

May and June are definitely my favourite months of the year. That might sound a bit strange coming from a Newport County fan, but the lack of football action is more than compensated for by activity on the birdwatching front. All our summer visitors are here now and the breeding season is in full swing.

I don't get out birdwatching as much as I'd like, but have spent two mornings this week carrying out breeding bird surveys at Llanfair Discoed and Clytha Hill – and it's really given me a boost. One of the things I particularly enjoy about birdwatching at this time of year is seeing birds carrying food to their nests. It signifies that they have successfully hatched a brood of young - and it always makes me feel good. This week I've been lucky enough to see quite a few species, including linnets, nuthatches, blackcaps, treecreepers and green woodpeckers all carrying food back to their chicks.

Some readers might have caught a news item on TV the other day about the increasing problem of people trapping song birds. By all accounts there is a market for British song birds on the continent and in some areas widespread trapping of birds such as bullfinches and goldfinches takes place.

I cannot understand how anyone could get any pleasure from seeing a wild bird in a cage -and whilst I'm not aware of any recent incidents of bird trapping locally, I would urge readers to keep an eye open for, and report, anything that looks suspicious.



Birdwatching Walks

You might be interested to hear that there are a number of fantastic birdwatching walks coming up over the next few weeks:

Next Saturday 26th May the venue is Blaen Bran Community Woodland, Upper Cwmbran, where two mates of mine, Mick Bailey and Keith Roylance will lead you on a three mile route through woodland and mountain side. Mick and Keith (Blimey, they sound like half of the Rolling Stones!) know this area inside out and will ensure that you have a fruitful morning's birdwatching as well as making you very welcome. Target species include cuckoo, skylark, meadow pipit, wood warbler plus many more. If you fancy joining in, meet at the woodland carpark (ST 272 968) at 8.00am.

There is another walk lined up the following weekend, on Sunday 3rd June. This time at Goytre when Steve Butler will be leading birders around the village. Goytre is a real hot spot for birdwatching and Steve's 2 – 3 hour walk will take in Goytre House Wood Nature Reserve and stretches of the Mon – Brecon Canal. Steve is an excellent birder and another good friend of mine, who loves to see new faces on his walks. Target species for this walk include great spotted and green woodpecker along with pied and spotted flycatcher.

To take part, meet at The Goytre Arms car park (ST 323 046) at 8.00am.

The following Friday 8th June there is an evening walk being held at Wentwood. Local birder John Bennett knows the woods like the back of his hands and has a real treat planned for those

who are prepared to go out
birdwatching

after dark – A close encounter with two of Britain's most elusive birds; nightjar and woodcock! Both these birds are rarely seen because they are incredibly well camouflaged and nocturnal. However, John knows a few spots where they emerge at dusk to put on an impressive and noisy display. If you would like to witness a truly memorable avian event meet John at the Cadira

Beeches car park (SO 422 949) at 8.00pm – and please remember to bring a torch.

Argus readers are particularly welcome to come along to any of the walks mentioned. There is no need to book a place – just turn up. Remember to bring boots and waterproof clothing, refreshments, drinks and binoculars if you have them.

If you would like more details visit www.gwentbirds.org.uk or give me a call on the number below.

Keep in Touch

Thank you to all readers that have taken the time to get in touch.

I always enjoy hearing from you and can be contacted at smegstevens@gmail.com or on 01633 866470.