

THE DIPPER



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Registered charity number 1088830

GOS WEB SITE: www.gwentbirds.org.uk

Newsletter No. 159

Summer 2021

CONTENTS

Chairman's Note	Keith Roylance	Page 2
Notes of Committee Meeting	Cathy Gregory	Page 2
Finding Gwent's Breeding Curlews	Verity Picken	Page 4
Survey of the lower Wye for breeding waterbirds	Richard Clarke & Steph Tyler	Page 6
Recent outdoor meeting reports	Nicholas Beswick	Page 9
	John Coleman	Page 10
	Andrew Cormack	Page 11
	Keith Roylance	Page 12
UKBS Gwent Bird Reports	Chris Hatch	Page 14
Report of recent indoor meetings	Andrew Cormack	Page 15
Snippet	Keith Roylance	Page 16
Splatometer	Keith Roylance	Page 17
Indoor Programme		Page 18
Outdoor Programme		Page 19

Summary of the Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 20th April, 2021 online via Zoom

It's Spring (allegedly) and the Outdoor Programme has re-started with Nicholas Beswick's walk. Numbers at events, of course, depend on the current Covid rules, so it may be necessary to split into smaller groups to comply. Portland was not due to open up until 21st June for overnight stays so a visit is unlikely; October might be possible.

For the Indoor Programmes, GOS will not be charging non-members to attend online meetings. We discussed using the hall for meetings but there would be fees for travel, limitations on numbers and there could yet be another wave of Covid sometime this year.

John Harvey from Cheltenham Bird Club has suggested joint indoor Zoom meetings and outdoor meetings and it was felt that this would be a good thing.

The website is going well. Andrew Cormack has been busy automating as much as possible; security updates happen automatically and the page for buying reports now updates automatically. The 2018 report has sold out but you can now go to the products page and download the text without pictures. Verity Picken posted a request on the GOS website for people to submit emails of Curlew records via a dedicated email address set up by Andrew and this has prompted a number of responses.

The Dipper was published electronically and was also on the website. Covid has affected the logistics of providing paper copies but the committee are looking into printing costs. The Annual Report has been delayed slightly due to covid exacerbating other commitments of the main protagonists. Financially, printing and postage bills are anticipated and GOS is solvent as usual.

Chairman & Treasurer for 2022: Please volunteer or encourage others to volunteer.

NWR

Uskmouth has been busy recently, unfortunately there has been a lot of vandalism and litter dropping. The bittern has been booming at Uskmouth and various surveys (Lapwing, Skylark, Marsh Harrier, Bittern, Water Rail) have taken place. Goldcliff has been good for birds recently with the summer migrants coming through: Bar-Tailed & Black-Tailed Godwits, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Spotted Redshank. There has been a large number of redstarts, possibly due to the cold weather preventing them from moving on.

Llandegfedd Reservoir: Dwr Cymru submitted some more planning documents, with a couple of extra bits of conservation (surveys); they appear to believe that noise will not be an issue although they have described outdoor music. GOS members have noticed that signs (such as dogs on lead and no entry) around the site are easy to ignore and difficult to enforce.

Concerns about disturbance on the River Usk were discussed at the previous meeting and NRW was contacted; the fairly standard reply indicated that trespass is up to landlord to sort out.

Living Levels Project: The Committee has endorsed funding from the Burt Hamar award for a boat trip to observe birds along the river, as far upstream as possible from Chepstow; Richard Clarke will write this up afterwards. RC suggested that GOS might like to book a charter for a future outing. Some of the Living Levels funding for the sand martin hotel is coming to GOS. RC recommended 100-hole facility with locking door for monitoring and ringing pulli.

BTO Business: Mick Bailey is standing down from BBS and as an ambassador. RC wanted to put on record that Mick Bailey has been fantastic servant, promoting the garden bird watch. He's done it for many years, speaking to different groups, signing people up, raising wide awareness of that particular project, also the interest in birds more generally. Thanks to Mick for doing that for so many years and doing such a good job.

CALM Update: CALM Zoom meeting to decide a statement or press release to send to all candidates in the forthcoming Senedd elections, to say that the M4 cannot be justified with so many people working from home instead of going back to the office.

Biodiversity Action Groups: Monmouthshire and Newport LNP had a round of funding which benefitted the Goldcliff Ringing Group and other groups. In future funding rounds, the GOS committee can put forward ideas for projects to be supported by the funding.

