, a mix of woodland and heath allowed us to hear a few birds, but sightings were few and far between. This lack of sightings did not dampen the enthusiasm as Steph's knowledge of the plant life within this environment kept us busy in trying to remember all the different names of the species we commonly see on walks.

Zig-Zag Clover, Fairy Flax, Hedge Woundwort, Glaucous Sedge and Lesser Spearwort were among the early plants shown to us.



Zigzag Clover



Marsh Bedstraw

The rain eventually became heavier although the plant life continued to be highlighted: Water Figwort, Marsh Bedstraw, Corn Mint, Bell Heather and Eared Willow being some of the highlights.

Marsh Thistle





Common Spotted Orchid

Arriving back at the car park wet but undeterred it was only left to thank Steph for a truly enjoyable GOS walk with a difference. The author certainly learnt a lot but probably won't be able to recall it all in future.

Birds noted: Grey Heron (Overhead), Woodpigeon, Wren, Robin, Stonechat, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Pied Flycatcher, Blue Tit, Treecreeper, Carrion Crow, Possible Redpoll.

Plant Species: Zigzag Clover, Fairy Flax, Black Medick, Hedge Woundwort, Glaucous Sedge, Enchanter's Nightshade, Tormentil, Lesser Spearwort, Hard Fern, Marsh Thistle, Garlic mustard, Silverweed, Water Figwort, Marsh Bedstraw, Corn Mint, Lousewort, Bell Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Eared Willow, Scarlet Pimpernel, Dog Rose, Field Rose, Stonecrop, and many others.

Keith Roylance, June 2022

Mobile phones have been insinuating their way into bird walks for a number of years. Initially they were pushed into rucksack pockets “in case of emergency”. Then it was a more convenient way of carrying a bird guide and then it was one short step to I may as well complete my BirdTrack list as I go. Now the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has given us another reason for carrying our smart phones round with us in the form of the free app Merlin.



The Cornell lab holds a lot of data about birds and it has bought that together in an app that enables you to identify birds both by sound and image. It is the sound side that I have had great fun playing with over the summer. It is simple to operate in that you press an icon of a microphone to start recording and your phone records and displays a sonogram of what it can hear. When it recognises a bird, it displays an image and the name of the bird it is most likely to be. As it records first, there is enough of a time delay for it to usually act as a confirmation of the song heard rather than as a main identifier. However it was very useful for getting our ears back in tune at the start of the season (garden warbler versus blackcap), hearing what else is calling other than that really noisy wren and as an encouragement to start looking more carefully at our surroundings (spotted flycatcher in the garden and redstarts by a gate going up towards the Deri). It does not have total coverage of all species for the UK and it can be spectacularly wrong on occasions.

If we get back to foreign travel, I will certainly regard it as an additional identification aid for birds I don't know and children would love seeing if they can beat the app. One warning if you do decide to try when you are out and about. If you are relying on your phone as your source of cash or as your return travel ticket, do keep an eye on battery consumption. It is not too greedy in operation but stopping a recording does make a noticeable indent in battery life.

For more information please see [Merlin Bird ID – Free, instant bird identification help and guide for thousands of birds – Identify the birds you see \(allaboutbirds.org\)](http://allaboutbirds.org)

GOS INDOOR PROGRAMME 2022

Please note that meetings will be via Zoom or live at Goytre Village Hall. All meetings commence at 7:30 pm.

See comments column for location.

Zoom connection information will be sent to email members within 7 days of the date of the meeting.

