

Let me start off by saying farewell, as this is my final birdwatching column – I've been writing it for the last 9 years and am now passing over the baton to John Coleman, whose articles I am sure you will enjoy.

Quite a lot has happened on the birdwatching front since my first column in 2004; Gwent Ornithological Society has been extremely active trying to conserve local environments and compiling records of the birds that feed and breed here. In 2008 they published 'The Birds of Gwent', an essential reference following 5 year's survey work carried out by countless local volunteers. Later this year 'Gwent Birding Walks' will hit the shelves to mark the society's 50th Anniversary.

Many birds have declined drastically since 2004 (both locally and nationally). Summer migrants such as wood warbler, cuckoo, yellow wagtail and spotted flycatcher are in serious trouble and turtle dove have become extinct as a breeding bird in Wales. Some resident species have also had a tough time, with grey partridge, tree sparrow and marsh tit all but disappearing locally.

On the plus side several new species, namely avocet, bearded tit and little egret have started to breed in Gwent – largely thanks to the continued development of Newport Wetlands Reserve.





Birdwatching Events

There are a few events arranged for Saturday 21st September – make sure you put them in your diary.

In the morning my good mate Steve Butler will lead a walk around Newport Wetlands Reserve. Starting at 9.00am from the visitor centre car park, this 3 – 4 hour walk will take in both the Uskmouth and Goldcliff areas of the reserve and is a great opportunity to see some of the many species of bird that frequent this fantastic habitat.

In the evening there is an illustrated talk taking place at Goytre Village Hall (exit the A4042 at the Goytre Arms, S0 323046) entitled 'Birding in the Wild West' by Allan Heath. This talk features the birdlife found in Arizona and promises to be very entertaining and informative. The talk starts at 7.30pm and entry, including tea and biscuits, costs £2.

Argus readers are extremely welcome at these events – visit www.gwentbirds.org.uk for more details.

I'd like to sign off by thanking everyone who has read this column, especially those that have taken the time to get in touch. I have enjoyed hearing from you and hope that you continue enjoying the wonderful birdlife that Gwent has to offer....and urge you to consider joining Gwent Ornithological Society.

Mark Stevens