

COMMITTEE COMMENTARY

The Good News is that permission to construct a shingle beach at **Blyn-y-Cwm reservoir** to facilitate breeding Little Ringed Plovers, has finally been granted by Welsh Water, nearly three years after the project was first planned.

The Bad News is that Environment Wales confess they have already spent the money that was ear-marked for the project, which will now be delayed until the next financial year – and too late, even, for the *2014* breeding season! You couldn't make it up.

The headline news from **Newport Wetland Reserve** is that breeding success is better than last year, e.g. 6 breeding pairs of Lapwing. More details in the next edition.

Chris Hatch, who used to manage **Llandegfedd Reservoir** many years ago, has discussed the deterioration and poor maintenance of facilities at the reservoir with the current manager at Llandegfedd . Lack of money and reduced staff has been the consistent response over the years and so it is today, though promises were made to clear flight lines for Wigeon and Teal and improve access to hides over the winter period. It was pointed out that there are legal obligations on Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales (an amalgamation of CCW , Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales in April 2013) to maintain grant-funded areas and unless improvements are made, these funders will be made aware of the deteriorating conditions. We will wait until March 2014 to see whether the conditions for birdwatchers have improved.

To celebrate this, our 50th Anniversary year, a small team has been compiling a book, “**Birdwatching Walks in Gwent**”

,
in time for launching at the
GOS

/
WOS
Conference on November
2
nd

. After countless hours of heroic efforts, the book
will
be published in time and will be a fitting memento to mark the occasion. Over 60
favourite
birdwatching
walks are described and it will be sold to
GOS
members at a discounted price of £9.99.
RRP
is £11.99.

The **F1 Motor Racing Circuit** application at Rassau is being contested by GWT on the grounds that 200 hectares of habitat will be destroyed but no acceptable mitigation plans have yet been proposed. As a result the Welsh Government has been asked to call-in the application.

Provision for a **tea and coffee break at indoor meetings** is a persistent problem because of the lack of volunteers to sign up to a rota to ensure that boiler is switched on at 6:
45pm
and that the essential provisions (milk, tea, coffee, orange juice, biscuits plus tea towels & dishcloths) are in place. You will be asked at the next indoor meeting whether you feel a tea break is necessary and if so, whether you will volunteer to provide it!

Trevor Russell

River Usk survey in August 2013

A survey on 24th August was organised to see how many broods of Goosanders were on the river and what numbers of other species there were. A survey in 1984 by Jon O Stratford (JOS) provided some data for a comparison with the situation almost 30 years later.
JOS

walked the 40 miles between the
Powys
border with
Gwent
and the estuary over two days on
20th
and
21st
August 1984. On
24th

August 2013 some 16 volunteers surveyed the river, each observer covering a section of
2-6km
, all starting at 09.00 hrs. Because of riparian trees being in full leaf and there being much tall
bank-side vegetation, including the dreaded Himalayan Balsam, it was difficult to even see the
river let alone river birds.

Birds were generally few and far between with only 14 or 15 Cormorants, 26 Grey Herons, 3
Little Egrets, 47 Mute Swans including several broods of cygnets. Also seen were about 400
Mallard, one flock of 40 Lapwing, 4 Redshank, 7 Common Sandpipers, 2 Green Sandpipers, 4
Kingfishers, 8 Dippers and 36 Grey Wagtails. Other species included 4 Great Crested Grebes at
Bulmore Pools, just 7 Canada Geese, some
Moorhens and Coot, a few Sand Martins and a variety of gulls. In total only 19 or 20
Goosanders
were seen, including three or four broods of well grown young,

Since the 1984 survey there have been gains – Canada Geese (unfortunately), Little Egret,
increased numbers of Mute Swan and Mallard and a few more Goosanders but species
suffering losses or declines include Lapwing (JOS
saw 400!), passage waders such as
Greenshank
and Green Sandpipers and Yellow Wagtails (44 seen in 1984).

