

NOTICE OF Annual General Meeting 2014

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 18th, 2014, in the Village Hall, Goytre,
starting at 7:
30pm

To accommodate and facilitate the running of the Committee it is proposed to modify part of Item 7 (2) of the Constitution from:

“The Executive committee may, in addition, appoint not more than 3 co-opted members but so that no one may be appointed as a co-opted member if, as a result, more than one third of the members of the Executive Committee would be co-opted members”,

To the following:

“The Executive committee may, in addition, appoint co-opted members, as required, for specific purposes, tasks or expertise, though they will not have voting rights.”

Rules concerning the numbers of Honorary Officers, Executive Committee Members and Committee Members will remain unchanged and they will continue to be subject to their existing election rules.

This Constitutional change will be put to a vote.

There are several changes to the Committee from 2014: **Keith Roylance** will step down as **Treasurer**, to be succeeded by **Andrew Cormack**

Chris Jones

will step down as

County Recorder

; Tom

Chinnick

has been nominated to take on the role.

Mark Stevens will step down as **Publicity Officer**, to be replaced by **a team of contributors led by John Coleman**.

The role of **Vice Chairman** will no longer carry the informal expectation that he or she will succeed the outgoing Chairman. Instead the Vice Chairman's role will be limited to deputising for the Chairman when necessary. As such this will be a Co-opted role. Given this new requirement,

Al

Venables

volunteered to stand as Vice Chairman.

These changes will require a vote of acceptance.

Nominated to join the Committee as **Committee Members** are: Dave Brassey, Keith Trott, R
oo
Perkins.

These nominations will require a vote of acceptance

Further nominations are invited and both the Proposer and Seconder should sign the nomination with the agreement of the nominee, or e-mail me with details. (see Contacts list for details)

Nominations must be received by January 1st 2014

In the event that any position or seat is contested selection will be made by a show of hands at the AGM.

The AGM will be followed by a **Finger Buffet** where the trick is to bring some finger food to be shared by everyone but then select something that looks far more appetising than your own offering!

Following the buffet, Arthur Ball will be taking us to the Galapagos Islands to view the wildlife as seen through the eyes of Charles Darwin – and assess the consequences of his trip.

Trevor Russell, Secretary

COMMITTEE COMMENTARY

The highlight of the month, of course, was the **GOS/WOS Conference**

held in Monmouth to celebrate the

GOS

50

th

Anniversary (see article elsewhere in this edition). Alan Williams was congratulated for

organising
such a successful, sell-out event and the three
GOS
speakers, Al
Venables
, Jerry Lewis and Steve Roberts were highly praised for their
compelling, informative and amusing presentations. Al
Venables
also marked the occasion by launching our new book,
“Birdwatching
Walks in
Gwent”
, which sold well.

Steph Tyler reported that Natural Resources Wales had granted licen
ces
for fishermen to kill 6
Goosanders
and 18 Cormorants on the River
Usk
, going against the recommendation that the cull should be limited to 6
Goosanders
and 6 Cormorants. We are still trying to understand why the advice was
ignored and how the numbers killed were limited and controlled, given
that all of the shooting took

place in one, simultaneous shoot-out along the entire length of the
river. One begins to understand some of the reasons for Iolo Williams’
tirade at the Conference against the indifference to the environment by
the Welsh Government and

NRW

We had written to the CEO of Welsh Water to complain about the deteriorating conditions at **Llandegfedd Reservoir** for both birds and birdwatchers

. Their reply blamed lack of money and indicated little urgency, by stating that improvements would not be seen until 2015. This is still a Work In Progress.

As we approach the **AGM (January 18th)** we discussed next years' Committee format. Several Committee members have decided to stand-down: Chris Jones, County Recorder; Keith Roylance, Treasurer; Rob Parsons, Indoor Secretary and Mark Stevens, Publicity Officer. Some candidates are already being considered as replacements, but if you would like to be nominated, or just learn more about any of the jobs, please contact me on 01600 716266.

**Trevor Russell The GOS/WOS Conference,
November 2nd 2013,
Monmouth**

Celebrating 50 years of Birdwatching in Gwent

In recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of GOS, the annual Welsh Ornithological Society conference was held in Monmouth at the Bridges Community Centre. It proved to be a sell-out 120-ticket event despite dark mutterings that “it’ll never beat last year’s Conference in Llandovery”

. Well, we showed ’em!

