EDITORIAL

Well this is my second HOC news and I am finding my feet. First and foremost, I would like to thank all of you who sent feedback on the last edition of the bulletin - positive and negative comments all help to improve the look and feel of it and most importantly, to ensure that we are providing something that is owned and shaped by club members.

Some significant feedback comments included pleas to see the return of the field trip reports. Well, several are included in this edition as is a report written by our very own chair on the annual HOC weekend away to Seahouses in Northumberland. It sounds like a fun if not wintery, few days in June.

Also included in this report is a plea for a Records Administrator, so if you are able, or know someone who is, please contact the relevant people listed on page 8.

Once again, we have included the sightings highlights and there have been some very exciting birds visiting the county recently - cream coloured courser, Lesser yellowlegs, Red-throated pipit. It just goes to show, we get good birds too. Keep your eyes peeled and you never know, you too may be able to find something equally as exciting.

Finally, if you would like to send me any articles or photographs of birds found in the county, I will include them in the next edition. As you can see, we have some lovely shots of members on field trips as well as some seabirds taken on the trip to the Farne Islands. On this note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed to this HOC news, keep ‘em coming!

nickydavies71@hotmail.com or mobile phone (07855) 126642

CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treasurers jottings</th>
<th>Page 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sending in bird records</td>
<td>Page 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird sighting highlights</td>
<td>Page 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes from the chair</td>
<td>Page 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand Martin Fleas</td>
<td>Page 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor meetings programme</td>
<td>Page 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records Administrator</td>
<td>Page 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help required</td>
<td>Page 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOC Atlas update</td>
<td>Page 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOC Outdoor meeting dates</td>
<td>Page 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sept - Dec 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor meeting reports</td>
<td>Page 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOC 2012 Weekend away to</td>
<td>Page 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seahouses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact details</td>
<td>Page 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obituary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising &amp; Submissions</td>
<td>Page 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TREASURER’S JOTTINGS

Newsletter distribution

This is the first edition of the Newsletter to be issued by email to those of you for whom we have an email address (190 out of 312 members). As indicated last time, we believe that this will save us both financially and logistically by reducing the effort needed to distribute the document. At the moment, the on-line and mailed versions are essentially the same with the only significant difference being that the on-line version has coloured photos.

If you have received your copy in the post but would be willing to have the on-line version next time, please do let me know by emailing me at m.jim.wilkinson@googlemail.com. It is an easy way to reduce HOC costs and help us to keep subscriptions as low as possible.

Jim Wilkinson

Extreme birding! Phil getting acquainted with the residents on the Farne Islands. Picture by Nick Smith
**SENDING IN BIRD RECORDS**

County Recorder: Steve Coney, The Corner House, 5 Springfield Road, Withington, Hereford HR1 3RU. E-mail: coney@bluecarrots.com

To report a bird to the County Recorder please supply the following information by email or post

- Person making the report
- Email address or contact details
- Species
- Life stage (age, sex, breeding status etc.)
- Numbers
- Date
- Exact location (with 6 figure OS grid reference if possible)
- Are photographs available Yes / No
- Field notes / description

We encourage the submission of all sightings that might interest or help others who watch birds in Herefordshire. Sightings are informal reports of birds that have been seen in the county and are primarily intended to inform others.

Sightings should not be confused with records; these are the formal documentation of a bird in a format suitable for entry on the archives held by the County Recorder.

Records
The Club welcomes all records of birds identified in Herefordshire and these should be submitted to the County Recorder. Of particular value are systematic records submitted regularly throughout the year. These should be sent on the spreadsheet or on a report card available from the County Recorder. Ideally records should be sent either monthly or quarterly to spread the task of their addition to a database. A deadline of 31st January for submission of records from the previous year is set to ensure that records are assessed and processed in time for inclusion as a Systematic List in ‘Birds of Herefordshire,’ the Club’s Annual Report.

More details on how to submit sightings, reporting to the County recorder and guidelines for the submission of records can be found on the HOC website.
A pink-footed goose remained around Wellington gravel-pits until 28th April, with a separate bird at Berrington Hall on 7th April (TCC). 1 pair with 2 immature male common scoters were at Bodenham Lake from 19th - 21st May (P&TD).