During the 2013 survey 30 species of non-river bird were also seen from Green Woodpeckers
to a Reed Warbler. There will be a full report in the GOS Annual Report for 2013

Many thanks to Roger Belle, Nicholas Beswick, Ruth Brown, Carl Downing, Keith Jones, John
Marsh, Verity Picken, Steve Roberts, Trevor

Russell, Roger

Ruston, Al
Ve

nables

, Ian & Judy Walker, Lesley Watson and Alan Williams. Lynne Belle, Lindsay Tyler and Mary Russell are also thanked for helping with transport issues and of course Jon Stratford for carrying out the 1984 survey.

WELSH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2013

The gathering for birdwatchers in Wales

Jointly held and hosted by Gwent Ornithological Society – Celebrating 50 years of birding in Gwent
, in association with
BTO
and
RSPB

Saturday 2 November at The Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth, Gwent NP25 5AS, from 10.00 am until 5.00 pm

Join us for a great programme, including:

* Conservation concerns for birds – Mark Avery * The Severn: has the tide turned? – Nigel Clark

* GOS: fifty years of Gwent birding – Al Venables * Winter birds on the Dyfi – Tony Fox

* Hawfinches – Jerry Lewis * Honey Buzzards – Steve Roberts

Latest news from BTO Cymru and RSPB Cymru

In addition two new books will be on sale: The Breeding Birds of North Wales and Birdwatching
Gwent Walks in

Sales and Information stands from BTO Cymru, RSPB Cymru and Subbuteo Natural History Books.

Gwent Ornithological Society will lead a bird walk at Newport Wetlands NNR on Sunday if there is sufficient demand.

WOS President Iolo Williams will present the WOS Lifetime Achievement and Student Research Awards.

For full programme and details of how to book your place go to: www.birdsinwales.org.uk You can also sign up and pay via PayPal.

Payment: £21 WOS/GOS members, £26 non-members no later than Friday 25 October 2013.

Conference fee includes lunch, coffee and tea for ticket holders in advance. We have vegetarian options available. If you have other requirements, please let us know when booking. Non-members who join WOS at the conference will receive £5 discount on first year's subscription.

Stephanie Tyler

Naturetrek Tour of Spain's Coto Donana and Extremadura Spring 2013

Birders who have stayed on the island of Skokholm may remember the Centre's well-stocked library of books. It was on such a stay in 1964 that I first read Guy

Mountfort's

1958 book 'Portrait of a Wilderness: The Story of the Ornithological Expeditions to the Coto

Donana.' It features the story of

ornithological

heavy weights, Viscount

Alanbrooke

, Julian Huxley, Roger Tory Peterson, James Fisher, Guy

Mountfort

and Eric Hoskins and their 1952, 1956 and 1957 investigations of the area. The story remained with me, though dormant until a second hand-copy obtained from Amazon rekindled my

interest. Indeed, I made myself a promise, aged 17 I would visit the area one day. Research

made during the 2012 Bird Fair suggested the

Naturetrek

tour of Spain's

Coto

Donana

and

Extremadura

led by David Morris and Simon

Tonkin

, on

23

rd

April to

30

th

April 2013 would be a good choice. This proved to be a wise decision.

Both David and Simon, two professional ornithologists, know the area and its birds well. There were very skilled at bird identification and frequently remind people of the key features to look for. As soon as they located a bird of interest, their Leica and Swarovski scopes were rapidly trained on it - so much so, that I hardly used my own scope during the trip. The two hotels that accommodated us in both areas supplied a morning and evening meal. Each day, David and Simon bought picnic lunch of beer, fruit juice, various meats, cheese, salads, cakes and bread. Although a full day - from 0900 to 1800hrs - the pace was casual, with very little strenuous

walking; the furthest we ventured on foot was just three to four kilometres.

