

HEREFORDSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB



NEWS

QUARTERLY BULLETIN FOR HEREFORDSHIRE BIRDERS



**Something to cool you down— Birdwatching at Brockall Gravel pits.
IMAGE COURTESY OF STEVE CONEY**

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EDITORIAL

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of HOC news. It is too hot to be outside in this heat so I am sitting in the shade in front of my laptop. Even the garden birds are quiet, moving as little as possible to prevent overheating. When I spoke to a visitor from Australia last week, he said “I have heard about your British summers and it’s all a pile of nonsense – what do you mean – rain, wind and flooding? It’s all lies!”

Well, this edition of the newsletter has been a struggle to squeeze everything into it. There are so many trip reports, which just show how active HOC has been in recent months. On top of this fabulous activity, members have been beavering away with producing the atlas. If you haven’t sponsored a bird yet and would like to, please see the article on page 6 and help us to reach the costs of producing this outstanding piece of work – the first ever for Herefordshire.

As well as trip reports and the usual features, we have introduced “Desert Island Birder” – a fun spotlight on a HOC member to give us all an insight into their birding lives and background to where their passion started. This edition it’s John Pullen – a long standing member of HOC and active committee member.

HOC are still looking for someone to take over the role of indoor meetings secretary as Keith and Chris Mason are standing down after several years of hard and dedicated work. If you think you could help and take on this position, contact us for more information. More details can be found on page 4.

Unfortunately we have no update on our robins in this edition, but watch this space in the autumn newsletter for another intimate observation of these delightful garden birds.

If you would like to submit an article or photograph for the next edition, please email it to me, or call on the telephone number below. Remember, the closing date for submissions is 14th October I look forward to hearing from you.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to all who have contributed photographs and articles for this edition and carry on with all of the good work.

Well, happy birding and enjoy the read (and the warm summer)!

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

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HOC INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME

AUTUMN 2013 TO SPRING 2014

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.

2013

Sept. 12th 'Barn Owls in Herefordshire' by Denise Foster & Chris Robinson (HOC)

Oct. 10th 'Shearwaters' by Andrew Ramsay

Nov. 14th 'Wildlife of Trinidad & Tobago' by Roger Beck (HOC)

Dec. 12th 'Discovering Birds through Photography' by Ted St. George (HOC)

2014

Jan 9th 'A Sortie in Spain' by Phil Mugridge ARPS

Feb 13th 'The Wild Wood' by Keith Offord. The Dr. Walker Memorial Lecture.

Mar 13th AGM, Dutch Supper & Members contributions.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Summer is here at last, but already the daylight hours are decreasing. Luckily, Club members have more than enough enthusiasm to keep on getting out and about, observing the wildlife of the County and recording all relevant information for posterity. To sort all these data the Club needs a County Recorder. The position will become vacant in March 2014. Someone - none of us knows who yet, but it could be you - is waiting for the right time to declare themselves. Don't be reticent. Seize the moment. Show yourself. Your fellow committee members are waiting to welcome you into their midst. Meanwhile, the Garden Birdwatch is going well, but needs more, active, participants to increase its value for this and future generations of birders. If you are not already a part of the team, contact Ian and Natalie Buttriss. You never know, you could become one of the leading lights, and have your name and your records highlighted in the quarterly report. It's surprising how interesting and enjoyable maintaining a constant log of sightings can be. Only when you look back over a few years of records do you realise how much fun it is, and how you look forward to spotting an uncommon species flying into your garden. Even in the most inclement weather you can look outside from your warm comfortable home and watch the birds feasting on the fallen fruit from your own - and maybe your neighbour's - trees, and squabbling over the seeds in the feeders. Look after the birds, and you will never want for simple enjoyment. That's birding.

Gareth Morgan

HOC COUNTY RECORDER

Our County Recorder, Steve Coney, has decided to relinquish the post after the next HOC AGM in March 2014. We will reflect on all his hard work and give proper thanks to Steve when he finally gives up the job. We are now seeking a replacement for Steve so there is as long a period of induction as possible. This role must be occupied by an expert birder of which we are lucky to have quite a few in the County. You may remember that we have previously advertised for a Records Administrator who would, under the guidance of the County Recorder, collect and manage all bird records. We are hopeful of appointing someone to this role in the near future. The role of the County Recorder therefore becomes less of an administrative task and much more to do with rarities, liaison with third parties and general advice on birding matters. The County Recorder also chairs the Rarities Committee.

If you would like to be considered for the role of County Recorder, please contact the HOC Chairman - Gareth Morgan.

