

2018 AGM MEMBERS EVENING, JANUARY 20TH □ Trevor Russell □

I know it's early notice but after the formalities of the AGM we will be holding a Members Evening where you will be invited to give a 10-minute slide presentation on anything likely to grab our attention, be it birds, holiday adventures etc. (*but do ask me first if it falls into "etc"!*) □

We're looking for about 5 or 6 presenters so if you feel you would like to have a bash please contact me on tjrus2010@gmail.com. □

SPEAKER PROGRAMME FOR 2018, FEBRUARY – DECEMBER Trevor Russell □

I'm looking for speakers for our 2018 programme and you may be able to help. Have you heard a good speaker or a talk that we might consider for inclusion in our programme? Maybe someone you saw or heard perhaps in the GWT somewhere, at a neighbouring bird club – Glamorgan, Herefordshire, Bristol – the Bird Fair, even, I'm not too proud to plagiarise!

Please email me with suggested names and/or contact details (your name will be held in complete confidence) at tjrus2010@gmail.com

CAN YOU HELP, WILL YOU HELP? □

After 25 years of service as GOS Secretary, Trevor Russell has indicated he wishes to step down from this role and also as Indoor Meeting Secretary a role he held for many years and which he has taken on again recently.

We therefore require both a Secretary and Indoor Programme Secretary for 2018 and

beyond.

The secretary is obviously expected to attend the committee meetings (five per year) and take the minutes of the meeting and circulating them to all committee members. They are also responsible for Circulating the Agenda for meetings after agreeing with the chairman the agenda content.

More details about the role of secretary can be obtained from Trevor either by email indoor@gwentbirds.org.uk or by giving him a call on 01600 716266.

The indoor programme secretary role is to book speakers and the hall for our indoor lecture programme and to maintain contact with the speakers to ensure that they are reminded of their booking.. Trevor will have arranged the speakers and booked the hall for the 2018 programme before he takes a well-earned rest. Therefore the new indoor secretary will be able to settle in to the role during 2018.

More details can be obtained from Trevor in the same way as above.

M4 Relief Road – Destruction of many SSSI's Andrew Baker

An M4 motorway diversion around Newport, sometimes called the “M4 relief road”, has been considered since the early 1980s. The Welsh Government gave 3 separate route options for consultation before putting its weight behind the most environmentally damaging or black route. The Welsh Government then consulted on the Black route. Thousands of objections were submitted, and consequently the Welsh Government announced a local public inquiry which opened on 28 February 2017.

GOS has submitted written evidence to the public inquiry emphasising our objection to the proposal. We are objecting because the new section of motorway would cut through four of the Gwent Levels Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), destroying and fragmenting habitats. It will destroy the area used by a pair of common crane which returned to breed on the Levels last year; the first in Wales for 400 years. The inspector of the inquiry will report in several months

time. Then the Welsh assembly will vote on it. In case of the worst possible outcome – the Welsh Government would attempt to mitigate and compensate for these impacts by providing alternative habitat. GOS believes the proposals currently offered by the Welsh Government on this score are woefully inadequate. GOS is a member of the “Campaign Against the Levels Motorway” which continues to persuade politicians and the public that alternatives including the metro / trams etc providing a much better basis for making Newport a hub. Brexit may also provide an unlikely source of hope as EU support for infrastructure projects will stop.

I would ask all members who continue to have strong views against the proposed Black Route to write to your AM and ask him to consider carefully the environmental damage that will occur and to please vote against the proposed Black Route when it is raised in the Assembly.

STOP PRESS: CALM met on 11th October to plan the way ahead post public enquiry. It was decided to have a three pronged approach with sub groups working in the following areas:

Direct Political Influencing – to get maximum support from those AMs who are already opposed to the Black Route and to encourage those on the fence to jump into our camp.

Keeping the New M4 relevant across Wales – campaigning across Wales, making it clear that the New M4 is an investment issue affecting public spending across Wales, as well as being one of the biggest decisions for Wales as far as the nation’s impact on the global environment

Working with local communities, developing the grassroots campaign – helping local people build their voice and get it heard where it needs to be heard. If anyone feels strongly about this issue and would like to help out with one of the sub-groups please contact the Chairperson Catherine Linstrum by e-mail at the following address:

catherinelinstrum@me.com

Llandegfedd Reservoir – The Forgotten Jewel

Llandegfedd Reservoir is a SSSI for its overwintering wildfowl. Since the creation of the National Nature Reserve at Newport Wetlands the reservoir has become the poor relation with regard to birdwatching and the reporting of species present.