Four nights were spent at El Rocio, with a splendid view of Madre de Las Marismas from our window. Flooded at that time year, it enabled viewings of numerous Black Kite, Whiskered Tern, Black-winged Stilt, Common Pochard, Red-crested Pochard and Reed Warbler - not bad company! Famously, the town of El Rocio is like something out of a Spaghetti Western, no metalled roads but rather impacted sand, and outside each building wooden rails to tie up horses. A reminder of the days when the only form of transport in and out of the town was by horse. Indeed most evenings we noticed locals drinking beer seated on horses at some of the local taverns.

Approaching El Rocio from the airport, some lifers were recognised from the van such as Spotless Starling, Black Stork and Woodchat Shrike, the latter very common and seen every few 100 meters or so, and equally common it seemed, Corn Bunting. After dropping off our luggage, a group of us visited Madre de las Marismas adjacent to the Hotel Toruno where we were to stay. We observed several pairs of Red-crested Pochard, and another two lifers followed with Black-winged Stilt and Spanish Imperial Eagle. The latter we were to see on another six occasions before the holiday was over. The focus of the first morning was Acebron, an area of heathland, parkland, woodland and scattered trees, with a splendid collection of birds including Dartford Warbler, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Zitting Cistola, Savi's Warbler, Melodious Warbler and, it seemed, Nightingale singing in virtually every area of scrub.

So common were the Nightingales that I completed a two-kilometre walk and counted 18 singing birds. New birds that morning included Wryneck, Short-toed Treecreeper, Serin, and Bee-eaters. The afternoon was spent at Acebuche but was partly spoiled by several school parties. However, we were not joined by the usual crowd - such as Magpies, House Sparrows and the like - during our picnic lunch, but we had to rough it with two dozen or more Azure-winged Magpies scavenging from the picnic tables. That evening we returned to the Acebron area and heard churring Nightjar. Also heard and indeed seen displaying was a Red-necked Nightjar. My sleep was delightfully disturbed that night with an Eagle Owl foraging from the hotel rubbish bins just outside our window.

Hopes were high for our visit to the Parc National but our slow drive through the woods, to try and see Iberian Lynx, was only rewarded with recent foot-prints. We drove on towards the Joe Valurde Vistors Centre, stopping as we observed various birds including Short-toed Lark, Black-necked Grebe, Melodious Warbler and Marsh Harrier. We checked out numerous Coot in the hope one would be a Red-knobbed Coot but, alas, no luck. Several lifers later followed by Purple Heron, Griffon Vulture, Greater Flamingo, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Squacco Heron, Collared Pratincole, Great Reed Warbler and White-headed Duck. Eventually we were dropped off to walk the last mile or so back to the Centre. Lunch that day was provided in a hunting lodge at Coto del Rey and during the afternoon we had good views of Bee-eaters, Imperial Spanish Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Honey Buzzard.

The last full day in the Coto Donana involved a two and a half hour drive south-east to the Bonanza Salt pans. In many ways this was a bit of a bus-man's holiday with Dunlin, Sanderi

ng
Little Ringed Plover, Common
Redshank
, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Avocet and Lesser Black-backed Gull. However, Little Tern,
Yellow-legged Gull,
Kentish
Plover, Greater Flamingo and Black-winged Stilt reminded us that we
were
somewhere special. We not only saw
Audouin's
Gull, but other lifers in the form of Gull-billed Tern, and Slender-billed Gull as well. That
afternoon we investigated a series of small lakes close to the town of
Jerez
de la
Frontera
, observing Sardinian Warbler, Pied Flycatcher,
Whinchat
and Common Redstart - and we finally achieved our goal of that afternoon, another lifer, a
Marbled Teal.

The fifth day was a rather long journey north-west to Extremadura and our hotel near Trujillo.
Fortunately, the drive was to be broken up with several selected birding stops to clock up other
lifers, including Alpine Swift, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush and
Penduline
Tit. Other delights during that day included Turtle Dove, Crag Martin, Little Bittern and "Stork
City", where I counted at least 24 nesting White Storks in one small area.