The conference traditionally starts with the WOS AGM and this proved as mundane as a

GOS

AGM

, until

WOS

President,

Iolo

Williams, enlivened proceedings. He gave us a heartfelt tirade about the indifference and lack of vision for bird conservation by the Welsh Government and the total failure of Natural Resources Wales (a Welsh

Govt

. amalgamation of

CCW

, Environment Agency Wales and the Forestry

Commission Wales in April 2013) to deliver on their conservation objectives.

Iolo

called upon campaigning NGOs to make political capital out of the government's failure.

Many of the speakers were GOS members and it was fitting that the first speaker was Al

Venables

, who gave a brief history of

GOS

: how it was created by Bert

Hamar

and Betty Morgan, both beginner

birdwatchers

, who initially called their small group the

Pontypool

Ornithological Society. After expansion, by embracing a

wider membership, this morphed into the

Monmouthshire

Ornithological Society and now, due to political boundary

changes, is known as the

Gwent

Ornithological Society. Al's talk was punctuated with

pictures of days of yore, starring luminaries such as Bert,

Helen Robbins, Phil Warwick, Steve Roberts as a schoolboy, Percy Playford and Patrick Humphries

. Also pictured were AI's selection of the new birders to appear in the 1970s

who made the biggest impact on recording in the county, notably Steve Howell and Chris Jones (though AI is too modest to include himself in the same august company). There were also photos of some of those members (past and present) who have made big contributions to the running of indoor meetings and social activities, including Mary Beard, Dave Wood and Cathy Leyshon

. The GOS members' nostalgia was politely tolerated by the wider WOS audience.

As one of the editors, it was also fitting that AI should announce the launch of the new GOS book, "Birdwatching Walks in

Gwent”

; he thanked all those who had contributed so much to such a useful volume (we later sold 80 copies on this first day!).

Mark Avery’s aim was to work us all up into an indignant frenzy and write to our MPs about, well, almost anything we had a gripe about concerning conservation and the environment! Six letters on the same topic is certain to provoke a response, he assured us. We were soon whipped up into rebellious exasperation as he reminded us of the species that have even been *hunted* to extinction, for example, the Passenger Pigeon, and the Dodo. When we see declining abundance we should reflect that we are presiding over a less healthy environment and he was encouraged that around half of the audience had already protested to their MPs, because there are far too many opponents of nature conservation making their voices heard in the name of “progress”.

BTO’s Nigel Clarke highlighted the importance of the River Severn as a source of energy potential which

means that energy-capture proposals will not go away despite the recent 'victory' over the barrage. 20 million tonnes

of sediment are moved on each tide and birds have to follow it to find their food. He stressed the importance of good, long-term quality data, e.g. the low-tide

WeBS

counts and cited the cynical interpretation of data used during the construction of the Cardiff Bay barrage, when it was claimed that waders would simply move to new feeding grounds. It was later shown that one-third of the Redshank died.

Although the River Severn is internationally important for seven fish and eight bird species, the proposals for under-water turbines could cause huge death rates in fish (e.g. 100% of Shad) killed by the pressurised 'cavitation' effect as they pass through the turbines (pressurisation followed by sudden decompression causes them to explode). Over the last twenty years our ability to understand and defend special places for birds has become increasingly sophisticated but, sadly, the engineering design of turbines hasn't kept pace.

The afternoon session started with presentations by RS
PB
Cymru's
Daniel Jenkins- Jones and
Arfon
Williams on the status of birds in Wales.
Chough
& Lapwings had a good year on the
RSPB's
Welsh reserves though Black Grouse
leks
were smaller after the bad weather in 2012. We heard
that the latest
agri-environmental
scheme,
Glastir
, was being praised for its design but, despite the money
being available, the process of delivering the scheme is
not working.

Tony Fox has been studying Greenland White-fronted
Geese for nearly 40 years and has witnessed a
substantial decline in wintering numbers in Wales; the Dy

fi
population has dropped from 400 birds to 55 and none had arrived so far this autumn, while some Welsh sites no longer hold any wintering populations. Hunting in its wintering and breeding areas is a contributory factor, though where hunting bans have been imposed within its range, populations have shown a 6% growth each year thereafter. Astonishingly and embarrassingly, Wales and England are the only countries to have not imposed this ban! So, make Mark Avery proud! Take the revolution to the gates of the Senedd!
! (or, maybe more effectively, sign the e-petition set up by Aaron Davies).