It has had a short term in the headlines this year due to the passage of five Osprey during the late summer and autumn months. In fact as this is being written two juvenile Osprey are still present at the site having been there for three weeks.

Why don't you help us to monitor the overwintering wildfowl this winter. Purchase a permit (£8) from the visitor centre (and a site key if you don't already own one) and visit the site on a regular basis reporting your sightings on the GOS website and on the BTO Birdtrack site if possible.

Peak counts of overwintering Wigeon were once as high as 2000 birds (1986/87). Over recent years peak counts have been below 700. Peak counts normally occur between December and February. Teal also occur in significant numbers at the reservoir. Peak counts of 250+ are regular.

Throughout the year you will see Tufted Duck, Mallard, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe and Cormorant. The Heronry at the north end of the reservoir has reduced in size over the past 15 years but still holds up to 10 active nests in the spring. Little Egret are now regularly seen at the site so perhaps in years to come we will see breeding pairs here.

More recently Mandarin Duck have taken up residence on the reservoir and a breeding population appears to be being created. Other species which are regular visitors are Goosander, Goldeneye and Gadwall.

Gull roosts in the winter evenings can bring in substantial numbers and less common gulls are always a possibility.

Over the years a number of less obvious species have turned up including: Great Northern Diver, Leach's Storm Petrel, Manx Shearwater, many Tern species and a few weeks ago a Wryneck at the dam end.

Out of the water all the usual species of passerines can be seen and heard. A Tawny Owl is often roosting in the trees around the area of Green Pool.

Let's make the autumn / winter of 2017 /18 the year we put Llandegfedd Reservoir back on the birdwatching map of Gwent.



□



Come and see the reservoir for yourself at a GOS Outdoor meeting? Saturday December 2017 Llandegfedd Reservoir. □ Meet at Fishermans Car Park 9:00 am for a 2.1/2 - 3 hour walk □

Note: Participants do not need a bird watching permit to attend this walk. Note also that the car park gates will be locked prior to the start of the walk and will be unlocked at the completion of the walk.

Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve Tom Dalrymple

Birds and other wildlife

It has been quite a good summer for migrant waders, all the species you would expect and the second highest counts for ruff and ringed plover ever recorded on the reserve.

The wintering wildfowl seem slower than usual in arriving this year with low numbers on the September WeBS counts for black tailed godwit, shoveler, teal and hardly any wigeon. Water rail numbers in the reedbeds have already swelled to 40 with winter migrants. Unusual sightings for this period include a spotted crane picked up on a trail camera in the reedbeds on the 20th September. An osprey seen flying over the lagoons on the 17th of September.



Spotted flycatcher seen near the lagoons on the 14th of September. Garden warbler heard on the 27th of August. Spoonbill was seen several times in July. The Cranes were last seen on the 25th of July. A cattle egret was seen flying over the lagoons on the 20th of July.

Migrant wader sightings include: up to 4 little stint, up to 9 ruff, curlew sand piper, knot,

sanderling, turnstone, up to 209 ringed plover, green sandpiper, common sandpiper and 3 or 4 wood sandpiper.

Management

63ha of rushy grassland has been cut, bailed removed and the regrowth cut again to try to keep on top of the rush. It's a big expense, but if the rush was left unchecked it would completely cover the grasslands making it unsuitable for most of the wintering waterfowl and for breeding waders and skylark.

Approximately 150 cubic meters of silt has been removed from lagoon 2. The silt was carefully skimmed off using a long reach excavator, to maintain a suitable profile for feeding waders. The silt settles out of solution from the turbid waters of the estuary in the near still waters of the lagoons. Unfortunately, if we didn't remove silt occasionally the lagoons would dry up.



We have been working with the Friends of Goldcliff Lagoons to build a new viewing screen, the "John Marsh Screen". It overlooks lagoon 3. A big foreshore clear up was cancelled this August due to lack of litter, surely a good sign and testament to all the hard work earlier in the year.