The first full day in Extremadura centred on the mountains of the Monfrague National Park.
New birds included breeding
Griffon
Vulture at
Pennafalcon
Rock, Egyptian Vulture, Subalpine Warbler and good views of more raptors, including Booted
Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Black Vulture, Peregrine, Black Kite, Red Kite
and Common Buzzard.

Our first stop while approaching Pennafalcon Rock was to the Trujillo Bullring with several
pairs of nesting Lesser Kestrels. At a later comfort stop we heard another lifer, a Quail, and
noted two Woodlark, Southern Grey Shrike,
White Stork, Black Kite, Little Bustard (another lifer!) and

Calandra

Lark. Day two: we were to explore the steppe area, where we added Great Bustard, including a male courting with a female, in full display. Although we birders were suitably impressed with his 'foam bath' performance, she seem to be playing hard to get. We also added two more lifers, Black-bellied Sandgrouse and a male Montagu's Harrier.

Driving on to some nest boxes on pylons we had fine scope views of another lifer, Roller. Then, following dinner, Simon took four of us to the town centre park in the hope of hearing and maybe seeing a Scops Owl (lifer). Although the previous night's group had failed in their attempt, between 22.05 to 22.50, not only did we hear four calling to each other, but managed to observe one owl, with the help of a torch, at very close quarters, just above us, deep in a tree.

Our last full day was to be a compromise, due to a forecast of sun and showers. We were offered a visit to another area of the Steppe or shopping at Trujillo. Although most opted for shopping (Gill included) a small band of us took the birding option, hoping for target birds such as Great Crested Cuckoo and Thekla Lark. We failed to see the lark but were rewarded with very good views of Great Crested Cuckoo. Later that morning we clearly heard Little Bustard, had footage of Black Kite and Corn Bunting, Crested, Short-toed and Calandra Larks, White Stork, Cattle Egret, Lesser Kestrel, Hoopoe, Northern Wheatear and Raven. After collecting the shoppers/sightseers we returned to the steppe for the others to see the Great Crested Cuckoo, but without luck on this occasion. Another short trip was arranged that afternoon to a wooded valley near the village of Garias. This supplied me with my final lifer of the holiday, a Bonelli's Warbler. We also added Woodlarks in song, Pied Flycatcher, and rounded the day and holiday off with some superb views of Wryneck.

Woodpigeon Movement Study Request

Adrian Plant (adrian.plant@museumwales.ac.uk) would like to hear from anyone interested in counting the numbers and directions of Woodpigeons moving through our area in late October and early November. The peak passage is likely to be on or around 3 November but large numbers pass through for a week or so either side. He is attempting to coordinate watches to try and understand how and where they move through South Wales so if anybody is willing to spend a few hours on one or more mornings during the crucial period, their help would be much appreciated and Adrian would like to hear from you.

For several years now Adrian Plant has been recording visible migration on the Gwent coast at Rostone, Wentlooge.

. One rather spectacular aspect of this is the large numbers of Woodpigeons moving along the South Wales coast in late October and early November, when peak counts are generally between 10,000 – 30, 000 birds per hour (see the results on the Trektellen website –

<http://www.trektellen.org/default.asp?site=0&taal=2&land=5>

). On a good day it can be a real 'wildlife spectacular'.

These birds appear to be of British origin (there are few records of incoming flocks on the east coast at that time of year). From what we know, many birds move SW over the English Midlands and seem to get 'bottled up' somewhere in the area from the Forest of Dean through to the area between the left bank of the Wye and right of the Severn, it is not clear how they reach the South Wales coast from there, but they do, in large numbers and continue to move westwards through Gwent and Glamorgan and probably leave the Welsh coast at some unknown point heading southwards into SW England (large flocks have been seen passing Lundy for example).