A Honey buzzard was at Wellington gravel pits 23rd May (G. Bilbao). Ospreys on passage, were reported from 11 locations between 5th April and 19th May.

Quails were heard at Bishopstone, Brampton Bryan and Burghill between 24th May and 13th June.

The second ever County record of cream-coloured courser was of a bird identified by Christina and Paul Downes on Bradnor Hill on the evening of 20th May and delighted many local and visiting birders until its departure southwest on the morning of 23rd May.

A sanderling was at Wellington gravel-pits on 14th May (G. Bilbao). The second ever County record of Pectoral sandpiper was found at Brockhall on 21st April and was seen by many local and visiting birders until its departure on 23rd May. (P. Downes)

Whimbrels were reported on passage from Hereford Quarry, Bromyard Road, the Upper Lugg Meadows and Brockhall.

A summer-plumaged spotted redshank was found at Brockhall on 27th June and was seen by many local and visiting birders until its departure on 1st July. (NCP)

The potential second County record of Lesser yellowlegs was at a site on the outskirts of Hereford on 20th May. (SPC)

A greenshank was at Brockhall on 6th June (NCP). Separate single wood sandpipers were recorded at Brockhall on 13th (AHE) and 19th May (NCP).

A summer-plumaged turnstone was at Brockhall from 26-27th May (NCP).

A 2nd Summer Mediterranean gull was at Wellington gravel-pits on 1st April (G. Bilbao).

Yellow-legged gulls still remain scarce in the County with the only records of single birds at Wellington gravel-pits. One was there on 7th April (P&TD), a 1st Summer bird on 2nd June (P&TD), and a 2nd Summer bird on 23rd June (NCP). The only record of great black-backed gull was of an adult on the flooded Lower Lugg Meadows on 6th May (P. Downes).

Single Arctic terns were reported from Hartleton Lakes on 8th June (AHE) and Brockhall on 27th June (PJE).

The potential first County record of Red-throated pipit was from floodwater at Bodenham on 7th May. (S. Klasan)

A Cetti’s warbler was singing on the banks of the Wye at Clifford on 16th May (JLR). Firecrests returned to breed for another year at a site in the West of the County (PJe).

A corn bunting feeding amongst the garden birds in Bromsash on 11th May (AHE).
NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

It seems hardly possible that three months has passed so quickly. It may have been what is described as "unprecedented" amounts of rain, but certainly this is not, so far, a summer to be associated with carefree walks in the hills, lazy days on the beaches, or the thrill of mastering the art of perfect barbequing while friends and family look on hungrily.

So, to fill in those wet days, your committee members have been completing the latest Annual Report, continuing to update the website, improving the method of submitting records and generally doing whatever has to be done to make membership of HOC an ever more enjoyable experience.

A number of us made a special journey to Bradnor Hill, Kington, to see the best-so-far-this-year uncommon bird, the Cream Coloured Courser, which flew here in May. Few people aged under 100 will have seen one in the county, so for those who were unlucky this time, you may have another chance before 2099, depending on the effects of climate change.

Whatever the weather, enjoy the birds, and keep the records flowing electronically to the Recorder, so that the next Annual Report reaches you that much sooner.

Gareth Morgan

in support of National Trust

Herefordshire and Marches Association
Meetings are held in the Great Hall of The Royal National College for the Blind, College Road, Hereford
The next meetings are
Tuesday 25th Sept at 7.30 pm. A talk by Lt Col R. Tomlinson
“A career in military music”
Saturday 27th Oct at 2.30pm a talk by Peter Ralph
“Charcoal Burning the hard way.”

Admission: £2 (including tea or coffee)
Further details from Sheila Taylor – 01432 268243
I am researching for a PhD on the coevolution of sand martins and their fleas at Oxford Brookes University. An interesting feature of this topic is a hybrid zone between two subspecies of the sand martin flea that runs across the UK. To be able to carry out my research I need to find large numbers of Sand Martin colonies from a range of sites (river cliffs, quarries, artificial nest-holes, etc) all over the United Kingdom. The fleas *Ceratophyllus styx styx* and *C. s. jordani* over-winter in old nests, from which I will be collecting them following the southward migration of the sand martins to Africa and prior to their return in March. Thus there will be no disturbance of breeding birds. I will be constructing a detailed map of the flea subspecies distribution across the UK.