Jerry Lewis gave a typically compelling presentation on his work with Hawfinches in the Forest of Dean and Lower Wye Valley. Since 2000 he has ringed over 800 Hawfinch, about 30% of the UK total! Measurements of wing-length show that many birds over-winter here from overseas, which led, unwittingly, to the quote of the day, perhaps of the Conference: “In 2012, I had a Swedish bird in the Forest of Dean”! He showed us some stunning

photographs, too... Fascinating graphs showing recapture rates by year and location deserved longer attention and it was intriguing to hear how radio-tracking helped identify nest location and will in future determine

whether egg and/or chick predation is a factor in the increasing rarity of the Hawfinch. Radio-tracking has also revealed that Hawfinches travel up to 5km from nest-site to feeding areas, a very long distance for a passerine. I hope we can hear this talk again soon, in greater depth and with updates.

The final speaker was our President, Steve Roberts, who regaled us with side-splitting anecdotes as he gave a bravura presentation on Honey Buzzards. Readers who suffer with vertigo should stop here because we watched stomach-churning footage of Steve shinning up and abseiling down gigantic trees to photograph and ring chicks in nests built in those very, wobbly bits at the tops. Camcorders trained on the nests (

Autumnwatch

eat your heart out!) have shown that frogs constitute up to 50% of the chicks' diet when wasp and bee nests are scarce.

Given Steve's jokes and jibes about friends and colleagues in North Wales, I wonder if we will even be invited up there for next year's Conference, but if we are, I'm sure we will all be saying "It'll never beat this year's Conference in Monmouth!".

Trevor Russell

Gwent Ornithological Society Indoor Programme Season 2014

Wed 15th Jan. *In association with Chepstow Branch of
Gwent
Wildlife Trust at
Chepstow
leisure Centre 7.30pm.*

Ashley Grove- Birding from Shetland to the Scillies Sat 18th Jan. AGM. Arthur Ball – Galapagos Wildlife.

If you really want to step back in time, a visit to the Galapagos will really blow your mind. From the colourful and unique wildlife to the reality of Darwin's trip and the consequences of it. Arthur will sum up and explain this truly magnificent place – not to be missed.

Sat 1st Feb. Pete Carty – Birding on Wenlock Edge and Long Mynd

▪

With neighbouring habitats of upland moorland and deciduous woodland, Long Mynd

and
Wenlock
edge in
Shropshire
are really Wales in miniature. This famous
Landscape is nationally
recognised
as an
AONB
and has a wide range of birds from Ring
Ouzel, Red Grouse and many of the warbler
species.

Sat 15th Feb. Paul Denning – Birding in the Canadian Rockies.

Pauls talk will cover the flora, fauna
and wonderful scenery of the region
from the grassland Prairies around

Calgary to the snow capped peaks and flower filled meadows of Banff, Jasper and the neighbouring National Parks.

**Sat 1st March. Roger White –
Birds and landscape of East
Germany.**

I will talk about the many thousands of wintering Geese and Migrating Cranes, the many Raptors (including White tailed and Lesser Spotted Eagles) Bustards a range of Birds on the

Western Edge of their range. Apart from the forest and many wetlands, heaths resulting from Russian Army occupation and opencast mining both provide rich habitats.

Sat 15th March. Roger Dickey – Army Birding – more Birds than Bullets.

The talk will be a series of anecdotes of those rare opportunities in my Army life

when I have been able to combine soldiering at home and abroad and a need to pursue my love of birds through studies and surveys and sometimes plain Birdwatching . I will also include some anecdotes from “operational”

birding and how it produces conflicts of interest. The talk

will include visits to Western Isles, The Falklands, Hong Kong, Diego Garcia, Afghanistan, Gibraltar and Ascension Island.

Tuesday 18th March. *In association with Blaenavon World Heritage Centre at 6pm*

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**Nick
Beswick
will talk on Upland Wildlife
and Habitat Management**

**Sat 29th March. Al Ven
ables
– The birds of Tierra del
Fuego.**

This talk covers birds,

seals, whales and spectacular scenery on an expedition cruise from Tierra del Fuego across the notorious Drake Passage to Antarctic Islands and the Peninsula. Al's personal quest for the private life of the Giant Petrel is an underlying theme.