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER	COMMENTS
SEPTEMBER 17TH	Sri Lanka	ASHLEY GROVE	GOYTRE VILLAGE HALL MEETING
OCTOBER 1ST	Wader Quest	RICK SIMPSON	GOYTRE VILLAGE HALL MEETING
OCTOBER 15TH	New Zealand: Endemic Birds & Natural History	JOHN BUCKINGHAM	ZOOM MEETING
OCTOBER 29TH	Russian Far East	CHRIS COLLINS	ZOOM MEETING
NOVEMBER 12TH	Britain's Coastal Birds and Their Secretive Lives	SIMON GINNAW	ZOOM MEETING
NOVEMBER 26TH	Birding Israel	MIKE ALLIBONE	ZOOM MEETING
DECEMBER 10TH	A Year In the Life of a Bird Tour Guide	NEIL GLENN	ZOOM MEETING

OUTDOOR PROGRAMME 2022

Charges may apply at some reserves. at outdoor events is undertaken at your own risk.				Attendance			
Date	Time	Walk Area	Description	Meeting Place	Leader		
16/01/2022	7.00	Tregaron & Aberystwyth	Full day - Raptors and Starling murmuration	Abergweuny Bus Station. Car sharing.	Dave Brassey		
30/01/2022	9.00	NWR Uskmouth	Bird ringing with Goldcliff Ringing Group as part of the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch weekend. Weather dependent.	NWR Uskmouth RSPB centre	Richard M. Clarke		
13/02/2022	9.15	Slimbridge	Full day - Winter visitors inc Bewicks and Whoopers	Slimbridge Car Park. Charge for non WWT members	Dave Brassey		
19/03/2022	9.00	Mynydd Llangatwg	Moderate Walk 2 - 3 hours - Wheatear, Red Grouse and Golden Plover	SO202124 (NP23 4GU)	Nick Beswick		
23/04/2022	9.00	Brynmawr, Beaufort and Garmydan	Moderate walk 2 - 3 hours	Aeda Brynmawr car park	Nick Beswick		
30/04/2022	9.00	River Ebbw Tredegar Park	Easy Walk 2hrs with opportunity to look inside the newly built Sand Martin hotel	South bound layby on A467 (Forge Road - ST282860)	Richard M Clarke		
07/05/2022	9.30	RSPB Gwentffrwd-Dinas	Full day with RSPB staff guides - Hawfinch, Pied Flycatcher etc	Gwentffrwd-Dinas but car-sharing to be arranged	Dave Brassey		
15/05/2022	8.30	Lower Monnow	Easy walk 3 hours	On road by Osbaston School SO507137 - NP25 3PU	John Coleman		
28/05/2022	9.00	Collister Pill	Easy walk 3 hours	Urdy Church	Lyndon Waters		
10/06/2022	20.00	Wentwood Forest	Easy evening walk to look for Nightjar and Firecrest	Cadira Beeches	Gavin Vella		
11/06/2022	8.30	Blaen Bran Woodland	Moderate walk 2 - 3 hours	Blaen Bran Woodland car park ST272968	Keith Roylance		
18/06/2022	8.30	Trellech Heaths	Moderate walk 2/3 hrs	Ninewells Car Park	Steph Tyler		
26/06/2022	7.30	NWR Uskmouth	Warbler ringing with Goldcliff Ringing Group. Booking essential (surveys@gwentbirds.org.uk) Weather dependent	NWR Uskmouth car park	Richard M Clarke		
23/07/2022	9.00	Ham Wall	Easy walk Full day	Ham Wall Car Park ST 449 396 (Charge for Non-RSPB members)	Dave Brassey		
24/09/2022	9.00	Steart	Full Day in this large improving reserve	Car Park ST 25208 44210	Blair Jones		
07/09-Oct		Portland	Bookings taken from 1st July - take sleeping bag and food. book - email Dave Brassey david.brassey@ntlworld.com	Observatory	Dave Brassey		
22/10/2022	8.00	Allt-y-ym NR and Tyny-y-fro Reservoir	3 hours walk - some gradients and steps	Fourteen Locks Car Park (EI charge)	Dave Brassey		
26/11/2022	9.00	Ullandefield Reservoir	Easy Walk around the reservoir	Fisherman's car park at north end of reservoir SO332007	Keith Roylance		