If you have any information on the locations of Sand Martin colonies (past and present), I would be extremely grateful if you could send it to me at: SandMartinFleas@gmail.com. Any information is useful even if you think I may already have it. The project will last for three years but the sooner I can assemble a database, the better.

I would also be most grateful if you could notify me of anyone else who may be able to help.

Many thanks, Hannah Wickenden, Oxford Brookes University

https://www.facebook.com/SandMartinFleas

**HOC INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME**

**AUTUMN 2012 TO SPRING 2013**

Every 2nd Thursday in the month.
Held at the Holmer Parish Centre (SO505:423) Holmer, Hereford. On the A49, Leominster Road just north of ‘The Starting Gate Inn’ roundabout and on left by Holmer Parish Church; car park and other facilities.
All meetings are on Thursdays at 7.30pm.
A fee of £2 per member, £3 per non-member, includes refreshments.

2012
13th September Terry Bond - "The Isles of Scilly"
11th October Brayton Holt - "Springtime in the Rockies"
8th November Steve Roberts - "Honey Buzzards"
13th December David Fletcher - "Bird Life of Antarctica"

2013
10th January Ted St George - "Discovering Birds through Photography"
14th February - Dr Walker Memorial Lecture, Ian McGuire - "Conservation of British Owls"
14th March - AGM - Dutch Supper
HOC RECORDS ADMINISTRATOR

HOC is looking for a Records Administrator to assist the HOC County Recorder in managing bird records. HOC receives bird records in a number of different formats – on-line (via HOC website), on spreadsheets and on record cards. These records need to be checked and entered onto the HOC database for use by the County Recorder, for producing Newsletters/Annual Reports and for identifying trends in bird population across the County. The HOC Records Administrator will be responsible for managing these records.

This is a new role in the Club which is needed as we develop our use of IT in managing the increasing volume of bird records. Candidates for the job do not need to be expert birders – the County Recorder will provide guidance when required. What is needed is confidence with computer systems, a methodical approach and an ability to communicate with recorders.

HOC will provide a laptop computer and database software to manage the records. Training will also be available as required. The database software is the same as used by Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC) and some liaison with HBRC will be part of the role.

The Records Administrator will be supported by a number of HOC volunteers to convert record card data into excel spreadsheets.

Any member who might be interested in taking on this role should contact either;
HOC Chairman, Gareth Morgan 01531 631347
gareth.morgan@ledburybband.co.uk

or
HOC Treasurer, Jim Wilkinson 01989 763182
m.jim.wilkinson@googlemail.com

HELP WANTED……

HOC will have a stall on 11 August at the Hereford Nature Trust Festival of Wildlife 11am start until 6pm. Offers of help during the day would be much appreciated. Please contact Susanna 01432 344837. Thank you
With only about 60 Timed Tetrad Visits needing to be done this year we have been focusing much of our effort during the later 2012 breeding season on increasing confirmed breeding counts. As previously reported here, many tetrads had extremely low numbers of species recorded as confirmed breeders (some none at all!) so the June and July HOC field meetings were devoted to “blitzing” areas which were particularly poor. The areas around Bishops Frome, Bodenham, Dilwyn and Pembridge were selected and we covered nearly fifty tetrads over the four days, increasing the confirmed breeding counts from (typically) 3 or 4 to the high teens or low twenties. On most squares we were also able to record new species which had not previously been seen there. Considering the summer we have been having so far, we were amazingly lucky with the weather and rain only affected the Pembridge meeting, fortunately (or otherwise, depending on your opinion on damp sandwiches) most of it occurring during our lunch break! All these meetings were thoroughly enjoyable as well as useful and everybody who took part seemed to enjoy themselves. Thank you everyone who came to one or more.

Thank you too to all those individuals who have been out “roving” and gathering breeding evidence for other tetrads around the county.

Although the end of July was the end of the TTV survey period don’t forget that you can go on gathering breeding evidence until October, so it’s still quite possible to confirm many late nesting species such as Woodpigeons, Collared Doves, Hobbies, Barn Owls, etc. We haven’t yet set a final deadline for record submission so you still have plenty of time to get your records in. Don’t leave them in your notebook, let us have them!