This year would like to coordinate observations of direction and numbers of Woodpigeons passing through our area. We do not know if they enter our region via the Severn, Wye or Usk.

, nor how far west they travel in Wales before heading out to sea. A few observers stationed at some critical points might resolve this. Ideally it would need somebody to watch near the most likely points into our area – the Severn Valley,

Wye

and

Usk

mouths. But anywhere in the county could provide useful data. Migration is likely to peak around

2nd

or

3rd

November, when an attempt will be made to coordinate synchronous counts, but observations made a week or so either side would also be helpful.

If you would like to participate in any way please contact Adrian at Adrian.plant@museumwales.ac.uk

Adrian Plant

Blorenge Walk 13th July 2013

Eleven of us assembled at the Foxhunter car park at 9am, on a hot sunny morning. The route of the walk can be found in the soon to be published

Gwent

Bird Walks book where it is referred to as the 'Grouse walk'. Unfortunately, the walk was probably a little late both in the day and year to view this iconic bird and so it proved. I hope to repeat the walk next year at a time and date to give a much better chance of good views. That said, it was a beautiful morning for a walk and some good birds were observed. We initially walked to the summit and saw only Meadow Pipits, but as we descended we were rewarded with a good view of a Skylark carrying food. We walked to the edge of the steep drop of

Cwm

Craf

and took in the view whilst we stopped for a pleasant break. From this vantage point we observed Swifts and Ravens. As we left, some of the group spotted a Hobby. We then descended to the road and heard and saw a large number of

Whinchats

and a male Reed Bunting then, after the long pull back to the car park, we were rewarded with views of

Whinchats

, Whitethroats, Tree Pipits, Linnets and a Buzzard. The Whitethroat was a tick for one of the group and a pleasant morning was (I hope) enjoyed by everyone.

Andrew Baker

Recent Gwent Sightings for June 2013

Highlights

A Wood Sandpiper was reported from Newport Wetlands (2nd). Two Spoonbills were also present at this site for most of the month, whilst two Little Terns were also seen on 9th

Other sightings

Nightjars were reported from Manmoel (6th) and Wentwood (from 7th). A Great Skua was off Peterstone

(13th

), over 200 Manx

Shearwaters

were recorded at

Sudbrook

(

22

nd

) and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen at

Llanwenarth

(20

th

).

Recent Gwent Sightings for July 2013

Highlights

A Pectoral Sandpiper was reported from Newport Wetlands (8th). A presumably different individual Pectoral Sandpiper was also reported from the same site at the end of the month (31st). Single Wood Sandpipers were present at Newport Wetlands (7th and 31st) whilst a Spoonbill was present at the site for most of the month.

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Two Common Eiders were reported (3rd). Up to 60 Avocets were present (25th), whilst an adult summer-plumaged Mediterranean Gull was present almost throughout the month.

Other sites

Four Barnacle Geese were recorded at Bulmore lakes (2nd). Two Nightjars were reported from Manmoel (4th), whilst two Nightjars were also recorded at Blaenafon Community Woodlands (19th). Two Hawfinches were reported from the Minnetts Wood (20th).

Recent Gwent Sightings for August 2013

Highlights

A Pectoral Sandpiper was recorded at Newport Wetlands again (3rd), whilst up to three Wood Sandpipers were present at the same site (until 8th

). A Spoonbill was also reported from this site (

27

th

to

30

th

). A Wryneck was at

Peterstone

Gout (31

st

)

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Wader sightings increased throughout the month, with single Little Stints present (4th and 25th

). Other sightings of note included an Arctic

Skua

offshore (

17

th

), two Common Scoters, also offshore (18

th

), a

Garganey

(

25

th

) and a Marsh Harrier (

25th

).