TREASURER'S JOTTINGS by Jim Wilkinson

Newsletter distribution

It is now one year since we started sending out Newsletters by email to those members for whom I have an email address. I am pleased to say that the number of email members has increased to 195. This represents about 63% of the membership and a saving of at least £800 to date. As well as getting the Newsletter, having your email address allows HOC to send out other timely information about upcoming meetings, requests for help at shows and other news items (e.g. radio broadcasts).

If you have received your copy in the post, we do not hold your email address. Please do let me know if you would like the on-line version next time by emailing me at m.jim.wilkinson@gmail.com. It is an easy way to reduce HOC costs and help us to keep subscriptions as low as possible.

Sand Martin Barrels

No success so far with the barrels that we reported on last time. We won't really know until next year after all the nearby construction work has finished

Jim Wilkinson

DO YOU WANT TO BE HOC INDOOR MEETINGS SECRETARY?

Keith & Chris Mason are still hoping that someone will take over arranging the indoor meetings from September 2014 onward. They have a complete list of all Speakers, Topics & dates as from 1991 and lists of contacts - although the internet should produce more. Please do consider it & contact them to discuss.

Further details are available from President Keith Mason and Chairman Gareth Morgan.

This is an honorary position. Essential expenses will be reimbursed.

DESERT ISLAND BIRDER

This is a new feature that will focus upon a different HOC member every edition to give you an insight of their birding lives and to allow you to get “up close and personal”. This time it’s John Pullen – a long standing member of HOC and he has been challenged to answer the following questions...

NAME & HOC POSITION John Pullen — Committee Member

FAVOURITE BIRD AND WHY Redstart. This small bird is a colourful migrant and tells me that spring has arrived. Its wistful song is often heard although not seen. Finally the redstart is a bird of the uplands that I look forward to seeing locally on Garway Hill.

FAVOURITE BIRDING PATCH IN HEREFORDSHIRE The Gamber Meadows, St Weonards - an area of river pasture, small lakes and boggy ground that attracts migrants and breeding warblers. Best birds include grasshopper warbler and water rail some years.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO BIRDWATCHING? As a small boy I collected birds’ eggs and my parents would take me out to look for nests and I always remained interested, being fortunate to be brought up in the countryside in Gwent.

WHAT DO YOU GET UP TO WHEN NOT WATCHING BIRDS I enjoy walking, watching cricket, rugby, local history and visiting churches; my favourite place for peacefulness and birds is Partrico church in the Black Mountains, I spent part of my 70th birthday here.

ESSENTIAL BIRDING ACCESSORY I definitely need binoculars and a scope!

EARLIEST BIRDING MEMORIES Walking around the village with my parents looking at birds. Later memories of when I first joined HOC and would attend field meetings with two of my sons and how welcome they were made by older members , especially Ifor Evans, Mrs Bromley then Secretary and Mr Fox the then President.



John Pullen - drinking cider to support Herefordshire’s bird life!

HOC BIRD ATLAS SPONSORSHIP

The May edition of your Newsletter included an Atlas funding appeal leaflet, indicating where you can help participate in raising extra funds to help us to complete this work. Well, since that launch, we have been very grateful to all those who have responded to date with over 40 species already taken, and thereby raising nearly £2600.

It has been interesting to see the species chosen, but there are still plenty of species to target from the original list in the leaflet, as some groups, like geese and ducks, have not been requested. We have a very broad range of other species to choose from across all families, but with still plenty to consider like hobby, raven and wood warbler which are very much species of the County.

We are also releasing a second list as below to encourage those who would like to sponsor some of the scarcer species discovered during the Atlas fieldwork. So you have your first opportunity to consider one of those species and contact us.

Your name will appear in print under the species you choose to sponsor but this will be subject to a first come first served selection of any species.

To find out more and which species have already been taken, please contact Jim Wilkinson our Treasurer (details in this newsletter), to see if your first choice could be still be available, or if you wish to nominate one or more on the second list being released now.

Second Species Sponsors list - autumn

White-fronted Goose	Pectoral Sandpiper
American Wigeon	Spotted Redshank
Red-breasted Merganser	Lesser Yellowlegs
Gannet	Wood Sandpiper
Purple Heron	Great Skua
White Stork	Caspian Gull
Red-footed Falcon	Whiskered Tern
Red-necked Grebe	Arctic Tern
Slavonian Grebe	Ring-necked Parakeet
Avocet	Hoopoe
Cream-coloured Courser	Golden Oriole
Dotterel	Yellow-browed Warbler
Grey Plover	Tawny Pipit
Knot	Water Pipit
Temminck's Stint	

The corporate business sponsorship is proving to be more difficult, as many local firms don't have the extra funds available to help presently, in these times of financial recession, to make a beneficial contribution. We do have some good news, with the National Trust and the Duchy of Cornwall willing to donate generously towards the project, which sets us off in the right direction.