Now a plea for help! Revisiting some of these squares has reminded us that quite a few species have been recorded without any breeding code at all. Most records should qualify for at least an ‘H’ (for a bird in suitable habitat) or an ‘S’ (for one singing) thereby marking it as a possible breeder and if the species was seen/heard in several places or on separate TTV visits it can be elevated to ‘T’ (holding territory) and become a probable breeder. If you have submitted any records (TTVs or Roving Records) can we ask that you review your records (that’s the View / Edit My Records button on the Atlas website) and add breeding codes to any which are missing them and, where appropriate, raise a ‘possible’ breeding code to a ‘probable’ one?

Thanks for all your help with the atlas surveying – we are nearly there!

Chris Robinson  
County BTO Rep  
herefordbtorep@btinternet.com

Nick Smith  
Chairman - Atlas Group  
nswoodlander@gmail.com

CAN YOU HELP WITH AN APP?

Has anyone come across an application on a mobile phone that contains a visual ID check together with the bird’s song/call? We have received a query from a member who would like to know if and where this exists.

Have you come across such a thing? Any help will be most appreciated. Please email the editor if you can help.
HOC OUTDOOR MEETINGS - Sept to Dec 2012

Thursday 16th August  Brampton Abbots (morning only )
Meet at Brampton Abbots Church car park (SO601:264) at 9.30am for an easy 3 mile walk. Farmland and riverine species, late migrants and a Sand Martin colony. No dogs please.  
Leader: Chris Bartlett  (tel: 01989 721080)

September 8th Saturday  Goldcliff and Newport Wetlands
Meet and park cars at ST 370:829 at 9.30 am. Directions from Monmouth, take A40 then the A449 towards Newport, at the junction with the M4 turn onto the A455 and near Newport on the dual carriageway go past Tesco, turn left at the fourth roundabout, then keep straight on towards Goldcliff ignoring signs for RSPB Newport Wetlands. Park on the grass verge 100 metres past the Farmers Arms Pub. Afterwards a visit to RSPB Newport Wetlands. Lunch in cars, easy walking,. No dogs please.  
Leader: Tony Eveleigh  ( tel 01989 750297 )

October 13th Saturday  Cors Caron – Tregaron Bog
Meet at Llynheilyn lake. SO 166:583 at 8.00am. Directions, take the A44 from Kington towards Rhayader, at Llanfihangel nant-Melan take the A481 signed Builth Wells. The lake is on the left one third of a mile after leaving the A44 at Forest Inn, where we will meet. From here we will travel together via Builth Wells to Beulah and mountain road to Tregaron with some short stops. Park at Cors Caron Centre on left of B4343 north of Tregaron at approximately 10:00 am. SN 692:625. A level 4.5mile walk via old railway track, river path and board walk, carrying lunch. Waterproof footwear essential. No dogs please.
Cors Caron is a National Nature Reserve of raised bog, pools and willow scrub, we shall look for raptors and wetland birds. Will the Golden Eagle still be in the area ?.
Leader: Peter Smith  ( tel 01544 327162 )

November 7th Wednesday  Hereford City Walk   Half Day.
Meet at Sewage works entrance  SO 520:390 at 9.00am for a walk taking in river Wye and interesting parts around Hereford city. Easy walking, bring waterproof footwear. No dogs please.  
Leader: Dr Terry Foxton.  (tel 01432 341203 )

November 21st Wednesday  Hollybush area.
Meet at car park  SO 759:369 at 9.00am on the A438, approximately 2 miles east of Eastnor village for wintering farmland birds and possibly Snipe. Easy to moderate gradients, stout footwear essential. Lunch in cars. No dogs please.
Leader: Gerald Wells  (tel: 01531 640124 )

December 9th Sunday  Queenswood, Dinmore and Wellington Gravel Pits
Meet at Queenswood car park SO 503 : 514 at 9.30 am
It is intended to visit the north side of the woodland, which will include some steep gradients. A walk around the top of the hill will be arranged for any members who would prefer more level ground. Lunch in cars. After lunch we move on to Wellington Gravel pits for the afternoon. No dogs please.
Leads: Phil and Chris Williams  ( tel: 01432 350238 )
OUTDOOR MEETING REPORTS

FOREST OF DEAN MEETING. February 16th 2012
Leader: AH Eveleigh

19 members met on a beautiful sunny morning and we quickly set off for Speech House. Stock Dove, Common Buzzard, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Song Thrush and several Mistle Thrush were seen on route also a pair of Common Crossbill were seen high in a larch tree near the school.