Other sites

Mediterranean Gulls were reported from Sudbrook (one on 3rd and two on 15th) and the Moorings (one on

8th

). A female Ruddy Shelduck

was seen at St. Brides (

8th

to

13th

th

). A flock of over 50

Crossbills

was reported from Slade Woods (

5th

th

). A Common Scoter was seen at

Llandegfedd

reservoir (7

th

). A female Hen Harrier was recorded at the British (

1

st

). A Marsh Harrier was reported from

Garnlydan

reservoir (30

th

to

31

st

), with a Hen Harrier also reported from the same site (

30

th

to

31

st

).

Chris Hatch

LODGE WOOD, CAERLEON

This account was originally submitted for consideration in the GOS recent publication 'Best Birdwatching Walks in Gwent', but was not selected due to lack of space. It is inevitable in books of this nature that some birding sites within the county will not be included. 'Dipper' editors will know there is usually a shortage of material for the magazine and, rather than wasting the account, I have submitted it for inclusion in The Dipper.

As I live just a quarter of a mile from Lodge Wood, this description is based on about 180 bird watching visits made to the locality in all seasons, covering a 43-year period since 1972. It's an all-year-round site; the relevant OS Map is Sheet 171 ST 325 917.

Lodge Wood is a small broad-leaved wood supporting a wide range of plants and animals. The wood in the main comprises beech, pedunculate and sessile oak, ash, holly, hazel and sycamore, while ground cover includes bramble, bracken, bluebell and ramsons. This is a rather small wood, one kilometre long and just 200-300 metres wide. The wood is steep, climbing 59 metres from the lower footpath to its summit at the Iron Age Hill Fort. During 2000, three trenches were excavated in the south west corner of the fort during which post holes, middle and late Iron Age pottery and an iron brooch (dated to about 300 BC) were found. The wood is bound by farmland to the north, with mainly built up areas comprising Malpas to the west, Caerleon to the east, and south. The wood is topped by a large Silurian iron age hill fort and excavations suggest it was first constructed about 600–300 BC. The earthworks are still evident in several places and form part of the footpath. Although the wood forms part of the 'Lodge Hill Circular

Walk,
Caerleon
, we focus here just on the wood.

For interested parties, the Lodge Hill Circular walk of 3.1 miles (5 kilometres) is described as 'Mostly rural paths with some stiles and kissing gates. Some steep sections. Spectacular views from the high ground over the River Usk and City of Newport. Roadside parking in Lodge Hill area.' Further details of the circular walk are available in 'Let's Walk Newport: Countryside Walks' and is available in the Newport Tourist Information Office, Newport Library.

There are three paths running east to west at the lower and upper parts of the wood and a central footpath running north to south. In addition, there are several other unofficial paths throughout the wood. Parts of the footpaths can be very muddy during winter and wet weather, making it rather slippery underfoot. Further, parts of the footpath have had steps created to aid progress in some of the steeper sections of the walk. Sadly, however, little forethought seem to have been given to the constructions of some of the steps, so several are up to 36cm or more deep, which can create problems for the less able. Given these restrictions, it takes about two hours to walk the eastern 800 metre footpath and explore the upper section of the wood.

Key Points

- Short walk just over one mile (c.2km).
- Shops, toilets and all other facilities below Lodge Hill in Caerleon.
- Limited parking due to residential area.
- Can be difficult for the less able bodied
- Telescope not necessary.
- Free access at all times.
- Commanding views from the upper footpaths.

Access Details

Lodge Wood can be entered by several routes from Northfield Road (Point A). Descend the rather steep steps and cross the stile at the bottom, then follow the path north-west to the stile (B) from where you enter the wood. Follow the path west at the bottom of the wood, to another stile (C) which exits the wood to Park Farm (D) and the Lodge Hill Circular Walk (E). Retrace your steps from (C) to the obvious constructed steps and climb up the hill to the upper footpath. There are a few unofficial paths upwards, but these tend to be rather too steep and awkward and so are best avoided. The upper part of Lodge Wood can be explored, including the Hill Fort (F), using the southern path of the Lodge Hill Circular Walk, south of the Hill Fort. This southern path can also be entered from The Paddocks, Lodge Farm (G) and also behind Highfield Close (H). There is a regular bus service every 20 minutes or so between both Newport and Cwmbran to Lodge Hill, Caerleon

