

I bet you would be surprised if I told you that some of the birds that visit the UK to breed each summer have already left; But it's true - Most of the adult cuckoos that arrived here in April have already flown off and are currently heading back to Africa.

When you think about it, there's no need for them to hang around any longer – Once cuckoos have mated and their eggs been smuggled into their unknowing hosts' nests, they play no further part in their youngster's lives.

I find cuckoos fascinating; I always enjoying hearing and watching them on the hills above my home and think it's amazing that young cuckoos are able to embark on a gruelling Southerly migration without adult birds to guide them.... it's almost as though they are born with an in built pre programmed sat nav
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Readers may remember hearing about a research project in which a handful of cuckoos were fitted with micro transmitters last year and their movements monitored. Well, this year another eleven birds have been tagged, including four from Mid Wales and they are providing lots of new information which can be used to further our understanding of their behaviour. Previously information about migrating cuckoos once they leave the UK has been very sparse; There has only been one record of a UK ringed cuckoo found in Africa - and that was in Cameroon 82 years ago!

I speak to quite a few people when I'm out and about and everybody recognises the call of a cuckoo and loves to hear them. They, like many other migratory birds, are becoming rarer and I hope that this project can come up with information to help arrest a further decline in their numbers.

If you get a few spare minutes I recommend that you visit www.bto.org/cuckoos to read more about the project – It really makes fascinating reading.



Birdwatching Walks

If you picked up your Argus early this morning you will probably just be able to visit Newport Wetlands Reserve (NWR) in time for a 'Wildlife in Welsh' walk. This Welsh language walk, led by Gareth Beynon, starts at the Visitor Centre at 10.30am and takes in both the Uskmouth and Goldcliff areas of the Reserve.

Why not pop along to the NWR Open Day? It's being held on Sunday 8th July between 11.00am and 4.00pm and is a chance for you to check out the Reserve as well as finding out a bit more about some of the local environmental groups at their stalls and displays. A free bus service is being laid on and departs Newport Bus Station at 10.30am and 1.30pm. For more details call 01633 636363.

Don't forget that Gwent Ornithological Society have a guided birdwatching walk coming up on Saturday 7th July, when local birder Paul Kelly will be leading walkers to Llangattock Quarries. This 4 hour mountain and moorland jaunt should showcase some interesting and unusual upland birds and starts off from the Bridge End PH car park, Brynmawr (just off the A465 roundabout) at 8.00am.

Argus readers are particularly welcome to come along to this walk. 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 Steve Butler a call on 01873 854583.

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