We have decided to set a final deadline for all sponsors to have their nominations in

by the End of October, as we need to collate the details for the designers to finish the setting in the Atlas book.

So please don't leave it too late, when trying to choose your species, in case the species you want is gone!!

HOC BIRD ATLAS PROJECT - SUMMER UPDATE

The May Newsletter gave you an opportunity to see some of the work being progressed by the project team, as we approach the final stages of this project.

The team has set goals to be completed so that the final draft sections will be with the designer in the early winter of this year, with printing expected in the spring of 2014, and a book launch in the summer. This will still be a very tight timetable for everything to be completed, as we would also like to announce a pre-publication book offer in the spring of next year. So please watch this space and perhaps consider offering your family the choice to just delay that Christmas gift or birthday present and await the launch of the new Atlas - a worthwhile gift to all!

The work on the Atlas is progressing well, with all the species scripts currently being worked upon and the data maps and facts and figures from all those hours in the field being compiled. This will be the challenge to the writers, to look at previous history and undertake the interpretation of the data they are being presented with. I am sure this will make for some very interesting conclusions about some species, where we have little knowledge of their distribution and breeding successes or population estimates for this county and then comparing them with the national figures.

This project does not come cheaply, as we are using professional designers and printers, so we have now had the main committee's approval for the overall expenditure to be nearly £24k for completion of the project. Proceeds from sponsorship and book sales should bring the net cost well within budget.

I would also like to extend thanks to the many folk on the project team who have given so much of their time to this project, and for their dedication, willingness, and expertise to keep this Atlas project on course.

Nick Smith
Atlas Steering Group Chairman

HOC SIGHTING HIGHLIGHTS April to June 2013

Compiled by Steve Coney

The adult **Pink-footed Goose** remained at Crifftin Ford Bridge until 10th April. (PHD)
A **Lesser Canada Goose** has paired with a greater Canada Goose at a private lake near Bromsash (AHE)
Single male **Garganeys** were at Kenchester Pools (NCP), Sink Green Wye (AHE), Brockhall GP. 2 males and a female were at Wellington gravel-pits (P&TD). A pair was at Eardisland on 5-6th April (EP)
The male **Lesser Scaup** remained at Wellington gravel-pits until 28th April (NCP), although it relocated to Hereford quarry on 27th April (AHE, AM).
A male **Red-breasted Merganser** was at Brockhall GP on 17th April (J&BK)
Single **Honey Buzzards** were seen, in flight, at Hergest Ridge on 27th April (G&MP), Clehonger on 29th April (GMD), The Broad, Leominster on 9th May (GE) and Fishpool Cottage, Pencoyd on 21st May (AB)
Flying **Hen Harriers** were reported from Clehonger on 12th April (GMD), Symonds Yat on 15th April (GB), Bodenham Lake (Birdguides) on 20th April and Chances Pitch on 24th April (TS)
Single **Ospreys** were at Castleton on 6th April (P&TD), Upper Maund on 7th April (P&GB), Wilton Wye on 7th May (NH) and Ledbury on 4th June (CET), with 2 at Wellington gravel-pits on 15th April (EQ-A)
Single **Sanderlings** were at Brockhall GP on 12th (NCP) and 14th April (NCP) and at Wellington gravel-pits on 25th April (TW)
Seven **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Wellington gravel-pits on 29th June (NCP). One was present, there, on 30th (JK), while 2 were at Brockhall GP on that day (NCP).
Whimbrels were unusually low in sightings, with 1 at Wellington gravel-pits on 20th April (TH), followed by 2 at Brockhall GP on 25th April (SC), 3 there on 6th May (SC), 2 on 7th May (NCP) and 2 on 14th May (NCP)
A **Greenshank** was at Brockhall GP from 15th – 19th May (NCP)
An summer adult **Turnstone** was at Brockhall GP on 12th May (NCP)
A 1st winter **Mediterranean Gull** was at Wellington gravel-pits on 7th April (GSB), followed by a 2nd summer bird on 12th April (P&TD). An adult was at Brockhall GP from 16th April – 20th (NCP/PHD), when it was also seen at Kenchester pools (PHD). Probably the same bird was seen over arable fields by Wyevale Wood on 26th April (JB)
A 1st winter **Little Gull** was at Brockhall GP on 17th April (J & B K), while a 2nd winter bird was there on 30th May (NCP).
2 adult **Yellow-legged Gulls** were at Wellington gravel-pits on 5th April (IR), followed by an adult at Brockhall GP on 5th May (PHD)
A **Great Black-backed Gull** was at Wellington gravel-pits on 9th April (GSB)
A **Common Tern** was at Brockhall GP on 15th April (NCP) and an adult and 1st summer were at Wellington gravel-pits on 21st May (GSB)
Single **Arctic Terns** were at Wellington gravel-pits on 14th April (P&TD) and at Brockhall GP on 9th May (GMD), 16th May (PHD) and 26th May (GRP).
Single **Channel Wagtails** (Yellow wagtail racial hybrids) were at Backney Common on 26th April (ID), Wellington gravel-pits and Brockhall GP on the 26th April (NCP/PHD) and at Brockhall GP on 30th April (JT).