The date of the next committee meeting will be Tuesday, 15th June at 7.30 p.m.



Curlew over lowland pasture, Gwent

Blair Jones

Anyone who's heard the haunting, bubbling song of a curlew will have had a moment of sheer joy and will know that never hearing it again would be a tragedy. The shocking decline in Wales' breeding curlews continues – having already decreased by 69% since 1995 they're at risk of extinction within the next decade so it's absolutely essential that we do what we can to save them.



Curlew in lowland pasture, Gwent 2021 John Marsh

As we can't take targeted conservation action until we know where these iconic birds are GOS set up a dedicated email address (curlew@gwentbirds.org.uk) and asked members and non-members alike to submit reports as soon as possible. Requests giving the address were posted on Twitter and 'green' websites such as Gwent Wildlife Trust, Gwent Birders Facebook page, Monmouthshire Meadows and others as well as on our own website. Reminders were posted intermittently during the breeding season.

So far 62 reports from 34 observers have been received via the email address (several people enthusiastically made repeat visits and submitted updates). A number of these reports are duplicates (birds seen or heard by different observers at the same site) and, given that breeding curlews roam quite widely, it's possible that the same bird or pair was seen at two sites. Nonetheless, we already have 20+ sites documented, four of which held two pairs.

A nest with two eggs, found in silage at a lowland site, is sadly presumed to have failed; a second (possibly replacement) nest was located in nearby pasture. Behaviour indicating breeding has been seen at at least seven further sites.

A few traditional sites weren't included in emails so observers who'd reported curlews in previous years were contacted – most responded quickly, offering to check sites and report back. A subsequent report has been made saying that chicks have now been seen at one of the sites that was initially reported through the dedicated e-mail address.

Use of a dedicated email address undoubtedly encouraged people who don't normally submit records to do so. Twice as many non-GOS-members as members responded. Several told friends who also sent in reports so the exercise produced the additional benefit of raising awareness of the curlew's plight.



Curlew nest in silage, Gwent 2021

Verity Picken

This article has also been published in WOS's newsletter .

Survey of the Lower Wye for Breeding Waterbirds - Steph Tyler & Richard M. Clarke

As part of the Gwent-wide survey of rivers for breeding waterbirds, a river trip was organised to survey the lower Wye river. The section of river between Chepstow and Tintern is particularly difficult to view from the land because of restricted access and the steep limestone cliffs through the gorge. A survey by boat is the only realistic option to cover the stretch of the river effectively.

We met the crew from the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) (Richard Newhouse and Ryan Games) at 8am on 26th April at the riverside near the Boat Inn at Chepstow. After recent glorious sunny and blue-sky days, it was a little disappointing that the morning was both very overcast and very cold.

Having put on our covid masks and signed indemnities, we were fitted with buoyancy aids and then boarded the rescue boat via the pontoon bridge. Before we even set sail, the first sightings were logged with Mallard swimming along the water's edge. Shortly into the trip, a further 24 Mallard were seen near the old Chepstow bridge and the first of two drake Mandarin ducks of the trip.



Setting out from Chepstow with the old bridge up ahead (Richard M. Clarke ©)

Herring Gulls were loafing around the bridge and we scanned the castle for nests. We counted just one where an adult gull was sitting, but other birds

were on the castle walls and we assumed that further breeding pairs were probably nesting on the listed building.

Beyond the castle, the first Shelduck of the trip lifted from the river and flew upstream. Throughout the trip Shelduck were seen mostly in flight and frequently circled and moved about and therefore the need to avoid any double-counting of birds was paramount. Steph did a supplementary species count on the return trip and we concluded that overall some 40 birds were present.

Throughout the trip, pairs of Mallard were noted along the length of the river. In total 11 pairs, but there were also 32 non-paired drakes that were mostly in small "bachelor" groups.

Just a little way upstream past the old church at Lancaut, we came to the Piercefield heronry. As we approached, the whitewash of the nesting trees came into close focus and we could see several herons on the water's edge; some took early flight.

The heronry was mostly in three trees with eight, seven and seven occupied nests where birds were sitting or standing on clear platforms. Piercefield is Gwent's largest known heronry and has been monitored as part of the BTO's Heronries Census for many years.

Heron at nest (Richard M. Clarke ©)

The count of 22 nests was an increase on the previous comprehensive survey undertaken in 2019 from Lancaut, when 18 nests were recorded. In contrast to 2019, no Cormorants or Little Egret were seen in the immediate vicinity of the heronry.