Sat 12th April. Carl

Downing – Birding in Colombia.

As a founder member of the Neotropical Bird Club, and a Council member and Chairman, Carl will lead us through five main regions of this newly evolving country.

Sat 27th April.

Andrew Ramsay –

Shearwaters

▪

Having studied Shearwaters for over forty years in the Scottish Islands, Andrew is an authority

on this much enjoyed
and intriguing bird.

**Sat 4th Oct. Mike
Lane – A lane in a
Midland Forest.**

A talk about the
new and little known

Heart of England
Forest in
Warwickshire where
Mike has spent the
last few years
extensively
photographing the
wildlife. It is a new
forest with many
young trees, but also

some
well-established
mature woodland,
lakes, rivers and
shallow scrapes. An
exciting Midlands
habitat that has Mike
working on his favou
rites
subjects: British

Wildlife.

**Sat 25th Oct.
Charles Martin –
Puddocks
and
Poveys
: the folklore of
bird names.**

While looking at a variety of well-known upland birds (Hawks, owls and ravens) this talks covers them as birds of ill omen

and corvid
intelligence. The
legends and stories
may seem fanciful
but they are in
many ways the
product of centuries
of experience and
accurate

observation from
which we have
much to learn.

Sat 8th Nov.

Ian Butler –

**Birding in Costa
Rica**

Spending three months in Costa Rica, Ian explores different species he observed and photographed.

From

White-necked Jac

obins
, Montezuma
Orrupendula
to Strawberry
Poison Dart Frogs
and Tarantulas.
Ian's images will
leave you wanting

to visit this exotic
place of wildlife
diversity.

Sat 22nd Nov.

Len Clarke –

Birding in

Spain.

Covering an
overview the
range of habitats
from the cork
woodlands to the
high mountain

ranges and the
wonderful sand
dune system.

Len as a leader
for Spainbirds
will bring a
wealth of
knowledge of

**birds to see and
sites to see.**

Sat 6th Dec.

**John Gale – A
trip to South
Georgia.**

In January
2010 John and
fellow artist
Chris Rose trav
elled
from the
Falkland Islands

to South
Georgia on the
yacht “Golden
Fleece”. They
spent 6 weeks
circumnavigatin
g the island

collecting material for an exhibition of paintings

to raise
money and
awareness of
Albatross and
seabird
conservation.
They painted

and sketched
the amazing
wildlife and
stunning
scenery in very
challenging
conditions and

on their return
endured seven
hours of
hurricane
conditions at
sea. Their
“Artists for

Albatross”
project and
exhibition raised
over £48,000
for seabird
conservation.

17th Jan –

GOS

AGM

■

Rob

Parsons

Learning Bird Songs and Calls

Most people
would agree
the sound of
birds is a vital
part of the

natural scene
during a walk
in the
countryside.
Even for
people who
how have no

particular
interest in
birds, bird
songs are one
of the main
joys of people
who enjoy the

country side.

Learning the
calls and
songs of birds

has been
discussed
many times in
the past, and
by authorities
much more
skilled than

myself. But
rather than
writing yet
another, it is
hoped there
are a few ideas
given which I

at least have
not seen in
print before.

But having said
that, I am sure
birders have
tried similar

ideas. This
then is not a
discussion on
theories of bird
song, rather
how I tackled
the problem,

and if I'm
honest, still
learning, this is
how I am trying
to tackle the
problem.

Most
beginners to
birding inform
me that
learning birds

sounds is not
easy.

Inevitably it
takes time and,
more than
anything else,
experience in

the field, the
rewards for a
little
perseverance
are immense.
But from the
outset, think for

a moment and
you maybe
surprised how
much you
already know.

Song and
call can be vital
in telling you
that a
particular
species are
around. Cetti's

Warblers for
example
skulking are
very difficult to
see but usually
heard. The
'pinging' call of

the Bearded Tit
will tell you
they are about,
others ways
we may walk
pass them.

The ability to
identify an
individual
species by its
song and then

to count

how many of
that species
are singing in a

particular area
can provide
vital
information on
distribution and
population
density that

can be difficult
to get in other
ways.

