

THE DIPPER



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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GOS WEB SITE: www.gwentbirds.org.uk

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Summer 2018

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THERE WILL BE NO INDOOR MEETINGS NEXT YEAR

...unless we can urgently recruit an Indoor Programme Secretary.

Indoor meetings are part of the essential social 'glue'; of the Society and it would be a shame to stop them simply due to your inertia. Get involved, it isn't difficult!

Planning starts in late September by booking the Hall for the 2019 dates and the selection of speakers and topics usually only takes a week or so because there is a good pool to choose from - plus any interesting ones you may have heard in neighbouring meetings, of course. Many familiar speakers have a long list of topics. All that remains is to remind the speakers a couple of weeks before their meeting that all is still OK. If you can be at the meeting to meet and greet the speaker so much the better, but is not a requirement. Trevor Russell will be pleased to offer advice and guidance if necessary. Contact Keith or Trevor if you'd like to get involved.

Committee Summary of meeting held on 21st June 2018

A highlight of the June committee meeting was the opportunity to look at an interesting 19th century catalogue of an egg collection (now lost) which may allow us to add birds to the county list. Also, the curlew awareness exercise produced about 50 records, some historical. The "Go Wild" summer show was a success although there were no new recruits to GOS.

As on previous occasions there was concern over the large scale felling of larches and other unfavourable land management around Gwent. Also, it was sad to hear that Newport Wetlands Reserve had a dismal year for waders following predation of many of the chicks.

Meanwhile the Website Sub-committee has been working hard refining a website wish-list to cover topics such as volunteering, surveys, events. Information about GDPR and how GOS handles information is now on the existing website.

Speaking of volunteering, please do help with the maintenance of Goytre House Woods if you can, and hopefully with other upcoming conservation activities on the Gwent Levels when these get underway. Please consider volunteering (or volunteering someone) for the Indoor Programme Secretary.

A Blackbird that thinks it's a Kingfisher

Member Ruth Brown from Abergavenny has reported a visiting Blackbird to her garden. The Blackbird has been noted eating Newts.

One morning she heard a loud splash and looking out at her pond she saw ripples spreading from the centre of the pond and a Blackbird on the edge with a freshly caught newt. See photo.



Has any other member encountered strange behaviour from their garden birds?

Walk Round Strawberry Cottage Wood

Ten GOS members enjoyed excellent summer weather on a walk around the Gwent Wildlife Trust's Strawberry Cottage Wood reserve. The car park provided more than a dozen bird species, with chiffchaff and blackcap singing; house martin, swallow, pied and grey wagtails perched on or around the Queen's Head pub.

A walk alongside the Honddu demonstrated how productive the river is, with two active dipper nests in well under a kilometre. Great-spotted woodpeckers objected to our stopping to look at the reserve's two wild service trees. A climb up the reserve boundary produced long-tailed, blue and great tits before we entered the reserve itself. Here there is a wide range of nestboxes, and the highlight of

the day was watching pairs of pied flycatchers and redstarts taking food into their nests.

We continued across hillside fields with excellent views of the Valley, but none of the very noisy green woodpecker that was clearly sitting somewhere in an ash tree.

Back at the car park, a flypast by a sparrowhawk, pursued by house martins, provided an appropriate conclusion to an excellent morning's walk

Species list (38): Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Dipper, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Green Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, House Martin, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mistle Thrush, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Pied Flycatcher, Pied Wagtail, Raven, Red Kite, Redstart, Robin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Swallow, Treecreeper, Woodpigeon, Wren

Walk July 1st - Goytre House Wood

Only three members joined Alan Williams on a beautiful warm morning for our annual walk through the Society's Goytre House Wood and along the canal to Goytre Wharf.

A Pied Flycatcher was seen briefly in the wood but on this occasion Spotted Flycatchers were absent although they had been seen earlier in the season.

Whilst the highlight for birds seen was probably the site of three Buzzards and two Red Kite soaring together most notable was the absence of any Mallard on the canal between our wood and Goytre Wharf. Two moorhen were the only water birds seen.

Only 28 species were noted: Red Kite, Buzzard, Moorhen, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Swallow, House Martin, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Pied Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Bullfinch.

Goytre House Wood – Management

An opportunity for Society members – We are proposing to establish a group that will focus on the management of our very own Goytre House Wood.

The aim will be to manage the woodland in order to maximise the opportunities for wildlife. It will be a great opportunity to:

1. Become involved in healthy activity,
2. Be part of a select team of like-minded people,
3. Learn about nature and make a valuable contribution to our local wildlife,

The group is being launched on Saturday October 6th 2018 at 10:00 am and everyone is invited to come along. Meet at Goytre Car Park (Opposite Goytre Arms) from where we will progress to the wood. The theme for the launch will be

“nestboxes”. We will be highlighting how to make, position, maintain, and monitor existing boxes.