There was a large flock of mostly sub-adult Herring Gull just upstream from the heronry. We saw c.70 birds on the outward trip, but this increased to c.130 on the return leg, when we also noted a single Lesser Black-backed Gull.



In the Livox area we encountered the trip's first Cormorants. All birds on the journey were observed in flight, but the suggestion was that they had roosted somewhere between Livox and Tintern. A total of seven birds were seen, with most showing clear primary wing moult and therefore indicating non-breeding birds. Presumably, breeding birds would already be nesting on Denny Island off the Monmouthshire coast.

A little further upstream were pairs of both Mute Swan and Canada Goose and two Common Sandpiper. As we approached Tintern a great deal of jetsam and flotsam greeted us coming down stream. Included in this were some significant sized tree

trunks and boughs and the SARA crew steered us around the obstacles carefully and out of harm's way.



A sign of the times, the masked surveyors! (Ryan Games ©)

Above Tintern was a large flock of newly arrived House Martins. On the water were the second of the trip's Mandarin drakes, three pairs and five drake Mallard and five Herring Gull. There were adult gulls present, which might suggest that

birds were breeding once again on the abbey.

The water level had dropped several metres by the time we reached the abbey and it was clear that this would be the furthest point we could travel to safely as there was insufficient water to take us beyond the weir. We therefore scanned the waters around Tintern before turning and making a swift return to Chepstow.

The extent of how far the water level had dropped only became apparent when we arrived back at the Chepstow pontoon. Rather than being the horizontal platform from which we had departed, it was now at a jaunty angle and required a little more climbing than anticipated. We scrambled ashore, posted our buoyancy aids, bade farewell to the SARA crew and headed off to get warm.

Our thanks go to the Gwent Ornithological Society for supporting the survey through the Burt Hamar bursary, which met the cost of the boat trip. Thanks also to Richard and Ryan of SARA who did a fantastic job of expertly ferrying us safely during the trip.

Breeding Water Bird Survey of the Lower Wye – 26th April 2021

Species	Location	Total No.	Comment
Canada Goose	Livox	2	
Common Sandpiper	Livox	1	(Heard only)
	Tintern	1	
		2	
Cormorant	Livox	6	Most showing wing moult ie non-breeding
	Tintern	1	
		7	
Heron	Lancaut		22 AON @ heronry
Herring Gull	Chepstow	6	1 AON on cliff below Chepstow castle (bird sitting) (Flock mostly sub-adult)
	Piercefield	2	
	Lancaut	130	
	Tintern	5	
		143	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Lancaut	1	In flight
Mallard	Chepstow	25	(x4 pairs; x17 Male) Male (x1 pair; x4 Male) (x3 pairs, x6 Male) (x3 pairs, x5 Male)
	Piercefield	6	
	Lancaut	6	
	Livox	12	
	Tintern	11	
		60	
Mandarin	Chepstow	1	Both Male
	Tintern	1	
		2	
Mute Swan	Livox	2	Pair
Pied Wagtail	Tintern	1	Male
Shelduck	Chepstow	2	Lots of movement of birds up and down river – double counting possible. Total count on return trip x38 – therefore c40
	Piercefield	16	
	Lancaut	11	
	Livox	16	
		c40	
Other			
Buzzard	Lancaut	2	Mobbed by crow
House Martin	Tintern	c50	
Pheasant	Livox	1	Male
Sparrowhawk	Lancaut	1	Female
Stock Dove	Livox	2	

Reports from Recent Outdoor Meetings

Unfortunately the walk to Blaen Bran Woodlands was curtailed due to torrential rain, but there have been a number of other successful walks as GOS began to resume in-person activities.

GOS Outdoor Meeting Saturday 24 April 2021

Nicholas Beswick

The easing of COVID restrictions finally allowed our outdoor programme to get under way, in unfamiliar territory for most, visiting upland local nature reserves around Brynmawr. The pond at the former Dunlop Semtex factory, now Asda, held few surprises except for a lone House Martin braving the chilly easterly wind. Moving on to Parc Nant-y-Waun, a Sand Martin was spotted over Machine Pond but, Willow Warblers apart, other spring arrivals were notable for their absence. Our third venue, Beaufort Ponds & Woodland, provided three redhead Goosander, perhaps first-year non-breeders. The woods held yet more Willow Warblers and delivered excellent views of a pair of Bullfinches. Excitement was supplied by a Swift hurtling over at low level – the year's first locally – and a calling Lesser Redpoll.