20 **Waxwings** were at Walford church on 14th April (LT)

Greenland Wheatears were at Stocklow, with 5 on 23rd April and 8 on 25th April (PJ).
A 1st summer male **Ring Ouzel** was found at Kenchester pools on 6th April (AHE/AM) and remained until the following day. (The Black Mountains were still heavily coated in snow during this period)

A male **Cetti's Warbler** was at Sellack Marsh from 25 – 27th May (DW).

Single **Grasshopper Warblers** were at Wellington gravel-pits on 21st March (EQ-A) and 16th June.

At least 2 male and 1 female **Firecrest** were in woods in the NW of the County from 4 – 19th May (PHD)



Observers: Mrs J Allen, G S Bilbao, J W Birkinshaw, G Black, D G Boddington, P & F Bradley, P Bridge, M Brown, A Buttriss, I Buttriss, D Coker, Miss R Collins, M Colquhoun, S Coney, T & V Cooke, D J Crook, K Coupland, G Cundale, J C Davies, M H Davies, Miss N Davies, R Davies, G M Davis, Mrs F Di Marco, Mrs C Downes, P H Downes, T W Downes, I Draycott, A H Eveleigh, G Ewart, N Fincham, T Freeston, J Gale, P G Garner, Miss V Geen, W H Gregory, Ms F Griffith, D Griffith, I B Hart, R F Hemming, S Hicks, P Hopkins, N Hopkinson, T Hulme, R Husbands, Ms G James, P Jennings, Ms H M Jones, I Jones, Mrs B Kedward, J Kedward, G King-Salter, Ms G Linscott, A Marchant, R Martin, W J Marler, H Mason, J Mclellan, R Miller, AR Mountford, D Mullin, Mrs SMT Page, G & M Parker, G R Parker, N C Pegler, J Penrice, B Phillips, D Phillips, J B Phillips, E Pilcher, J Potts, G Poulton, J R Powell, G Price, J R Pullen, M Pullen, E Quinto-Ashman, A Ramsay, D & J Roberts, C M Robinson, R W Roseveare, R Rowley, I Roe, Ms A Smith, S Smith, R Stallard, T Studer, M F Taylor, Mrs S J Taylor, W Teiser, J Tilby, K Tillett, L Thomson, C E Tudge, P Venvil, S E Watkins, Mrs J Weale, TM Weale, D Webb, E D Wells, G A H Wells, B Wildey, Mrs A Willder, B Willder, T Willder, J Wilkinson, MJ Williams, H Wood, Ms J Wynne-Jones, K & C Mason.