From my

experience
during my early
years of birding
surprisingly I
learned most
rapidly when
seeing a

particular
species for the
first time, and
when mixed
with the
excitement of
that discovery,

I have noticed
when hearing
the song or call
that becomes
fixed and never
forgotten. I
writing this I

can recall the excitement of my first Manx Shearwater, Nightjar, Grasshopper Warbler, and

Bearded Tit for
the first time;
these calls
have never left
me.

For me at
least the
commoner
birds Blue Tits,
Dunnock,
warblers etc
seem to take a

little more time,
but be patient it
will come. I
quickly learned
the commoner
birds by
completing a

Common Bird
Survey. I'm not
saying to start
a CBC but to
adopt some
technique from
such a method.

Select an area
very close to
you home,
somewhere
you can visit
often, and can
cover in a

reasonable
short amount
of time. Being
close to your
home and
covered fairly
quickly you can

visit the area
often. After
several visits a
pattern will
emerge where
the same bird
will sing in

roughly the
same area, it
becomes
predictable,
and with this
familiarity you
will see the

birding singing.
Familiarity
breeds
contempt.

Having
mastered
some of the
commoner
songs and
calls, novices

could create
a series of
songs and
calls of
unfamiliar birds

and play as
background
music when
engaged with
some other
activity. I often
do so when

working on my
PC, and have
found this
technique very
useful.

Similarly
transferring the

same series to
a portable
playback
system can be
very useful to
carry in the
field. When

using a play
back system in
the field do not
use the
recordings to
attract or
stimulate a

response from
birds in the
field, rather
use an
ear-piece.

Using play
back systems
then can be
effective with
very similar
songs and
calls for

example
Blackcap and
Garden
Warbler, or
Reed and
Sedge
Warbler. I have

used records
of each played
one after the
other playing
for several
minutes.

Alternatively,

using two
separate
playback
systems
playing
simultaneously
in different

corners of the
room, one
playing
Blackcap song,
the other
Garden
Warbler.

Every British
bird has its
very own song
that once
learned can be

used to help
birdwatchers
identify it
without actually
having to see
it. Most of my
birding is done

by ear; indeed
Richard Fitter
claimed most
experienced
bird watchers
identify as
many birds by

sound as by
sight. As an
example, while
writing this
account, I
counted all
birds identified

by sound and
sight during a 2
and a half hour
6 kilometres
walk along of
Wentwood
during August

2013. Of the
135 birds note
during the walk
counted, 43
were noted by
sight and 92 by
sound.

Recently
Paul Stancliffe
reminded us of
another trusted
method in

issue

July-August

2013

‘BTONews’:

‘I learn my
songs and
calls by having
an internal aide
memoir – the
song of Cetti’s
Warbler always

reminds me of
Beethoven's
1812 Overture,
and the song
of the Garden
Warbler always
of a babbling

brook. Many
will know that
little 'little bit of
bread and no
cheese' is
sung by the
Yellowhammer

and

easier still, a
small number
sing their own

– Chiffchaff
and Cuckoo
being the most
obvious.’ There
are several
others which
can be useful,

many for
example would
be familiar with
the Great Tit
song of
'teacher,
teacher,

teacher,' or the
Collard Doves
repeated song
'I don't know',
or alternatively
with the
Collard Dove,

a rather
dishearten
miserable
football
supporter
chanting
'united, united,

united.'

Other wader
mnemonics
which I've read

over the years
which some
may find useful
include Grey
Plover: Who
are you?
Curlew:

Curlee;

Greenshanks:

Toy toy toy;

Redshanks:

Pee poopoo;

Spotted

Redshanks:

Chewill; Little
Ringed Plover:
Peeoo;
Lapwing:
Pewit;
Common
Snipe:

Electronic
sheep
'drumming';
creaky bicycle
wheel display
call.

Speaking
personally
although I have
found bird
mnemonics

effective, I
have found the
writing
description of
bird's songs
and call offered
in field guides

of little use at
all. I cannot
imagine how
'tsee-tsee
trrrrrr' becomes
a bird sound in
this case a

Blue Tit. There is no substitute for actually hearing the song/call, thus you may find a set of bird

records useful
during these
early years,
and indeed
much later.
There are a
number of

recordings on
the market
either on CDs,
cassette tapes,
DVDs, and on
the internet. A
set of such

recordings is
most useful in
early spring for
reminding you
of the songs
and calls of the
summer

visitors
particularly the
ones which are
so difficult to
differentiate,
like the Garden
Warbler and