The overall tally of 42 species was respectable, if unspectacular, but the meeting was a great opportunity for participants to catch up after the winter's isolation.

Species List

Mute Swan
Canada Goose
Mallard
Tufted Duck
Goosander
Great Crested Grebe
Grey Heron
Coot
Moorhen
Sparrowhawk
Buzzard
Herring Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Woodpigeon

Feral Pigeon
Collared Dove
Swift
House Martin
Sand Martin
Skylark
Meadow Pipit
Song Thrush
Blackbird
Robin
Wren
Dunnock
Willow Warbler
Chiffchaff
Great Tit

Blue Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Starling
Chaffinch
Bullfinch
Goldfinch
Lesser Redpoll
House Sparrow
Reed Bunting
Raven
Crow
Jackdaw
Magpie

GOS Outdoor Meeting – Lower Monnow valley walk, 22nd May 2021 John Coleman

We met – all five of us – at 08.30 outside the Church of England school at Osbaston and were soon on our way. After a week of weather which is best described as mixed, everywhere was sodden and though our walk was expected to take place in dry conditions, the effects of an exceptionally cold and wet month - which eventually turned out to be the wettest May on record! – were easy to see; and bird life was less exuberant than might have been expected at this stage in May.

The route was a simple one, mostly along the narrow 'B' road, northwards up the Monnow valley, with a detour past Osbaston weir as we started out. The River Monnow was running about a metre above its normal level, which meant that water birds were not easy to come by, with the exception of the many Canada Geese and accompanying goslings which sat around in the waterside meadows, and a few Mallard. A Moorhen popped up, leading two half-grown young; and a splendid male Mandarin Duck was paddling around in the fast-flowing current. Bird song was subdued, though Blackcaps could be heard everywhere in woodland edges and an occasional Chiffchaff made itself heard.

A large field of linseed was just beginning to come into flower, with patches of bright blue brightening up the scene, while at least two male Skylark sang high above. But there were some notable absentees; we saw no martins or swallows along the river, which was almost unheard of in late May. Around 20 Swifts were seen, in twos and threes, high up and heading north. And one or two Buzzard showed, as did a single Bar-headed Goose. The latter, an escapee from a collection, has been in residence among the Canadas for at least two months, presumably hoping for a mate to appear, though the odds against this happening in the Monnow valley are long, to put it mildly.

Most of the common woodland birds – Blackbird, thrushes, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Robin, Wren and Dunnock – put in appearances and we heard several Green Woodpecker and Pheasant, as well as Nuthatches and many more Blackcap as we moved through a wooded stretch of road, though we failed to locate any Whitethroats, even though the roadside hedges had held territorial birds since April. A single Marsh Tit was a very welcome find, gleaning food from roadside vegetation.

We had some excitement when a Hobby flashed over us, visible only for a second or two through the tree canopy and seen only by the leader! Lesser Black-backed Gulls from the local Hadnock Road breeding colony drifted up and down the valley and lots of corvids made themselves obvious, including a pair of Magpie which, as for several years past, had built their nest in a roadside hedge.

We reached Tump Hill, on the Herefordshire border, where a pair of territorial Swallows hawked around us and, after pausing to admire the view back down the valley, retraced our footsteps back down the valley. Half-way back the heavens opened and we all got pretty wet in about fifteen minutes' worth of torrential rain, but it did little to dampen spirits and we finished our walk at 11.45, back in Osbaston.

The full list of birds seen or in some cases heard – though not everyone saw or heard

every bird! – was as follows, a total of 37 species:

Pheasant	Canada Goose	Bar-headed Goose
Mandarin Duck	Mallard	Swift
Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Moorhen
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Common Buzzard	Great Spotted Woodpecker
Hobby	Magpie	Jackdaw
Rook	Carrion Crow	Marsh Tit
Blue Tit	Skylark	Swallow
Willow Warbler	Chiffchaff	Blackcap
Wren	Nuthatch	Starling
Blackbird	Song Thrush	Mistle Thrush
Robin	House Sparrow	Dunnock
Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Goldfinch
Linnet		