HOC FIELD MEETING REPORTS

WOOLSTON EYES NATURE RESERVE 13TH APRIL 2013

Leader: Gerald Parker

I think that Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve is the north west's best kept secret. It is a designated SSSI and covers an area of approximately 645 acres. It is owned by the Manchester Ship Canal Company and managed by the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group of volunteers who in my opinion are doing an excellent job. This was originally planned to have been a second visit to the black grouse lek however following a disappointing lack of co-operation from the RSPB, the lek had to be cancelled. However the welcome received from the Woolston Eyes people more than saved the day. Therefore with eager anticipation 9 of us met our guide, Mr Buchanan, who gave us a brief introduction to the reserve. With the background sound from the M6 motorway we made our way to the first hides, black-headed gulls were everywhere with their deafening noise and confusion, with a few lesser black-backed gulls quietly looking on, some cormorants were airing their wings on semi submerged logs. Great crested and little grebes were present - the latter given away by their ringing chittering. In the main hide, which was superb and one of the biggest I have been in, we met some of the local birders/volunteers who, knowing of our visit, had kindly got in early so as to point out birds of special interest. A sparrowhawk came into view, spiralling on the mild morning breeze and was mobbed by a buzzard. Suddenly out of the blue a peregrine shot across the lagoon causing confusion among the wildfowl. Nearly all the species of duck were present and a few lapwing being the only species of wader. Brambling, greenfinch, chaffinch and reed bunting were enjoying the black sunflower seed at the two feeding stations. The Manchester Bird Ringing Group were on site and gave us the treat of seeing great tit, brambling and stock dove up close. The willow tit is fairly common on this site and we were given the opportunity to examine one closely when it was caught in one of the mist nets. The bird that everyone was hoping to see was of course the black-necked grebe. It is the species that the reserve is famous for and there are two breeding pairs here. Eventually one of the local birders found one at the far side of the lagoon, everyone managed to see this smart little bird with the prominent side whiskers although it chose to spend more time under water than on it. We were not disappointed however for soon another came along giving superb views. As we ate our lunch in one of the hides, we were treated to views of sand martins, swallows and a few house martins having just arrived were busy catching insects over the water. As our guide had to leave us, we were left to amble around the reserve at our own speed and to see the work that was going on which was quite impressive, with cultivated areas for wild bird food and a meadow area with wild flowers and grasses. Crossing over the foot bridge back to the car park, we saw a male blackcap constantly darting out over the water to catch insects and then returning to the same perch. On returning to the cars some of us had a cup of tea to fortify us for the drive home and a brief recount of the day with 50 species seen. Many thanks to all who attended.

HOLME LACY 25th April 2013

Leaders: Tony Eveleigh and Terry Foxton.

While eighteen members met outside old Holme Lacy Church, Tony apologised for the late arrival of the publicised leader and temporarily took over. (I was delayed by a long awaited hospital appointment).

We followed a new shorter route with only the first one mile loop along the river and its adjacent meadows rather than the old five mile hike past the Wye/Lugg confluence. Star birds on this leg were a pair of Mandarin ducks, three yellow wagtails and a

singing sedge warbler.

A brief lunch stop was taken on the riverbank close to the car park. By chance this turned out to be an excellent choice as we saw three wheatears, a goosander red head, several sand martins and heard a curlew then the loud rattling song of a skulking lesser whitethroat.

We then headed north-east to the old boggy Hereford to Gloucester railway track vandalised by a certain Dr. Beeching in 1965! Here we picked up whitethroat, blackcap, willow warbler and chiffchaff in the bordering large hawthorn bushes.

Once in the parkland and lakes of Holme Lacy College, we had good views of a green woodpecker then spotted a male tufted duck, coot and moorhen. On the final half mile back to the car park, we found another three wheatears then ended with a flourish, a fine singing easily visible male redstart in the roadside trees. The list total for the four-mile walk was fifty nine species.

DAWN CHORUS – SUTTON ST NICHOLAS AREA 13th MAY 2013

Leaders: Tom and Jennifer Weale

On a cold but dry and still morning, 9 of us set off at 5.30a.m. from Sutton St Nicholas to walk the drovers' lanes to the west of the village. A number of goldfinches were singing in the churchyard. Just as several walkers said that they had not heard a cuckoo this year, one started to call.

A lesser whitethroat was the first warbler to be found. Blackcaps were heard throughout the walk and willow warblers and whitethroats were heard later. Other species found included a redstart, curlews, a skylark, lapwings mobbing a buzzard, a linnet and a pair of yellowhammers. The three resident thrushes: Blackbird, song thrush and mistle thrush; all sang enabling easy comparison.

The find of the morning was made as the walk neared its end, when a keen-eyed member spotted a lump on a distant tree trunk that turned out to be a little owl.

45 species were found on this pre-breakfast walk.

MOCCAS AREA 19th MAY 2013

Leader: Gerald Parker

On a bright sunny morning (what's gone wrong?), eleven members assembled at New House Farm by kind invitation of fellow club member Rachel Jenkins. Immediately adjacent to the car parking area was a Pied Wagtail nest, so not to cause too much disturbance we hastily moved around the corner to where we met Rachel's partner Andrew. There were house martins, swallows and house sparrows around and when everyone had got ready we set off through nearby apple orchards. Many blackcaps were singing with chiffchaffs joining in and a cuckoo was heard nearby, later joined by another cuckoo singing from a different direction. Song thrushes were taking advantage of the short grass between the rows of apple trees to look for food and a wren scolded us from the hedgerow. There were many jackdaws moving to and fro, probably many were nesting in nearby Moccas deer park where there are many ancient trees providing suitable holes.