Blackcap or
the Sedge and
Reed
Warblers. The
first 3 of the
following titles
are available

for loan in the
GOS library,
and for those
who wish to
buy they own I
have included
the current

asking price
offered by
Amazon:

‘Collins Field

Guide to Bird
Songs and
Calls of Britain
and Northern
Europe' by
Geoff Sample.
A 119 page

book with two
CDs (£12.10)

Paul
Doherty's

‘British Bird
Song’, DVD
1 hour 27
minutes
featuring 43
species of the
commoner

birds. (£15.50)

Paul
Doherty's 3
DVD set

**‘British Birds’ 6
hours 30
minutes
featuring a
more
adventurous
280 species,**

most feature
examples their
songs and
calls (£25.49)

‘British Birds
Sound on CD:
The definitive
audio guide to
birds in Britain’.
Recording from
the National

Sound Archive
on 2 CDs; Disc
1 Non
Passerines 96
recordings,
Disc 2
Passerines 79

recordings.
(£11.20)

‘DK RSPB
Complete Birds

of Britain and
Europe', by
Rob Hume.
With 70 minute
CD (£19.20)

Even after 51
years of
birding, there
are still times
when I cannot
recognise
some songs

and calls. For
some reason I
still struggle
with some of
our

commoner
tits. Ageing can
also produces
its own sets of
problems when
birding, an
example

occurred
recently. While
walking around
Wentwood I
encounter an
other birder,
very rare in

Wentwood.
While walking
towards him I
noticed he was
not moving, he
informed me
he was

listening to a
reeling

Grasshopper
Warbler.

Listening with
him I heard
nothing.

Another
untimely
reminder of my
age, indeed
older folk have
difficulty
hearing high

pitch sound.
Although on
this occasion
eventually
when no doubt
singing in a
particular

direction I did
eventually pick
the occasions
reeling from
the bird. I was
wondering the
population of

Goldcrest had
collapsed at
Wentwood.

The Goldcrest
population of
Wentwood has
not reduced

rather I cannot
hearing them
singing
anymore!

**Keith
Jones**

Recent Gwent Sightings for September 2013

Highlights

The Wryneck

was still
present at
Newport
Wetlands (until
4th). Single
Ospreys were
reported from

the Clydach
Gorge (1st),
Llandegfedd
Reservoir (9
th

to 23
rd

), and Newport
Wetlands (19
th

). A Wood
Sandpiper was
present at
Newport

Wetlands (23
rd
).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A Marsh
Harrier was
reported (16th).
Two female
Garganey were

present (21st).
Good numbers
of passage
waders were
present
throughout the
month, whilst

visible
migration of
passerines
was very
evident.

Other

sites

A Marsh
Harrier was
reported from
Garnlydan

reservoir (7th).

A Common

Scoter was

recorded at

Llandegfedd

reservoir (9

th

). The Lesser
Scaup was still
present at Parc
Bryn Bach (21
st

). Red Kites
and Hobbies

were reported
from a number
of locations.
Waders were
present in
good numbers
at the coast

and good
movements of
hirundines
were noted.

**Recent
Gwent**

Sightings for October 2013

Highlights

A juvenile
Rose-coloured
Starling was
present at
Newport
Wetlands (2nd).
A Turtle Dove

was reported
from
Peterstone (5
th
) . A Glossy Ibis
was seen at
Newport

Wetlands (11
th
) , with an
unconfirmed
report of a
Long-billed
Dowitcher from

the same site
(15
th
) . A Firecrest
was recorded
at Highmoor
Hill (23

rd

). A Dartford
Warbler was
reported from
Newport
Wetlands (24
th

).
▪

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A male
Marsh Harrier
was seen on
two separate
dates (1st and
12th).

A female Hen

Harrier was
reported on
three
occasions (18
th

, 29
th

and 30

th

). A female

Merlin was

recorded (6

th

and 9

th

). 15 Bearded

Tits were

observed (6

th

).

Other sites

A juvenile
Hen Harrier
was reported

from Waunafon
Bog (13th).
Single Ring
Ouzels were
recorded at
Abergavenny
(17th),

Pontypool (20
th

) and Skirrid
Fawr (27
th

). Single
Bramblings

were reported
from
Wentwood (23
rd
) and
Peterstone
Gout (24

th

). 19 Common
Scoters were
seen offshore
at Peterstone
(20

th

). A Jack Snipe
was also
present at
Peterstone on
the same date.