Strawberry Cottage Wood 30th May 2021

Andrew Cormack

Six people joined the GOS walk to Strawberry Cottage Wood on a warm Sunday morning, for what turned into something of a flycatcher and raptor-fest. First signs were disappointing, as the dangling gutter where redstarts nested two years ago has been replaced during lockdown, and the dippers were not visiting their nest adjacent to the route. However this was quickly set aside when we spotted a raptor being mobbed by a carrion crow, which we all noted was smaller than the hawk. Other individual features, even silhouetted against a bright sky, confirmed goshawk, rather than sparrowhawk. Walking down by the river, as well as the usual woodland passerines, the youngest and sharpest-eyed of the party found no less than three spotted flycatchers. Into the reserve itself and a pair of pied flycatchers were busy delivering food to their nest, giving good views and photographs to everyone. After completing the circuit of the wood, we decided to walk back up the river. About the same place as the goshawk cries of "falcon", "long-winged", "red" confirmed the day's second special raptor - a passing hobby. Back in the pub garden we cooled down with a selection of drinks and good views of hirundines and visitors to the well-stocked feeders.

Species list: Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goshawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Green Woodpecker, Hobby, House Martin, House Sparrow, Jay, Magpie, Mistle Thrush, Nuthatch, Pied Flycatcher, Pied Wagtail, Red Kite, Robin, Spotted Flycatcher, Swallow, Swift, Woodpigeon, Wren

Broadmead and Beacon Hill 12th June 2021 Photographs by Keith Roylance

Blackbird
Blackcap
Blue Tit
Buzzard
Carrion Crow
Chaffinch
Chiffchaff
Coal Tit
Cuckoo
Goldcrest
Goldfinch

Great Spotted Woodpecker
Great Tit
Green Woodpecker
Herring Gull
House Martin
Jay
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Linnet
Long-tailed Tit
Mistle Thrush
Nuthatch

Robin
Siskin
Song Thrush
Stonechat
Swallow
Tree Pipit
Whitethroat
Willow Warbler
Woodpigeon
Wren





Highlights

A first-winter Glaucous Gull was reported from Marshfield. A Tundra Bean Goose and a European White-fronted Goose were present at Newport Wetlands.

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A female Merlin was reported (27th). Several reports of Marsh Harriers were received throughout the month. A male Scaup was reported (15th). Wader numbers built during the month, with a Spotted Redshank recorded (15th) and up to 85 Avocets present (27th).

Other sites

A Short-eared Owl was seen at Waunafon Bog (20th). A Ring Ouzel was recorded at the Skirrid (24th). Incoming migrant warblers, chats, hirundines and Common Sandpipers were reported from numerous locations, as were displaying Goshawks. Red Kites and Peregrines were back at breeding sites.

Gwent UKBS Report for April 2021**Chris Hatch****Highlights**

A White Stork was seen over Llangybi (4th). A Great White Egret was reported from the Nedern (2nd), with two birds also present at Newport Wetlands (7th). A Little Tern was recorded at Newport Wetlands (24th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

The Tundra Bean Goose and the White-fronted Goose remained on site all month; a Brent Goose was also reported (2nd). Two male and one female Garganey were present (2nd). Up to 80 Avocet were reported (2nd). An Arctic Skua was seen offshore (24th). Marsh Harriers were reported on a number of occasions.

Other sites

A number of reports of Firecrests from various locations were submitted. Good numbers of Water Pipits were reported from Peterstone (2nd). Single Ospreys were seen at Llandenny and Llandegfedd Reservoir (both 11th). A Black Redstart was reported from Redwick (12th). A Ring Ouzel was present at Trefil (14th). A Willow Tit was seen at Wentwood (20th).

Gwent UKBS Report for May 2021

Highlights

An Ashy-headed Wagtail was present at Newport Wetlands (6th). Also present at the same site were Little Tern (7th), Spoonbill (19th), Sabine's Gull (offshore on 22nd) and Red-rumped Swallow (23rd).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

The Tundra Bean Goose remained for most of the month. Wader numbers remained high, with birds of note including a Little Stint (1st and 28th/29th). Marsh Harriers were reported on several occasions. Sea-watching from Goldcliff Point produced a Great Skua (3rd), with 17 Gannets and seven Manx Shearwaters on the same date. Two Arctic Skuas were seen (4th) and four Storm Petrels were reported (21st).