A heron flew over with slow deliberate wing beats and a family of robins were flying up and down in one of the apple trees. High up in a willow tree a male redstart gave a brief rendering of its song and appeared very briefly. The wood was alive with birdsong, nearby a mistle thrush was singing with a clear voice and a rapid kew-kew-kew call told us that a sparrowhawk was nearby and sure enough a bulky nest was spotted in a nearby fir tree. Three siskins were hunting each other overhead and calling in an agitated way, it's the old saying, "three's a crowd". One sharp eyed person found a pair of spotted flycatchers in a tree overhead, a most enjoyable sight indeed, the first ones of the year for most of us.

After excellent cake, biscuits and coffee provided by Rachel, we thanked her for a splendid morning, said goodbye and headed for Brobury where lunch was consumed

by the cars. The afternoon was planned as a visit to the Scar, a local beauty spot with wooded cliffs overlooking a bend in the river Wye. Here several more treecreepers were seen, jays were screeching below us and a nuthatch was busily hammering into the bark on a dead branch. A high pitched ke-ke-ke-ke was heard and someone caught the swift movement of a peregrine below and there in an old oak sat the male. Everyone had a look at it through telescopes and further scanning showed an occupied nest nearby. Further views were had of the male in flight. Far below us a female goosander was seen on a shingle spit in the river. Walking back to the cars, a yellowhammer was spotted and a pair of long tailed tits was busy carrying food from the hedgerow into the wood, no doubt for a hungry brood. Altogether 45 species were identified from both locations, an excellent day and a thank you to all who attended.

FOREST OF DEAN (NIGHTJARS) 23rd MAY 2013

LEADER: Nick Smith

This evening meeting began at the RSPB reserve at Nags Head. There had been heavy April showers and strong winds for much of the day, and as we started off, there was another short reminder! The party of 17 faithful enthusiasts all appeared willing to share this evening with whatever the weather was going to throw at us!! Unfortunately the birds felt a little bit different about this appalling weather and had mostly disappeared!! We went for a few short walks between hides across the reserve, but only a handful of species offered any opportunity to be heard or seen. The regular song thrush kept calling and blackcaps, chiffchaffs, blackbird and garden warbler tried to sing against the breezy conditions. On the final walk back to the cars the elusive pied flycatcher male did show very well for all but, for most of the time, the trees kept their secrets of hidden birds for another trip.

So, we moved off to our final destination in the forest for the evening, as the main reason for travelling this far from Herefordshire was the nightjar. As with all good planning ahead, I had made a prior visit only a matter of days beforehand to check and hear this species. But with the gloomy weather on this night, my heart was sinking. Unfortunately, the weather played its part, and not a sound nor sight of the bird was enjoyed. The consolation prize was a roding woodcock above our heads and a willow warbler singing, plus tufted ducks flying overhead.

We made our way back to the cars in semi darkness with slightly disappointed thoughts of what might have been. The final species count for the evening was 23 species on a difficult May evening, and my thanks goes out to all who were willing participants against the odds!

KINGS CAPLE AND SELLACK 18th JUNE 2013.

Leaders: Phil & Chris Williams

This walk was HOC's contribution to the Herefordshire Walking Festival and was fully booked this year. On the day, two of the fifteen people who booked on the walk were missing. Those that did arrive were joined by several HOC members and our very welcome experts Gerald Parker and John Pullen. We had a very pleasant warm day for the walk that started with a trip around the churchyard, where we saw swifts, swallows and house martins plus several hedgerow birds. Moving on through the village we then crossed farmland with good open vistas, we saw and heard many birds including dunnocks, linnets, great tits feeding young and several song thrushes. A yellow wagtail perched on a wire crossing the field stayed long enough for us to get views through the telescopes and a skylark was heard over an adjoining field. Along the lane leading to the bridge at Sellack we had good views of a whitethroat. Garden warblers and blackcaps sang well for everyone to be able to hear clearly and identify

the difference in the songs.

After crossing the bridge, we followed the river downstream for half a mile where redstart and reed bunting showed well. For several people on the walk this was the first time they had seen these birds. It was a pleasant surprise to see sand martins nesting in the bank. Few water birds were to be seen but a pair of mute swans with five cygnets did make an appearance.