A

Mediterranean

Gull was
reported from
Tredegar
House Lake
(26
th
) , whilst a Little

Gull was seen
at Sluice Farm

(28

th

).

Recent

Gwent Sightings for November 2013

Highlights

A Penduline
Tit was present
at Newport
Wetlands (7th t
o 9

th

). Single Great
Grey Shrikes

were reported

from

Wentwood (12

th

to 23

rd

) and

Brynmawr (18

th

). A Pink-

footed Goose

was recorded
at Newport
Wetlands (26
th
) , whilst two
Red-throated
Divers were

observed
offshore at the
same site on
the same date.
A probable
Great White
Egret was also

recorded at
Newport
Wetlands (30
th
).

Newport

Wetlands Reserve

A Merlin was
reported (2nd),
whilst a female

Hen Harrier
was recorded
(20
th

to 21
st

).

Other sites

Two
Mediterranean
Gulls were

present at
Tredegar
House Lake
Newport (3rd).
Two Ring
Ouzels were
reported from

the Blorenges

(10

th

), whilst two

Hawfinches

were recorded

at Wentwood

(12
th

). Five
Common
Scoters were
seen offshore
at Sluice Farm

(15
th

). A

Short-eared

Owl was

recorded at

Peterstone (23

rd

). A Merlin was
reported from
Brynithel (24
th
).

BTO NEWS

Chris

Hatch

We are well
into the second
(and final)
winter for the
**Winter Thrush
Survey.**
Last winter's

surveys
covered the
majority of the
core squares
and there were
several
additional

counts. This winter, with a much more abundant berry crop, are likely to give quite different

results.

Although we
are well into
the survey
period, there is
still time to
become

involved. If you participated last winter, please revisit your same squares, and repeat walks

along the same
routes will be
especially
valuable. Even
if you didn't
participate last
time, you can

visit your
regular birding
site and do a
winter walk, or
select
somewhere
new, as

coverage of
new squares
will be just as
valuable.

Counts can be
done in any
month, but in

particular,
midwinter
counts are
needed
(between Dec
27 and Jan 10)
at one of the

randomly
selected core
squares. The
core squares
are listed on
the website,
and it doesn't

matter if more
than one
person visits,
so you really
have a free
choice of
where to do

your count.

Please first

have a look at

[www.bto.org/v](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/winter-thruses)

[olunteer-surve](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/winter-thruses)

[ys/winter-thrus](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/winter-thruses)

[hes](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/winter-thruses)

to refresh your
knowledge of
the survey, and
register your
square.

Mid
November saw
the publication
of the much
awaited **Bird
Atlas 2007-11.**
Many

members will
have been
involved in the
survey work,
which took five
years; with a
further two

years to
analyse the
data and write
up the species
accounts, it
really is a
splendid

publication,
and has been
well worth the
wait. This is
the first time
that detailed
breeding and

wintering
distributions
have been
combined in a
single
publication.
There are short

species
accounts, and
the bulk of the
book
comprises
detailed maps
of the breeding

and wintering
distributions.
There are also
comparisons
with the
previous
breeding Atlas

(1988-91) and
wintering Atlas
(1981-84), and
changes in
distributions
detailed. For
those that

overlooked the
pre-publication
offer, it now
costs £69.99.

Have a look at
[www.bto.org/s
hop](http://www.bto.org/s
hop)

and follow the
links there to
the Atlas,

where you

can view some
sample pages
from the new
publication –
and order your
copy as a
special

Christmas treat!

I hope
everyone has a

good Xmas
break, and
remember to
make that
resolution to
become more
involved with

survey work in
2014. If
anyone has
any queries,
about BTO
issues, please
contact me on [j](#)

[msl2587@yahoo](mailto:msl2587@yahoo.com)

[oo.co.uk](http://msl2587.co.uk)

Jerry Lewis

SNIPPETS

Kite Bloggers

Rob Parson
located this
snippet,
'Bloggers with
a Bird's-eye
View of the
World' in the

Daily
Telegraph on 7
th
September
2013. The
story has a
coloured photo

of a red kite in
flight with the
caption “We
know what
you’re up to....”
The story
reads:

‘Birds started
tweeting 1500
million years
before Jack
Dorsey and

friends came
up with the 140
character
message - and
now, scientists
report, they
have taken up

blogging, too.
Researchers at
Aberdeen
University have
set up four red
kites to
describe their

days without
any human
intervention.

