

One bird whose call we all know is the cuckoo. However, word has reached my ears of a small number of cuckoos that have started to tweet!

OK, to be honest they are blogging rather than tweeting – and I thoroughly recommend you catch up with their latest posts at www.bto.org.uk

Cuckoo numbers are in serious decline and nobody is exactly sure why. All we really know is that they arrive in Europe during April, mate, lay eggs in other birds nests, depart before the young birds fledge and head back South, probably to Western Africa, leaving the young birds to make their own way home.

The British Trust for Ornithology are keen to find out where cuckoos go, their routes and the habitat they need in order to devise a plan to help conserve them. To do this they have fitted 5 male cuckoos with a tiny transmitter which tracks the birds location. Already it can be seen that the males move around quite a wide area within Britain looking for mates - and now they are starting to leave the country, which should provide valuable information on their life away from the UK.

In Gwent we are very fortunate to have many areas of suitable habitat for breeding cuckoos and I know that many Argus readers (including myself) take great pleasure from hearing, and occasionally seeing these strange and fascinating birds. Over the past week cuckoo calls have virtually stopped near me, indicating that the adult birds are ready to leave. I also tend to keep my eyes open for young cuckoos about now....in late June a few years ago I was lucky enough to see a recently fledged cuckoo (about the size of a pigeon) being fed by a very busy pair of reed warblers - one of my favourite birding memories.





Torfaen Tour Trumps Welly Telly

I would like to thank ecologists Kris Roberts and Steve Williams for inviting me on a tour around some areas of environmental interest in Torfaen recently - it was a really interesting and enlightening day.

It amazes me that countless local people tune in and enjoy watching programmes like Springwatch, yet don't think to get out and visit some of the wonderful places, packed full of flora and fauna, on their doorstep. If you want to find out more about natural gems in your area start off by checking out your local authority's website.

Birdwatching Walks

Gwent Ornithological Society's programme of guided birdwatching walks continues on Saturday 16th July when Stephanie Tyler will be leading a walk along the River Monnow, hoping to encounter species such as grey wagtail, dipper, sand martin and kingfisher. This 3 – 4 hour walk starts at 8am from the entrance to Llangua Church (about 1 km before the Llangua Bridge traffic lights on the A465 Abergavenny to Hereford road SO 390 257).

There is no need to book places on this walk, just turn up - New faces (especially Argus readers) are always welcome at GOS events.

Walkers should remember to bring suitable clothing (boots essential), food and drink – and binoculars if you have them.

For more information visit www.gwentbirds.org.uk or give me a call on the number below. Likewise, if you want me to send you a copy of GOS's programme of walks and talks, just let me know.

Keep in Touch

Thank you to all readers that have taken the time to get in touch.

I always enjoy hearing from you and can be contacted at m.stevens@webster.uk.net or on 01633 866470.