Walking to Sellack Church and along a bridleway to the Lough Pool, was a quiet part of the walk and few birds were seen. The pool had lost all its water in the previous two weeks and the expected birds were nowhere to be seen. As we left the pool the stragglers did see a spotted flycatcher - those of us who were intent on getting to the lunch stop missed out. A walk down the valley and through some woodland back to Sellack for a picnic lunch in the field near the church was also relatively quiet.

After lunch we climbed up the side of the hill and just before moving off another spotted flycatcher was seen a nuthatch and goldcrest were heard. The climb was rewarded with excellent views of the countryside. Two ravens flew over.

Moving back to the river we saw a heron and mallard but a single sedge warbler was only heard. After crossing the river we saw long tailed tits in the green lane before reaching the road back to Kings Cople.

A total of 50 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. Most pleasing is that the majority of the birds were seen (not just heard), by most of the people, which is not always easy with so much foliage about at this time of year. The feedback forms received were all very positive and we wish to record our thanks to all the HOC members for helping the Walking Festival participants and making them so welcome.

HOC WALK. FARMLAND BIRDS 25th JUNE 2013

Leader: Brian Willder

The walk started at Lower House Farm, Canon Frome with nine people present (we were joined by two more members during the morning). The weather was sunny and settled. As Mr. Bruce Gilbert, the farmer, was unable to be present, Brian Willder gave a brief description of the farm and the current farming practice.

Lower House Farm had been a specialist dairy farm until recent years, but, like many similar farms in the county the economic pressures had ruled that dairying ceased and the farm had turned to an arable regime. This has again changed and a large area of Cider Fruit has been planted. The farm business has taken advantage of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme whereby land by the river, which floods, is now in an arable reversion scheme and will become grassland once again. Other aspects of the scheme encourage the planting of new hedges, provision of wide field boundaries and areas of wild bird seed mixes and flower rich headlands.

At the farm yard we noted swifts, house martins and swallows. The house martins were nesting on the farm house. It was with some surprise that a tawny owl call was identified and thought to be a parent owl contacting its young. There were jackdaws and house sparrows nesting in the chimneys and eaves of the house while in the garden blackbird, chaffinch and robin were singing.

As we moved away to the fields a skylark was singing and there were wood pigeons, whitethroat, dunnock and greenfinch in the hedges. Our path led us to the remains of the old Gloucester Hereford Canal. This has been dredged out in recent years to provide a store of water for irrigation. On the water we saw pairs of tufted duck and little grebe. There were great spotted woodpecker, pied wagtail and chiffchaff at this location. Our walk continued towards Ashperton where we left Lower House Farm and

entered Walsopthorne Farm.

This is a farm still run on traditional lines with a mix of old unimproved pastures and livestock, hops, arable crops and cider fruit. As we walked through the hay meadow we noted traditional hay meadow species of plants. Buttercups and yellow rattle quickly attracted our attention then we noted common spotted orchid, goat's beard and greater knapweed. There were also small tortoiseshell and large white butterflies and some moths that we failed to recognise. The birds were also abundant with blackcap, linnet, goldfinch, garden warbler and a feral pigeon. Our path took us to Canon Frome cricket pitch where we noted yellowhammer, jay, bullfinch and lesser whitethroat then back over the old canal and into an old traditional cider orchard adjacent to Walsopthorne Farm House. In the orchard a redstart was seen and we also noted a family of young wrens. Stockdove, magpie and a lesser black-backed gull flew over.

We stopped to admire Walsopthorne Farmhouse a large impressive timber framed house dating back to 17th century. Here we met the farmer Mr Edward Davies who talked to us about the farm and the fact he had had no swallows until today.

Our walk continued, via footpaths, back towards Canon Frome noting no new species on the way. It was our intention to have lunch in our cars in the car park at the farm but one of our members, Julian Rutherford, kindly invited us to have our lunch in his garden by the River Frome at Canon Frome where he promised us a kingfisher sighting.

The garden was equipped with a viewing platform table and chairs and from the comfort of our seats we watched the kingfishers that had a nest nearby and a pair of grey wagtails busy gathering food for their young. Goldcrests were also heard singing in the large cedar trees.