The birds

trying to
re-establish
themselves in
Scotland after
being driven to
extinction have
been fitted out

with satellite
tags reporting
their
movements up
to six times a
day. These are
then

automatically
linked to
information on
local habitats,
geography and
weather, and
turned into

reports using
sophisticated
software.

Thus, the

one-year-old
Millie, recounts
having had “a
social week”
with two other
kites around
Errogie, near

Loch Ness.
Moray, one of
her
companions,
spent most of
her time on
farmland

“feasting on worms and insects” but made “odd journeys to heather”.

Meanwhile,
Ussie, a
two-year-old
male rescued
after being

caught in a
fence, roosted
in woodlands
near the
Dornoch Firth,
while Wyvis
frequented

“acid
grassland”
near
Wanlockhead,
Scotland’s
highest village,
in Dumfries

and Galloway.

Bloggers, of
course, are
always winging

it and flying
kites. So it
makes a nice
change to get
a real bird's
eye view'.

*(For the
computer
jargon-challeng
ed, which
includes the*

*editor, a blog
is a
contraction of
the words
web log
) and is a
discussion or*

*informational
site published
on the World
Wide Web and
consisting of
discrete
entries, known*

as "posts")

US Wind Turbine deaths of Golden Eagles.

Keith
Royslance
located this
item on the
internet BBC

News on 23rd N
ovember 2013
entitled: 'US
firm Duke
Energy pays
out over wind
farm eagles

deaths'. It
reads:

'A huge us
energy supplier

has agreed to
pay out \$1m
(£630, 000)
over the
deaths of
golden eagles
at two wind

farms'.

Duke Energy
Renewables
agreed to the

sum after
pleading guilty
to charges of
14 eagle
deaths in the
past three
years at the

Wyoming sites.
It is the first
time the
Obama
administration
has taken
action against

a wind energy
company in
such a case.
The AP news
agency report
that the fines
will go to

wildlife and wetlands conservation bodies.

The charges
were brought
under the
Migratory Bird
Treaty Act,
which protects
Golden Eagles

as well as
other species.
According to
one study by
biologists in
2013, wind
energy

facilities in 10
US states have
killed at least
67 Golden and
Bald Eagles
since 2008, AP
said. The

eagles often
fail to look up
as they search
for pray until it
is too late,
slamming into
the turbines.

They can also
be sucked in
by the
tornado-like
vortex created
by the
fast-moving

blades.

Duke Energy
Renewables
Greg Wolf said

the company
“deeply
regretted” the
impact on
Golden Eagles
at two of its
wind facilities

and had been
working closely
with the US
Fish and
Wildlife Service
to “take
proactive steps

to correct the
problem”.

These have
included

installing radar
technology to
help detect
eagles in flight
nearby and
further curbing
turbines at

times of high
eagle flight
activity.

**Donation
to the RSPB**

Every year,
for the past few
years we have
donated £100
to RSPB
Wales to be
spent on their

Welsh projects.
From next year
(2014) we will
donate it
directly to the
RSPB at
Newport

Wetlands
Reserve where
we hope to see
direct results
from our gift.

Normally this is our only donation to the RSPB and a reason to fend off other RSPB appeals to fund

projects
elsewhere in
the UK and
abroad. At our
November
Committee
meeting

however, we
agreed to give
an additional
£100 in
response to
their (RSPB)
UK Overseas

Territories Appeal.

The UK
Overseas

Territories are
as British as
the Isle of
Wight and are
home to some
of the rarest
species in the

world. In fact
90% of the
UK's
threatened
wildlife lives in
the UK
Overseas

Territories.

Examples
given by the
RSPB are:

100 northern
rockhopper
penguins are
lost daily
around Tristan

da Cunha. On
Gough Island,
Tristan
Albatross
chicks are
devoured by
house mice

every day.

Green turtles'
eggs and
young are

being eaten by
feral pigs on
Montserrat. We
hope that our
donation will
help our
threatened

wildlife in those
areas. If you
want more
information
visit [http://www
.rspb.org.uk/su
pporting/camp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/camp)

[aigns/ukot/inde
x.aspx](#)

**Keith
Roylance**

**Merry
Christmas
and a Happy
New Year**