Please wear appropriate clothing for the expected conditions and if possible bring protective hand-wear (e.g. Gardening gloves or similar)

We also want to hear your ideas on how to shape the group and its activities in the future.

We look forward to seeing you on the day, if you want to know more before the launch please drop an email to chairman@gwentbirds.org.uk .

Volunteers wanted: can you help with nest boxes on the Levels?

As part of the Living Levels Landscape Partnership (LLLP), the Society and the Goldcliff Ringing Group are working together to provide nest boxes for key bird species to encourage breeding.

Some ten farms will be taking part in the LLLP and at each of these, we will: survey the land for suitable habitat; provide nest boxes; and, monitor nest boxes during the breeding season. The species being targeted are Tree Sparrow, Kestrel, Barn Owl and Little Owl and the farms are mostly (but not exclusively) across the Caldicot Levels.

The programme gets underway in late autumn this year and we are recruiting volunteers now. If you would like to be involved in some way with this exciting project we would love to hear from you.

There are lots of different roles available for volunteers from surveying sites, nest box building and monitoring nests, but also opportunities to help with bird ringing, managing the project and collating and communicating findings. Experience is not necessary as we can help with training.

If you are interested and would like to find out more just drop me a line and I'll be in touch with further details.

Richard Clarke
Chykembro2@aol.com

Dragonflies

Do you monitor dragonflies on your birdwatching trips? If so why not send your records to the County Recorder for Dragonflies and Damselflies, Steve Preddy:- You can email your records directly to Steve @ steve.preddy@me.com

Highlights

Ospreys were seen at Llandegfedd reservoir (1st to 2nd) and Ebbw Vale (31st). A Great White Egret was present at Newport Wetlands (7th and 18th). A Bittern was reported from Newport Wetlands (9th and 20th), whilst a Spoonbill was also seen at this site (14th to 16th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A drake Garganey was seen (13th). Two adult and two juvenile Bearded Tits were recorded (19th). A Mediterranean Gull was reported (27th). Passage and breeding waders were present in good numbers throughout the month, as were passage hirundines.

Other sites

A late Jack Snipe was reported from Peterstone Gout (5th), whilst a drake Garganey was also present at this site (6th). Numbers of Whinchats recorded at upland sites were depressingly low, whilst upland Stonechats appear to have been hit hard by the falls of snow in late winter and early spring. Breeding Barn Owls in the uplands also appear to have been adversely affected by weather conditions.

Highlights

Two Common Cranes were seen at Newport Wetlands (2nd). A Rosy Starling was reported from Magor Pill (7th). A Bittern was recorded at Newport Wetlands (10th). A Spoonbill was present at Newport Wetlands (19th to 29th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A Little Stint was present (19th) A Curlew Sandpiper was reported (30th).

Other sites

A pair of Garganey was seen at Peterstone Gout (4th). Twelve Common Scoter were also seen offshore at this site (9th). A Red-breasted Merganser was reported from Sluice Farm (14th). 381 Manx Shearwaters were seen offshore at Peterstone Gout (17th) in strong winds. Single Mediterranean Gulls were also reported from this site (16th and 27th). Five Little-ringed Plover were present at Llandegfedd reservoir (25th).

Highlights

A Glossy Ibis was reported from Chainbridge (5th). A Wood Sandpiper was present at Newport Wetlands (13th to 31st). A juvenile Little Gull was recorded at Newport Wetlands (29th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A Mediterranean Gull was reported (7th). Amongst the many waders present, a Little Stint was recorded (12th to 18th), together with up to four Curlew Sandpipers (28th). A Sandwich Tern was seen (14th). A male Marsh Harrier was present (14th and 18th). 30 Manx Shearwaters were observed offshore (28th).

Other sites

100 Manx Shearwaters passed offshore at Peterstone Gout (3rd). A Mediterranean Gull was seen at Blackrock (24th) Two Sandwich Terns were reported from Peterstone Gout (11th). An immature Marsh Harrier was seen at Mynydd Llangatwg (25th).

Members living in the Chepstow area may wish to get involved in this project to protect Swifts in Chepstow and to encourage more people to put up Swift boxes.

Swifts are in decline nationally and locally and we want to protect these wonderful birds. Part of the reason for this decline is destruction of their nesting sites and we believe this is happening in Chepstow and nearby. A small group has been formed in Chepstow with the aim of protecting existing nesting sites as much as possible and providing new nesting sites close by them to help safeguard the local swift colony's future.

Progress in 2018

We are very grateful for the help and support of the Glamorgan Swift Group and the RSPB Cardiff Swift Survey who have helped us to learn much more about swifts and in particular how to find swift nests (not easy!). As a result this year we have found several previously unrecorded nests and have confirmed continuing occupancy of some previously known nest sites.