We then walked back through the Cyril Hart Arboretum one member spotted a Marsh Tit and a pair of Ravens were flying high overhead also a nice variety of woodland species were seen.

We then moved to the New Fancy viewpoint and soon found two Goshawks flying distantly. They then flew towards us and fortunately every member was able to see them though the telescopes which was satisfying. Around the base of New Fancy we had lovely views of a pair of Common Crossbills together with several Siskin. On our return Coltsfoot were noted just coming into flower.

After lunch we visited Cannop Ponds where the water had now become free of ice and Mandarin, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe trilling and Coot were present.

Later we drove over to Woorgreen Lake where excellent views of nine plus Brambling were found feeding on Larch cones together with more Siskin and Lesser Redpoll were heard, also 14 Goosander were on the lake.

Unfortunately after two attempts to find Hawfinch we failed to locate any birds this year but everybody enjoyed a nice day out.

DAWN CHORUS AT BRINGSTY COMMON. May 6th 2012
Leaders: Tom and Jennifer Weale

It’s not easy to entice people from their beds to start a walk at 5.30 a.m. but the prospect of good birding, fine weather and a 7.45 a.m. breakfast at the Live & Let Live did just that. The assembled group of 37, which included Club members, Bringsty Commoners and a few others, was too large for a single birdwatching party, so it had to be split into two. Luckily, there were enough very helpful and experienced members present that this proved to be no disadvantage.

The joy in springtime on the Common is the large number of warblers. Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warblers were there in some numbers and 2 Whitethroats were also heard. Warbler song was the dominant sound on the Bringsty walk. Something that surprised was that one group heard a Cuckoo loud and clear, whereas the other did not record it at all.

After a welcome breakfast, some of the party visited Grimley Gravel Pits, where water birds found included Great-crested and Little Grebe, Gadwall and Oystercatcher. Three species of raptor seen were Sparrowhawk, Buzzard and Kestrel. It was pleasing to also find Skylark, Sand Martin and Reed Bunting.

22 species were found at both Bringsty and Grimley, 16 only at Bringsty and 18 only at Grimley, giving a tally for the morning of 56 species.
EVENING MEETING HIGNHAM WOODS RSPB RESERVE. 10th May 2012
Leader: Nick Smith

The prospects of bird watching in the evening were not good, after a severe weather front had swept across during the day with heavy rain and wind. Many of us must have wondered whether it was really worth turning out that night? But as we all gathered in that beautiful ancient woodland near Gloucester, the skies brightened up with patches of blue, albeit still windy. This change helped improve the opportunities for those 11 hardy people who turned up wanting to hear a Nightingale sing after the awful weather conditions all day!

Highnam Wood is a lovely remnant of ancient woodland, with a 3 km nature trail that we mostly followed around the wood, knowing that it would still be an hour or more before we might hear any nightingales sing. At least other woodland species filled that time with plenty of breeding Great and Blue Tits, Nuthatch, Wren and Robins being the usual regulars and summer migrants like Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs busily calling and singing. Both Green and Great Spotted woodpeckers could be found in the wood and Buzzard, Swallow, Swift and House Martin above our heads. The odd Lesser Black-backed gull drifted overhead towards Gloucester city and a Pheasant called on the edge of the wood.

As the sky slowly began to cloud over again, we gathered at the usual location in the wood where Nightingales can be heard. We had to be patient and wait some 20 minutes, as the Song Thrushes seemed to be out in force that night, singing all around us despite the windy conditions! Our patience was rewarded at last with a few short bursts of notes from the dense understorey coppice. We heard one nightingale, then another, begin their beautiful melodious songs. The wind tended to suppress the sound somewhat, but at least 3 birds were heard at once and others could have been heard singing elsewhere if conditions had been better that evening.

