

COMMITTEE COMMENTARY

Trevor Russell

Natural Resources Wales has an unhappy knack of grabbing our attention for all the wrong reasons. We are still contesting the issue of a license to kill 6 Goosanders and 12 Cormorants in order to protect salmon stocks in the river

Usk

- and we learned that this was just one of 19 Licenses they granted to allow fishing clubs to shoot birds throughout Wales earlier this year! They tell us that each caught salmon is worth £8000

! We are disputing the data they use to justify the licence

and we will give them the data

GOS

surveyors gathered when we counted

Goosanders

and Cormorants on the

Usk

over three surveys earlier this year.

Our incredulity with NRW was further heightened when we learned that scarification and flailing had taken place in clear-felled areas of Wentwood and Trellech in April, the peak of the avian breeding season! This was allowed because their site-survey did not reveal any ecological or environmental factors which might have prevented or delayed such activity. Pity they didn't look at a calendar, or ask

GOS

or other outside interests! These exchanges continue in the hope that they will give

NRW

pause for thought when asked for a

licence

next year.

Sales of our book "Birdwatching Walks in Gwent" slowed during the summer break. Although we only have a couple of hundred still in stock, we have decided NOT to have a reprint, so snap up those unique Birthday and Xmas presents now, whilst stocks last!

Two bits of good news from our Treasurer: i) Membership is up 12 on this time last year and

ii) we will not need to increase our membership fee in 2016 (we need to give 12 months notice of any change at the AGM).

Changes are afoot on our website; the County List has already been updated and the Records/Sightings page will be changed to enable easier record entry and analysis. We are also looking to see if we can incorporate Facebook and Twitter.

We attended five Summer Shows recently (see elsewhere in this edition).

Two dates for your diary:

The Monmouth Meadows Group meeting on October 8th at the Centenary Hall, Usk, 7pm, when the topic will be Bees. For details contact: Maggie Bliss 01989 750740

Welsh Ornithological Conference, November 8th, Ruthin, Denbighshire. See their website for details: www.birdsofwales.org.uk

but can it possibly be as good as the conference held in Monmouth last year? Answers on a postage stamp!

County Bird List updated (or Where on earth is Kestrel?)

Those of you who use the GOS website will have seen that there's a new tab in the list across the top – click on this and you'll find an up-to-date County List. It's based on the one which appears in the Annual Report although the status of each species is given in abbreviated form.

As you know, GOS follows the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) order and the sharp-eyed amongst you will notice yet another change in the taxonomic order! The advent of DNA sequencing has thrown up some unexpected results in recent years: grebes, less primitive than previously thought, now fall between herons and birds of prey while crows have moved up the list and pipits down. There have been shake-ups within waders, gulls and warblers too. The latest research indicates that falcons are not that closely related to other diurnal birds of prey and they now appear after woodpeckers.

It all takes a lot of getting used to! However, using the online County List to find a particular species is far easier than hunting for it on the written page. Just use Ctrl F, type the species name into the box which drops down and you'll be taken to the right place. An excellent reason for using our webpage.

Rare Species Description Form updated

Submitting the right information to enable your rare find to be accepted is easy when you use the Rare Species Description Form. Currently, the updated form is on the GOS webpage at the end of the County List but it should soon be accessible under the Sightings tab so do keep checking there.

If you're lucky enough to spot any species with the recording code D, please download and print out this form, then complete, scan and email it to the County Recorder, Tom Chinnick, at countyrecorder@gwentbirds.org.uk . Alternatively, post it to Tom at 51

Emlyn
Avenue,
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It is hoped that it will soon be possible to complete and return the form online but at the moment our website package doesn't allow this.

Ever wanted to show a few of your best bird photos to GOS? Al Venables

Well you will soon have the chance. At the next AGM on Sat 17th Jan, the business will be followed by a Members' Evening at which we would like a few members to each bring along 5-10 minutes worth of photos that can be projected.

The photos could be a few of the most interesting ones from a recent trip or a local habitat, or might just be a collection of pictures from various sources that you would like to show. We used to do this quite regularly and it was generally very successful.

You will need to bring your photos on a memory stick, preferably in a PowerPoint file, but this is not essential. We will be looking for about 6 contributors, possibly more. We will need to know in advance how many members will be showing pictures, so if you would like to participate, please let me know by email well in advance (the sooner the better, although it is a long time off!).

Don't be shy - show us what you've got.

Contact: Al Venables:

Colour-ringed Curlews

Al Venables

Please keep a look out for colour-ringed Curlews this autumn-winter. Mike Smart, a Gloucestershire birder, has been colour-ringing Curlews on the upper Severn for several years. He would like to know whether any of them turn up on the Gwent coast. The rings are usually 2 on each leg (one being a conventional metal BTO ring), all positioned on the upper part of the leg, just above the joint, so they are easy to see. Goldcliff Lagoons on a big tide usually offers good viewing facilities for this species. Please note the colours on each leg and their position (e.g. Left leg: red above green; right leg: blue above metal BTO ring). There may be light or dark versions of the colours, so note such as 'dark blue', or 'pale green'. Please send details to me and I'll pass them to Mike. If you happen to have a scope and camera with you, a digiscope shot showing the number on metal can be useful in some records.

Many thanks
Al Venables