The volunteer team have removed all the ragwort from all the paths around the reedbeds, it took approximately 5 or 6 people 4 days this year. The ragwort has to be removed as when it's cut and bailed into hay it's poisonous to livestock. We need to haycut the verges to maintain the wildflowers enjoyed by visitors and pollinators alike.

We began flooding the field that is overlooked by the Redhouse hide in mid- September this year. It was quickly utilised by egrets, herons and ducks.

Events

RSPB organised a Bioblitz weekend on the 19th of August supported by SEWBRReC.



Kevin ran a dragonfly walk on the 13th of September

Gwent UKBS Report for August 2017 Chris Hatch

Highlights

A Cattle Egret was present at Peterstone Gout (8th). An Osprey was reported from Llandegfedd Reservoir (6th). A Wood Sandpiper was recorded at Newport Wetlands (26th), with

probably a separate bird also present at this site (31st). Single Firecrests were seen at Caldicot Castle (8th) and Newport Wetlands (13th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A Little Stint was reported (16th). A female-type Marsh Harrier was seen on several occasions during the month.

Other sites

Two Sandwich Terns were recorded at Llandegfedd Reservoir (14th). A Long-eared Owl was reported from Black Rock (15th). A Mediterranean Gull was seen at Cwmbran (17th). A Merlin was present on moorland above The British (23rd).

Gwent UKBS Report for September 2017 Chris Hatch

Highlights

Up to three Wood Sandpipers were present at Newport Wetlands (2nd). A Leach's Storm Petrel was seen being killed by a Peregrine at Llandegfedd Reservoir (13th). Three juvenile Osprey were also reported from Llandegfedd Reservoir (13th to 22nd), with single Ospreys being present at the site for most of the month. A Spotted Crake was photographed on a camera trap at Newport Wetlands. A Wryneck was reported from Llandegfedd Reservoir (23rd).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Up to three Spotted Redshank were present (from 3rd). Other waders of note included a Curlew Sandpiper (9th) and up to six Little Stints (from 13th). A male Marsh Harrier was

reported (22nd).

Other sites

A Gannet was recorded at Sudbrook (12th). A Manx Shearwater was seen at Llandegfedd Reservoir (13th), following very strong winds. A flock of 150+ Linnets was reported from Llangybi (17th).

Report on outdoor meeting 1/7/17 to Goetre House Wood

A period of changeable weather turned into a sunny day for the GOS walk at Goetre. T shirts and sunscreen was the appropriate wear rather than waterproof clothing. Eight of us set off for the easy walk through the Society's reserve at Goetre House Wood. We picked up Swallow and Goldfinch on the way to the Wood. In the Wood

Chiffchaff and Song Thrush were heard but our target species were the two possible species of Flycatcher, Spotted and Pied. A Green Woodpecker flew out of the trees and gave its usual call to complain at the disturbance. A Spotted Flycatcher was seen sitting on a branch before it flew up to catch an insect then returning to the same place, a sure sign of this species. A Jay, Blackbird and Robin were also seen here. Going on to the canal towpath we saw Buzzard and a Sparrowhawk. A Wren was skulking in a shrub on the opposite bank. Waterbirds present here were Mallard and Moorhen. A Lesser Black-backed Gull was on the field and a Stock Dove was spotted. We were expecting to see Grey Wagtail on the canal sluice at Park y Brain but due to disturbance from dog walkers and cyclists nothing was seen.

The walk along the canal to Goytre Wharf, and the lane back to the starting point gave us Magpie, Carrion Crow, Wood Pigeon and a Collared Dove. A last minute decision to have another look for the Grey Wagtails proved unsuccessful but we did pick another Spotted Flycatcher on the second look in the wood.

A disappointing count of 23 species but it was a pleasant morning walk.

Outdoor Meeting

Why not join us at a walk through Bargoed Woodland Park with Lee Taswell on Sunday 19 November at 9.00 am. Meet in the main car park. Grid ref: ST153976

The walk is graded easy over 3 miles. Lee can be contacted on the day on his mobile 07904 611 936

Indoor Meetings

Date	Title	Speaker
Saturday 11 November 2017	Saving near-extinct birds in the Seychelles	Ally Styles
Saturday 25 November 2017		

W Papua & Halmahera -

Painting Birds of Paradise in paradise

John Gale		
Saturday 09 December 2017	The Denny - Gwent's Bird is Rich	Richard Clarke
Saturday 20 January 2018	AGM & Members Evening	GOS members