Before darkness finally set in, the party returned back to the car park for what had been a May day of truly strange, poor weather. But despite this we had been able to hear a symphony of birdsong and sightings totalling 23 species, including the nightingales. Thank you to those hardy members for turning out, and our patience was truly rewarded by hearing, although not seeing, this elusive bird with its lovely range of melodious of sounds and song.

FOWNHOPE AREA. 27th May 2012
Leader: Nick Smith

The walk was a roughly circular route around the edge of Fownhope and included several HNT wildlife reserves and part of Haugh Wood. A party of twelve convened at the Forestry Commission car park at Haugh Wood on a dry and sunny day for a walk of about 5 miles, stopping for an early lunchtime break.

The walk started with a descent through the south side of Haugh Wood, continuing across open fields, to the HNT reserves, which included the edge of Nupend Wood and then picking up the Wye Valley Walk along Common Hill. At the end of the ridge we completed a loop through Lea and Pagets before crossing farmland again to enter Haugh Wood and a moderately steep slope back to the car park.
The early part of the walk through Haugh Wood provided many songs to identify and some good sightings of species like the Garden Warbler, plus other warblers like Blackcaps, Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs and Spotted Flycatcher. Over the edge of the wood we sighted a Peregrine flying, a Red Kite shortly afterwards and a Kestrel. Butterflies were abundant with Fritillaries among others in the sunny woodland patches. The Common Hill produced a few of the commoner bird species, like finches and tits collecting food for young, and excellent views out from this ridgeline. We were lucky to spot two lots of Great Spotted Woodpeckers' nests with well-grown young almost bursting to come out, and they were easily heard!!

After the lunch break the birds were generally quieter and Lea and Pagets was rather void of birds. As we were walking across fields, the distant call of a Cuckoo was heard in far away woods, and we had good views of Ravens mobbing a Red Kite and Whitethroat singing in the hedges, before entering back into Haugh and a steep climb to the car park.

The final count was 37 species seen or heard, and some very weary legs after a good walk on a day which was not spoilt by rain for a change!! I believe everybody enjoyed the walk and I would like thank those for making it a rewarding and interesting birding adventure.

GARWAY & SKENFRITH: June 19th 2012.
Leaders: Phil & Chris Williams

This walk was HOC’s contribution to the Herefordshire Walking Festival. Of the nine people who booked on the walk only six arrived by the start time, they were joined by 2 HOC members and our very welcome experts Gerald Parker and John Pullen. There was a road closure in the area so the first 15 minutes were spent looking around Garway Common to allow time for any latecomers to arrive. We had a lovely sunny day for the walk that was initially across farmland with good open vistas, we saw and heard many hedgerow birds and had Skylarks over one field, a Blackcap sang well for everyone to be able to hear clearly. When we stopped for a mid morning break we saw a Sparrow Hawk and Buzzards.

A beautiful walk following a stream down through the woods to the Monnow was very quiet. We reached the concourse of the stream with the Monnow and all had excellent views of a Dipper, which, obligingly, was on the right side of the stream to record it as a Herefordshire bird. Given the high water level in the river this was an unexpected treat.

At Skenfrith, a stop on the bridge allowed us to see a Grey Wagtail and there were numerous Swifts, Swallows, House and Sand Martins in the area. Lunch at the Castle allowed time for a look around the castle and along the river. As we were about to leave a Red Kite gave us a display to send us happily on our way.

A short road walk and we were back across fields for the return to Garway. Garden Warbler, Nuthatch, Long Tailed Tits and Bullfinch were new additions to the list.

A total of 48 species were recorded on the day and all the Festival participants were able to get good views of the birds that were seen and information on identification. The feedback forms were all very positive and we wish to record our thanks to Gerald and John for their valuable help.

