

I'm fed up of all this cold wet weather. At this time of year I expect to come home from a walk feeling chirpy having seen a few summer migrants. At the moment I'm seeing very little of interest - apart from flocks of redwing which are fattening up on earthworms before their return to Northern Europe.

There have been a few local sightings of wheatear and sand martin (as always, our earliest summer visitors), but nothing other than that. I'm also used to seeing masses of mating toads about now, but they too have yet to make an appearance. One of my mates is a keen fly fisherman and he reckons that he can't catch trout as there are no flying insects around yet.

I'd really like to see some warm dry weather arrive pretty soon (I bet Justin Edinburgh would as well) mainly so that insect life starts to appear. Last year's poor bird breeding season was largely attributable to a shortage of insects.... which itself was largely down to the wet weather. Many of our breeding birds feed on insects, as do virtually all newly hatched chicks, so another wet year (and few insects) would be devastating for them.

Anyway, enough of the doom and gloom, cast your eyes over these forthcoming guided birdwatching walks;

On Sunday 14th April, local birder Rob Parsons will be leading a trip to Craig Cerrig Gleisiad – a nature reserve in the Brecon Beacons. This is quite a hard walk, but well worth the effort if you fancy seeing a host of upland bird species including the elusive ring ouzel. Meet Rob at 9.00am at the 2nd lay-by south of Libanus on the A470 (SN 989 249).

On Sunday 21st April, Newport Wetlands Reserve manager Kevin Dupe will be taking walkers to see the wading birds that breed on the reserve. This site is an important breeding location for a number of waders and Kevin expects to be able to show you lapwing, redshank and oystercatcher as well as the scarce and beautiful avocet (pictured). Meet at the Farmers Arms PH, Goldcliff at 9.00am.

On Saturday 27th April, keen local naturalist Keith Trott will be taking the lead on a walk around Cwmyoy. This, in my opinion, is one of the loveliest spots in Gwent and Keith has mapped out a fairly hard yet scenic route taking in farmland along the Afon Honddu valley. This walk should yield views of many bird species including dipper, grey wagtail, redstart - plus pied and spotted flycatchers. Meet Keith at the walkers car park opposite The Queen's Head PH, Cwmyoy (SO 311 220) at 8.00am.

Argus readers are very welcome at all these events – Please remember to bring suitable clothing and footwear along with refreshments and binoculars if you have them.

For more details visit [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk) or call Steve Butler 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](mailto:smegstevens@gmail.com)