Other sites

19 Whimbrel were seen at Peterstone Gout (9th).

Report of recent Zoom talks

Andrew Cormack

Although John Wilson's usual patch is just over the border in East Glamorgan, his talk took us much further afield. A few years ago he enjoyed a small group tour to Uganda: not the most celebrated East African destination, but with a two-week trip yielding 409 bird species perhaps it should be. What's more, even though this was John's third visit to Southern Africa, 260 of those were lifers. The trip started at Entebbe, where the international airport is close to Lake Victoria. So a post-flight afternoon walk produced hornbills, herons, green pigeon and spur-winged lapwing. Next day, the nearby Mabamba swamp had the first of nine species of kingfishers and nine bee-eaters, weavers and the bizarre hammerkop and shoebill – two birds for which the "feathered dinosaur" description seems particularly well-suited. Then the first of two long days on dirt roads took the group 200Km across the country to the Murchison Falls National Park. Here the kingfishers ranged from pigmy (half the size of ours) to grey-headed (jackdaw-sized), both surprisingly at home in dry bush. Bustards, Martial Eagles and Ground Hornbills seem more natural companions to giraffes, zebras, antelope and warthog. The Ugandan landscape is more wooded than brochure images of Kenya and Tanzania, so there is a wide variety of primates. Colobus monkeys were something of a warm-up before another 250Km drive south-west to the Kibale National Park for chimpanzees and – clearly the highlight of the trip – the well-named Bwindi Impenetrable Forest to spend a precious hour with a family of mountain gorillas. This final expedition was on foot, but in other National Parks they were limited to vehicles to avoid disturbance. Judging by the quality of John's photographs, this policy is working well.

Mary Colwell brought us back to Wales, to talk about curlews. These are so embedded in our culture that there are more than 25 different Welsh names for them, and their calls are the go-to sound effect if you want to invoke a wilderness setting. In winter, the UK's coastal mudflats are home to around 150,000 birds: between a quarter and a third of the world breeding population. But our summer populations are

in trouble: Wales may be losing 5% a year and more than 50% in the last twenty. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries created a landscape trap for curlews: originally nesting only on high moors, they expanded down to farmland; moors then became unsuitable through afforestation and the rise in generalist predators; now modern farming – and in particular early silage cutting – is making the lowlands hazardous too. Although curlew chicks are adapted to leave the nest very soon after hatching, their eggs are vulnerable to predators, accidents, and combinations of the two. In the New Forest most clutches were lost within hours of brooding adults being disturbed. Technology can help: whether GPS tags to understand how adults use their environment, drones with infra-red cameras to spot brooding birds; electric fences around nest sites to exclude ground predators, or control to reduce their numbers around hatching time; or simple marker posts to guide mowers away from critical parts of fields. The precocious nature of the chicks has resulted in successes for “head-starting”: rescuing eggs from airfields, where they would otherwise be destroyed, incubating the chicks, then allowing the fledglings to develop in safe enclosures. But we badly need to make our whole landscape more curlew-friendly, something that a new Curlew Recovery Partnership (<https://www.curlewrecovery.org/>) is designed to help.

Six birds for every person – and sparrow is most common

THERE are around six birds for every human on the planet, according to a new study.

A global total of 50 billion birds was calculated in the ‘first comprehensive count’ using computer estimates based on reported sightings around the world.

The most common is the house sparrow with 1.6 billion birds. It heads a group of four species – all found in the UK – with an estimated global population of more than a billion each.

The next most common were the European starling (1.3 billion), ring-billed gull (1.2 billion) and barn swallow (1.1 billion). A

By **Xantha Leatham**
Health and Science Reporter

team at the University of New South Wales in Australia identified 9,700 species.

Some of the rarest birds, with fewer than 100 of each species thought to be left in the wild, include the Cocos cuckoo, found on an island in Costa Rica, the akekee in Hawaii and the mangrove finch in the Galapagos.

The researchers, whose work is published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, said they will be able to work out how struggling species are faring by repeating the study in five or ten years.

+

FROM DAILY MAIL: TUES 18TH MAY.

Will you count the bugs? Use the 'SPLATOMETER'
Gwent Wildlife Trust together with other wildlife trusts want you to help
determine the status of bugs in our Country.

New bug splatter app to reveal more about insect populations

Drivers and passengers are being asked to count bugs squashed on registration plates after a journey.

An innovative app to survey insect populations has been launched by Kent, Gwent, Essex and Somerset Wildlife Trusts with insect charity Buglife. The user-friendly Bugs Matter app brings meaningful citizen science to the pockets of thousands and will help wildlife organisations better understand how our insect populations are faring.