We have also recruited an enthusiastic swift nest box builder who has installed 2 boxes on his own home and has made more, soon to be installed on other properties. We are also keen to engage with developers to use swift bricks and/or boxes on new buildings, particularly where there were known nesting sites in the past before buildings were demolished.

Any help with surveying and/or communicating with residents and businesses to protect or create nest sites will be welcome! Please contact Rose via chepstowswifts@gmail.com

News on Hookpod

Members may be interested in the latest news to save albatrosses and turtles from the dangers of long-line fishing in the world's oceans. The Hookpod technology has been developed in the UK and has proven success where it has been deployed.

Whilst the society is supportive of this project we are limited in financial support by our charitable status for wildlife in Gwent. However we were delighted to see that Hookpod has met its target to raise £57,000

The information below has been supplied by the Hookpod organisation.

HOOKPOD – Technology to save albatrosses and turtles

The Hookpod is an ingenious new British invention, which covers the barb of the hook during setting the lines in longline fishing operations, and thus prevents the accidental capture of seabirds, particularly albatross and also turtles. It then opens when it reaches 20m depth, beyond the diving depth of birds and the feeding depth of most turtles, to release the hook to begin safely fishing. In this way, fishermen catch fish and not birds or turtles. It is re-usable, durable for around 2-3 years and has no impact on either the fishing operation or the catch rate of target fish.

We (Hookpod) are seeking support in the form of any level of donation - every £1 will go towards the final total raised by Hookpod. However, as this is a crowdfunded project we have to reach our target of £57,000 to receive any funds at all! The link to the website is here: <https://bit.ly/2JQGmTc>

Visiting the Gambia

The following information has been received from member Adrian Edwards who recently visited The Gambia. We are providing this information without endorsement as neither the Society or member of the committee has verified it. However more information may be available direct from Adrian.

"I had the pleasure of visiting Gambia earlier this year. I'm sure some of you have been there as a fabulous birding area. We met an excellent guide called Yuspha Jammeh, who took us to excellent places, and was extremely knowledgeable and able to find all the species. (We got 201 species, including 136 on one day!) However he was operating from absolute basics so I offered to organise a website to advertise his tours.

The site is at <https://yuspha.com>

I'd be very grateful if members could have a brief look at it, and offer any feedback (to me by email to adriangkedwards@gmail.com), or just enjoy the pictures! If you are going out there sometime I thoroughly recommend him as a very relaxed, pleasant, informative guide.

Many thanks

Best wishes

Adrian Edwards

Obituaries

Peter Boddington

We are sorry to advise that long time member Peter Boddington died on July 6 th 2018 after a long illness. Many of the longer term members of the Society will recall Peter as friendly and good humoured as well as being a very good birder.

We have also learned of the death of member Andrew Long of Beaufort, Ebbw Vale, earlier this year.

Our condolences to friends and family of both members.

Indoor Programme from September 2018

Saturday 22 September	Birding Tours in Africa	Marcus John
Saturday 06 October	Cuba - a Flicker of Interest	Oliver Smart
Saturday 20 October	Dippers on the Honda, Wye and Olchon	Mick Jenner
Saturday 03 November	Birds of Majorca	Len Clarke
Saturday 17 November	Changing Landscapes on the South Wales Coast	David Broadbent
Saturday 01 December	Finland through the Seasons	Phil Mugridge
Saturday 15 December	Focus on Wildlife - a Nature Photographer's Year	Chris Hatch

Outdoor Programme

Friday 12 October	Portland Observatory	Dave Brassey
Saturday 20 October	Ynys-y-fro Reservoir	Ian Walker
Saturday 24 November	Llandegfedd Reservoir	Keith Roylance

GOS CONTACTS

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How we use your personal data (May 2018)

When you join GOS we ask you to provide a postal address, email and phone number so we can provide your membership benefits. Postal address is used to send your membership pack and annual reports; email is used for newsletters, information about meetings and subscription renewals; phone is used to resolve problems with the other two.

If you make a donation on which we can claim Gift Aid, we may need to provide your name and address to HMRC to support our claim.

If you attend an indoor meeting, we'll record your name in case we need to evacuate the building; if you borrow a book from the library we'll record your name so we can get the book back.

If you buy items from our on-line shop, we need your name and postal address to deliver them; your payment information is processed by Paypal on our behalf. If you join one of our residential trips, we will pass your name and address to the accommodation provider.

If you make a public post on the GOS website, we require a name and e-mail address in case of problems. We may also contact you using that e-mail address to invite you to become a member.

Finally if you contribute to our annual report, either by submitting records direct to GOS or by allowing us to access your records on Birdtrack, we will add you to the list of contributors in the printed volume. We also share records with relevant biological records centres.

If you have any questions about the above or want to exercise your rights to see, correct or delete your data, please contact Andrew Cormack, treasurer@gwentbirds.org.uk. If we don't deal with your enquiry in a satisfactory way, you have the right to appeal to the UK Information Commissioner.