

It's all gone rather quiet on the birdwatching front – as it does every year at about this time. The majority of cuckoos (among the first of our summer visitors to leave) have now departed and it won't be long before the swifts are on their way. Bird song is now nearly non-existent as most birds have now finished breeding and are going about their business as quietly and invisibly as possible.

There are a few species that are taking advantage of the weather to squeeze out second or third broods and hopefully the weather will hold, ensuring the continued availability of insects for them to rear their young.

It seems to me that there is a marked drop in the number of many bird species this year – which is unsurprising given the poor breeding success most of them experienced during the spring/summer washout of 2012; For the past few years an average of six pairs of swifts have nested in a building near me, however this year only one pair are present. Likewise, in a nearby wood there are far fewer blue and great tits – and no sign of regular migrants such as redstart and wood warbler! I can only hope that the far kinder weather of 2013 has helped these species start rebuilding their populations.

## **A Peach of a Beach**

Whenever the opportunity arises, my wife and I head off with our spaniels Maisie and Misty, to our favourite beach at Monkknash near Southerndown. It's a gorgeous spot and, being off the beaten track, always nice and quiet – plus it offers some great birdwatching. Last week we were able to watch a party of chough (Britain's rarest crow) and a small colony of cliff nesting house martins (only a handful of colonies exist in the UK).....fantastic!



## Birdwatching Walk

There is a guided birdwatching walk at Blaenavon on Saturday 10th August. This walk starts at the Queen Victoria PH car park, Prince Street, Blaenavon

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at 9.00am and is being led by local birder Richard Dowle

. The route will take in local woodland and upland heath and is described as being 'hard'.

Argus readers are very welcome - For more details visit [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk) or call Steve Butler on 01873 854583.

Please remember to bring suitable clothing and footwear along with refreshments - and binoculars if you have them.

### 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)