Smartphone users can take part by downloading the free Bugs Matter app from their app stores. The concept is simple; before making a usual or necessary journey in a vehicle, clean the number plate. When you reach your destination count the bugs squashed on the number plate using a 'splatometer' grid, which will get posted to you when you download the app. A photo and details are then submitted.

Urging people in Gwent to get involved in this important Bugs Matter survey, Gwent Wildlife Trust's Head of Nature Recovery Gemma Bodé said: "With those memories of seeing clouds of insects on a summer evening drive sadly now a thing of the past, this survey will most likely confirm our worst fears - that our insect population is in rapid decline. Insects are so important to us all in many ways, including pollinating our crops. It is therefore vital that as many people as possible across Gwent participate in the Bugs Matter survey. Please take part and help us to form a picture about the state of our nature in Gwent, and together, we can help it recover."

Download the Bugs Matter app for [IOS](#) or [Android](#) and create an account

Your grid will be posted to you

Record bugs splatted on your number plate at the end of journeys from 1st June - 31st August

Submit your findings via the app

You can find out more information at:

<https://www.gwentwildlife.org/take-part-bugs-matters-survey>

and read their news story at:

<https://www.gwentwildlife.org/news/new-bug-splatter-app-reveal-more-about-insect-populationsap-sblat-pryfed-newydd-yn-ein-helpu-i>

How to create your very own **splat*meter**

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Print this sheet at A4 size (100%) and stick your splatmeter onto a cereal box or other suitable card.
- 2 Use a Stanley knife or similar, a ruler and a chopping board to cut out the splatmeter and the holes. It is very important that the holes are the correct size so that we can accurately compare your results with other surveyors across the country, so be as accurate as you can! Be careful to avoid injuries and get an adult to help if needed.
- 3 Please see the Bugs Matter app for the survey tutorial and safety information before conducting the survey, then you're ready to go!

GET THE APP TODAY

Search for 'Bugs Matter' in your app store.

Available on the **App Store**

GET IT ON **Google Play**

Autumn 2021 Indoor Programme.

All presentations will be via Zoom. Details and the link to join will be sent to those members for whom we have e-mail addresses approximately seven days before the meeting.

Autumn Season – confirmed speakers.

Sept 18 th	Stephen Lovell	The Somerset Levels	All round Naturalist
Oct 2nd	Graham Lenton	Wildlife of Madagascar	PhD in Ecology, avid traveller and photographer
Oct 16th	Nigel Redman	Birds of the Horn of Africa	Author, editor and tour leader
Oct 30th	Mike Reid	Travels with a camera	Photographer, tour leader and writer
Nov 13th	James Lowen Wildlife	Britain's Top Wildlife weekends	Award winning author of 11 nature and travel books
Nov 27th	Keith Offord	Aristocrats of the Air	Raptor specialist, lecturer and tour guide
Dec 11th	John Miles	The Solway – The whole of Cumbria	Former RSPB warden and tour guide

OUTDOOR PROGRAMME 2020

Due to the current Covid restrictions we have delayed the start of the outdoor programme until April. If the situation allows earlier walks may take place. Information on our website: www.gwentbirds.org.uk

Date	Time	Walk Area	Description	Meeting Place	Leader
Sat. 17th July	9.00	Ham Wall	Easy Walk	Ham Wall Car Park ST 449 396 (Charge for Non-RSPB members)	Dave Brassey
Sun. 1st Aug	7.30	Uskmouth	Warbler ringing with Goldcliffe Ringing Group	NWR Uskmouth car park	Richard Clarke
			Booking essential (surveys@gwentbirds.org.uk). Weather dependent.		
Fri - Sun. 20-22 Aug		Birdfair	Fantastic three-day event	Rutland - Unofficial - just for your diary	
Fri - Sun. 8 - 10 Oct		Portland	£17pn - bookings taken from 1st July - take sleeping bag and food	Observatory	Dave Brassey
			To book - email Dave Brassey david.brassey@ntlworld.com		
Sun. 17th Oct		Stearth	Moderate walk 2 – 3 hours	Car Park ST 25208 44210	Blair Jones
Sat. 23rd Oct	8.00	Allt-yr yn NR	2-3 hours walk -	Fourteen Locks Car Park (£1 charge)	Ian Walker
Sun. 28th Nov	9.15	Slimbridge	Full day - Winter visitors inc Bewicks and Whoopers	Slimbridge Car Park	Dave Brassey
			Hopefully booking restrictions lifted		