Map of Lodge Wood, Caerleon

Bird Species

Birds seen regularly in the wood, depending on the season, include Buzzard, Woodpigeon, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Tree Creeper, Chaffinch, Jay, Carrion Crow and Raven. During the summer there may be Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Common Whitethroat. In addition, passage has included Pied Flycatcher, Siskin, Redpoll, while Red Kite and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker have also been seen. Lodge Wood is particularly good for sightings of Nuthatch, Marsh Tit and Jay throughout the year.

Other nearby sites

The Moorings, Caerleon Flooded Field, and Bulmore Lakes.

Dipper editors are often desperate for material for this quarterly publication. If some of your favourite sites were not selected for inclusion in the book 'Best Birdwatching Walks in Gwent', why not consider it for inclusion in The Dipper?

BTO Business

This summer's surveys for **Woodcock** and **Chats** were successful, in the sense that most of the randomly selected squares were covered, but few of the target species were found. This is one of the problems with the random selection of survey squares, where the species is quite habitat specific. Although most of the Chat squares were within the ranges of

Whinchat

,
Stonechat
and
Wheatear

in
Gwent
, they didn't contain the desired habitat. The scarcity of

Woodcock

was of some concern, and suggests a contraction of the breeding range eastwards, and away from

Gwent

. Thanks to everyone who participated in these surveys, as even negative results are important for calculating (with known confidence limits) the size of population. This winter will be the second chance to help with the

Winter Thrush Survey

. Last winter saw very little fruit in the hedgerows, so relatively small numbers of the traditional wintering species. This winter sees a bumper crop of berries, so hopefully good size flocks of

Redwing and

Fieldfare

. A limited number of core squares need to be covered once a month (see

BTO

website for details) but you can also visit any square and count what you see. If you prefer this option, send me an email or phone (

jmsl2587@yahoo.co.uk

01873 855091) telling me which square, and I can then allocate it to you. There are still a few squares left for the annual

Breeding Bird Survey

, I'll give more details in a future Dipper, this survey involves just three visits to the square (between April - June) where you walk a two km route, counting everything you see and hear. Whether you help with these surveys or not, have a good birding year.

Jerry Lewis

Birdwatching Walks in Gwent

The following information is taken from the back cover of our new publication 'Birdwatching Walks in Gwent.' Hopefully it will wet your appetite for its launch in November next. The reverse cover also features a picture of a male Reed Bunting in a sea or

reedbeds

with the east

Usk

lighthouse in the background. The front cover features a picture of a

Whinchat

with the Sugar Loaf and some Red Grouse in the background. The back cover information reads:

'Gwent has an astonishing range of habitats, from the Wye valley and its ancient woodland in the east, to the deep valleys, fast-flowing rivers and high moorlands of the north and west. In between are the broad agricultural sweeps of the

Usk

and

Monnow

valleys. To the south the wetlands and

reedbeds

of the

Gwent

Levels and the

saltmarshes

and extensive

mudflats

of the Severn Estuary.

In birdwatching terms, Gwent is something of a well kept secret. The country boasts up to 132 breeding species, and around 200 species are recorded annually. These regularly include national rarities – most recently the celebrated Marmora's Warbler and Common Yellowthroat

.

Presented here are over 60 walks to help you explore Gwent's magnificent countryside and its birds. The routes were provided by twenty-six experienced birdwatchers, each with an intimate knowledge of their particular area. In this book they share with you the secrets that will enable you to get the best birding experience from your walk.

Features includes

- Detailed maps and directions for each walk
- Birding tips to help you get the best from each walk
- Checklist of Gwent's birds and what to expect throughout the seasons
- Information on public transport and wheelchair access'.