Thanks to all for making it a good day out.
ON A WET, WINDY AND DULL FRIDAY MORNING A SERIES OF LAND ROVER FREELANDERS AND OTHER, LESSER, VEHICLES SET OUT FROM THE GENTLE ROLLING PASTURES OF HEREFORDSHIRE ON THE LONG TRAIL NORTH. AT STRATEGICALLY PLACED MOTORWAY SERVICE STATIONS SEVERAL OF US EXCHANGED PLEASANTRIES BEFORE CONTINUING THE JOURNEY TO THE DISTANT NORTHUMBRIAN SHORE. WE ARRIVED IN THE PEACEFUL HAVEN OF THE LINKS HOTEL IN TIME FOR TEA, BUT INSTEAD WE WENT TO THE HARBOUR TO EXPERIENCE THE OZONE FLAVOURED MOIST BREEZE WHICH SATURATED OUR RAINPROOFS WITHIN A FEW BRIEF MINUTES. DESPITE THE SPRAY RUNNING FROM OUR BINOCULARS WE CLOCKED EIDERS, TURNSTONE, OYSTERCATCHERS, VARIOUS GULLS, KESTREL AND GANNET.

BY 6.30 ALL TWENTY OF US WERE ASSEMBLED IN THE LINKS BAR FOR A CONVIVIAL INTRODUCTION FROM OUR LEADER GERALD AND QUARTERMASTER CHRIS BEFORE ENTERING THE DINING ROOM FOR THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF PRODIGIOUS MEALS, WHICH TAXED (NEARLY) ALL OF US TO THE HILT. I WILL NOT NAME THE USUAL SUSPECT.

SATURDAY 9TH JUNE. WEATHER: WET AND FRESH A.M., DRY SUNNY AND WARM LATER. DURING BREAKFAST WE PLACED OUR ORDERS FOR DINNER. THIS WAS VERY CONFUSING TO SOME OF THE MORE ELDERLY OF US SO EARLY IN THE DAY. OUR FIRST OUTING WAS TO HAUXLEY NATURE RESERVE, MANAGED BY NORTHUMBERLAND NATURE TRUST. THIS IS PART OF THE FORMER RADCLIFFE OPEN CAST COAL MINE. GOOD VIEWS OF TREE SPARROWS, BAR TAILED GODWITS AND MORE FROM THE PATHS AND THE SIX HIDES. EXCELLENT VIEWS OF MARSH WARBLER AT HADSTON. MUCH EXCITEMENT FROM ALL AROUND. NEARLY TIME FOR LUNCH, SO WE WENT TO DRURIDGE BAY COUNTRY PARK, THEN ON TO EAST CHEVINGTON FOR MARSH HARRIER, STONE CHAT AND TERNs. AFTER THIS, ON TO NEWTON FOR A REFRESHING WALK. BY AN UNHAPPY MISCHANCE SEVERAL OF OUR NUMBER WENT MISSING, PRESUMED LOST, BUT THEY SENSIBLY RETURNED TO BASE BEFORE US, SO WE WERE WELL READY FOR THEIR MAIN MEAL AT 6.30, AFTER WHICH WE ALL WALKED TO THE HARBOUR BEFORE THE SUN SET, FOR ROCK PIPIT AND EIDERS. ANOTHER GOOD DAY.

