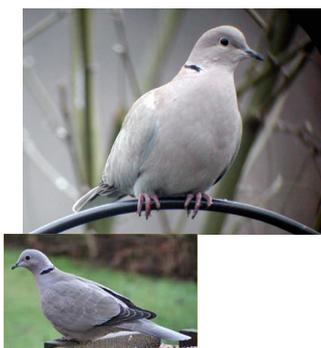


Perhaps it's a sign that I'm growing old, but 2012 seems to be flying past at a rate of knots. It seems as though Christmas has only just gone, yet suddenly Spring is nearly upon us! Already there are reports of sand martins arriving in the UK and even a few swallow have been seen!

Sand martins are a favourite bird of mine; They are always one of our earliest summer visitors and are a gregarious little bird that are a joy to watch. I can't wait to see how the colony using an artificial nesting site in Llanrhyon gets on this year.

There is also some early activity on the nesting front; Blackbird, robin and dunnock are all busy locally, as well as regular early nesters such as raven and heron. Collared doves are well known for breeding throughout the year, even so, a pair have caught me out by making an early start nesting in a hawthorn tree in my garden, thwarting my intention to cut it back a bit before the leaves appeared.

Keep an ear open for birdsong whilst you are out and about. Most of our resident species are belting out songs to attract a mate and establish a territory at present and I love listening to them, whether it is mistle thrush at the local park or skylarks on the mountains, the sound can't fail to lift your spirits.



Birdwatching Events

Don't forget tonight's birdwatching talk at Goytre Village Hall, when popular speaker Keith Offord will be returning to talk about 'Watching Harriers in Wales'. Keith has been studying hen harriers

since 1974 and can offer a unique insight into the lives of these much persecuted and elusive birds.

The next talk will take place at the same venue on Saturday 24th March, when Ian Harrison presents 'Birding in Oman'. I don't know about you, but to me Oman conjures up the image of a pretty hostile desert environment that doesn't seem very appealing to birds. However, this can't be the case or Ian wouldn't have anything to talk about! Why not pop along and find out what this Middle Eastern destination is really like?

Goytre Village Hall is situated just off the A4042 Newport to Abergavenny road (turn off by the Goytre Arms PH). Talks start at 7.30pm and entry, which includes tea and biscuits, costs £2

GOS have been able to arrange a visit to the Great Bustard Group release site on Saturday 31st March. A project to reintroduce bustards to Britain was launched in 2003, whereby birds reared in Russia were released onto Salisbury Plain.

If you would like to find out more about these wonderful birds and how successful the project has been then meet at Enford Village Hall, Wiltshire (SU 143 500 or for satnav users enter postcode SN9 6DD) at 11.30am. There is an admission charge of £10 plus £1 parking. For more information contact Steve Butler on 01873 854583 or 07970 558583.

Argus readers are particularly welcome to come along to all the events featured in this column. For more details visit www.gwentbirds.org.uk or give me a call on the number below.

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 smegstevens@gmail.com or on 01633 866470.