After lunch we proceeded to The Hill Farm at Fromeshill which is run by Mr Robert Manning. We have visited here in the winter and seen the wild bird seed plots that are part of the farms Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. The farm has a big poultry production unit and the bulk of the land is used to grow grain for poultry feed. The farm has conservation headlands round all of the fields and a network of permissive footpaths. Around the farmstead we found house martins, swallows, house sparrows and collard dove. As we walked we could hear a yellowhammer. We saw goldfinch, linnet, marsh tit and a pair of ravens flew over. We found a cinnabar moth on ragwort, probably laying its eggs, as this is the food plant of its caterpillar.

Mr Manning has, in recent years, clear-felled part of a large coniferous plantation exposing a series of ancient fish ponds which he has now restored as a series of three large ponds. These ponds and their surrounding area will, over the next few years, develop reeds and scrub which will be excellent habitat and together with the broad leaved woodland planting might provide a suitable habitat for nightingales. On the ponds we noted a pair of tufted duck, a mallard with five young we also saw a moorhen chick.

As we entered the mature woodland to return home we noted tree creeper and a nuthatch. We heard a group of juvenile coal tits and saw a pair of buzzards, who were probably nesting nearby. We also picked the powerful smell of a stinkhorn fungus.

The return path took us past the site of Mormon Pool where in the spring of 1840 John Bembow baptized about 200 converts to the Mormon faith. This pool is regularly visited by visitors from the United States looking for their roots.

HOC FIELD MEETINGS - August to December 2013

August 3rd Saturday Rutland Water Nature Reserve

Meet at Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre car park at 10.00am. It lies 1 mile south of Oakham and can be reached from either the A606 (Oakham to Stamford road) or the A6003 (Oakham to Uppingham road). Drive into the village of Egleton and where the road swings sharp left over a small bridge, carry straight on down the 'No through road'. Car park is on the left. There are a total of 28 hides, a charge of £3.70 is made for permits, on a group basis. Good possibility of seeing osprey that breed on the reserve and early passage of migrant waders. Dogs are not allowed on the reserve.

Leader: Gerald Parker. (Tel 01432 760023)

September 12th (Thursday) Hampton Bishop Wye

Morning only. Meet at the lay-by near the Bunch of Carrots Inn at Hampton Bishop (SO 551:381) at 9.30am for a walk along the river Wye going downstream. Waterproof footwear essential, easy walking with no excessive gradients, noted for a good cross section of birds. No dogs please.

Leader: Gerald Parker. (Tel 01432 760023)

September 22nd (Sunday) Wellington Gravel Pits

Meet at Wellington Gravel Pits at 9.30 am (SO 504:484) for a walk around this premier wetland site for Herefordshire. Autumn migrants a possibility. Moderate walking difficulty, afterwards travel to Bodenham Lake where lunch will be consumed in cars followed by a walk around the reserve terminating at the hide. Waterproof footwear essential. No dogs please.

Leader: Gerald Parker. (Tel 01432 760023)

October 23rd (Wednesday) Collister Pill

Meet at Collister Pill (ST 462:869) at 10.00am. Take A449 to Newport, then A48 to Chepstow, at Langstone take B4245 to Rogiet, here turn right into Station Road passing Severn Tunnel Station, over the railway line under the M4 Toll Road to park. Take wellingtons as it could be muddy walking along the estuary, Bring a packed lunch, arrangements for location to be finalised on the day. If time allows a visit to Goldcliff pools afterwards. No dogs please.

Leader: John Pullen (Tel 01600 750266)

November 21st (Thursday) Hollybush Area

Meet at Hollybush Car Park (SO 759:369) at 9.00am. On the A438 approximately 2 miles east of Eastnor village for a walk through woodland to Chase End Hill, returning to cars for lunch followed by visits to surrounding birding areas. Fairly easy walking with easy to moderate gradients. Stout waterproof clothing and footwear essential. No dogs please.

Leader: Gerald Wells. (Tel 01531 640124)

December 5th (Thursday) WWT Slimbridge.

Meet at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust car park at 10.00am for a visit to this very interesting location. It is about 1¼ hours drive from Hereford traffic permitting, late arrivals should enquire at reception. Admission for WWT members is free, warm clothing essential. Lunch to be carried or can be bought at the WWT restaurant. Shop and toilets on site, no dogs.

Leader: Tony Eveleigh (Tel 01989 750297)

ADVERTISING IN HOC NEWS:

Small ads for members wishing to sell or obtain birdwatching sundries such as books or binoculars are free of charge. Please enquire with the editor.

Commercial advertising rates are:

½ page £15 & full page £30 per issue, four consecutive issues for the price of three.

Supplied single page loose insert £20.00 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.

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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 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.

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

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www.herefordshirebirds.org