SUNDAY 10TH JUNE. DRY, WARM AND CALM, SO AFTER A VERY ENJOYABLE BREAKFAST, AT WHICH THE SECRETARY ENGAGED IN A COMPLEX SYSTEM OF BARTER WITH THE SUGAR BOWL, WE WALKED TO THE HARBOUR TO CATCH THE 9.30 BOAT TO THE FARNE ISLANDS. MANY HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HAD THE SAME IDEA, INCLUDING A CONTINGENT OF PORTUGUESE PHOTOGRAPHERS WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT. FIRST PORT OF CALL WAS STAPLE ISLAND. THE STATE OF THE TIDE WAS SUCH THAT WE CRUISED AROUND FOR A TIME, OBSERVING SEALS AND NUMEROUS SEA BIRDS UNTIL IT WAS SAFE TO LAND. PUFFINS EVERYWHERE, BUT A DEARTH OF TERNS. NEXT, WE WENT TO INNER FARNE, WHERE THE SKY WAS FULL OF ARCTIC, COMMON AND SANDWICH TERNS, PLUS GUILLEMOTS, KITTIWAKES PUFFINS AND GULLS. STOUT HEADGEAR STRONGLY ADVISED, BECAUSE THE ARCTIC TERNS WERE IN ATTACK MODE WHEN ANYONE CAME NEAR THEIR NESTS. A MAJORITY OF US CATCH THE 4 P.M. BOAT BACK TO SEAHOUSES, AND ENJOYED A WALK ALONG THE CLIFF PATH BEFORE RETURNING TO THE HOTEL FOR OUR THIRD DINNER. HAPPILY, IT WAS THE BIRTHDAY OF ONE OF OUR DISTINGUISHED LADY MEMBERS, SO WE REGALED HER WITH A JOYOUS RENDERING OF HAPPY BIRTHDAY AND IN TURN WERE TREATED TO A SUMPTUOUS HELPING OF BIRTHDAY CAKE, PRODUCED BY QUARTERMISTRESS PAM. AFTER THE FEAST WE WENT THROUGH THE DEFINITIVE BIRD LIST, AND MADE A TOTAL OF 82 SPECIES SEEN AND/OR HEARD. WE ALSO DISCUSSED POSSIBLE VENUES FOR THE 2013 WEEKEND AWAY. UNSURPRISINGLY, WE REACHED NO FIRM CONCLUSIONS.
Monday 11th June. Dry at first. At 0845 some of us began the long journey home, whilst others braved the elemental forces of nature by embarking on a voyage to Coquet Island to see the Roseate Terns. Happily, this proved successful. The Terns were nesting under the eye of the RSPB warden in what appeared to be rabbit hutches - the inhabitants of hutch 154 were particularly co-operative! Watching them through binoculars whilst the boat went up and down with the swell proved testing, but a good time was had by all.
From start to finish, this was among the most successful of the HOC Weekends away. Congratulations to the Leader and Quartermaster and their very supportive spouses.

Gareth Morgan

**Contact details:**

Chair: Gareth Morgan, 5 Abercrombie Close, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2UR
01531 631347  gareth.morgan@ledburybband.co.uk

Secretary: Tom Weale, Foxholes, Bringsty Common, WR6 5UN
01886 821 368  weale@tinyworld.co.uk

Treasurer: Jim Wilkinson, Coughton Forge, Coughton, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5SF
01989 763182  m.jim.wilkinson@googlemail.com

Recorder: Steve Coney, The Corner House, 5 Springfield Road, Withington HR1 3RU
01432 850068 or 07974 443719  coney@bluecarrots.com

**OBITUARY**

We are sad to tell you of another death of a long standing member of the HOC.

**David Wells** died on 27th May. He was a retired Auctioneer and a keen fisherman.

Chris Mason

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

Adult £12: Joint members (same address) £18: Junior (up to 18 years) £5:
Life Member £300: Senior Life Member £180: Joint Senior Life Members £270
Corporate Membership £25.00
ADVERTISING IN HOC NEWS:
Small ads for members wishing to sell or obtain bird-watching sundries such as books or binoculars are free of charge. Please enquire with the editor.
Commercial advertising rates are:
½ page £8 & full page £16 per issue, four consecutive issues for the price of three.
Supplied single page loose insert £15.00 per issue.
Position of advert at editor’s discretion.
HOC does not necessarily endorse products or services advertised in its publications.
Please mention this publication when replying to advertisements.
Printed at Ross Community IT Resources & Training Centre, Larruperz Centre, Ross-on-Wye, Hereford. Tel: 01989 762956

SUBMISSIONS
Contributions to HOC NEWS should be received by the Editor by the 14th of January, April, July or October for the February, May, August or November issues respectively.
Email: nickydavies71@hotmail.com
Due to space and/or postal charges, contributions may be edited, shortened or divided into instalments at the Editor’s discretion. Illustrations will be printed in black & white only. Photographs will also be used at the Editor’s discretion but please note the printing process limits the quality of photocopying reproduction.
Leaders of Club Meetings are invited to send, or to arrange for another member attending to send, a report of the meeting for publication. These are best when written and sent in as soon as possible after the event.

Support the work of the Herefordshire Ornithological Club by advertising in this Newsletter. Revenue raised helps conservation of habitat for wild birds (which includes other forms of wildlife), the study of wild birds and the promotion of their welfare through the publishing of data and survey reports, active co-operation with other bodies having similar aims and the education of the public in all related matters. All the officers of HOC give their services voluntarily.

Tom explaining the difference between blackcap and garden warbler on the dawn chorus walk. Picture by Una Morgan