



Lucky local birders got a real treat earlier this week when a marsh warbler put in an appearance at Magor Marsh. These little birds are pretty similar in appearance to the more common reed warbler, but whereas about 400 pairs of reed warblers visit the Gwent

Levels to breed each year, only a handful of marsh warblers breed in the entire UK annually. There have only been five previous sightings of marsh warbler in Gwent

– and interestingly the last one was also at Magor Marsh back in 1996.

Although these birds could quite easily be overlooked, their song is outstanding – male marsh warblers belt out a wonderfully varied and protracted song; They can sing for up to an hour continuously and mimic other birds, from both Britain and their wintering grounds!

House Martins

I always get a bit concerned if I don't see my local house martins by early May; This year I had to wait until 8th May to see my first bird.... and it wasn't until the 16th that a pair finally visited a nest cup under my eaves. This seems to be the norm as a quick check on the internet reveals that house martins arrived back later than usual throughout Britain this year. Happily there seem to be few more pairs here compared to last year and both my nest cups are being used.

If you have house martins nesting near you, the British Trust for Ornithology would like to

know. They are conducting an easy to complete online survey that can be found at www.bto.org.uk

Birdwatching Walks

There are a number of fantastic birdwatching walks coming up over the next few weeks:

Next weekend, on Sunday 3rd June Steve Butler will be leading birders around Goytre. This village and it's surrounding areas is a real hot spot for birdwatching and Steve's 2 – 3 hour walk will take in Goytre House Wood Nature Reserve and stretches of the Mon – Brecon Canal. Steve is an excellent birder and a good friend of mine, who loves to see new faces on his walks. Target species for this walk include great spotted and green woodpecker along with pied and spotted flycatcher.

To take part, meet at The Goytre Arms car park (ST 323 046) at 8.00am.

The following Friday 8th June there is an evening walk being held at Wentwood. Local birder John Bennett knows the woods like the back of his hands and has a real treat planned for those who are prepared to go out birdwatching after dark – A close encounter with two of Britain's most elusive birds; nightjar and woodcock! Both these birds are rarely seen because they are incredibly well camouflaged and nocturnal. However, John knows a few spots where they emerge at dusk to put on an impressive and noisy display. If you would like to witness a truly memorable avian event meet John at the Cadira Beeches car park (SO 422 949) at 8.00pm – and please remember to bring a torch.

Argus readers are particularly welcome to come along to any of the walks mentioned. There is no need to book a place – just turn up. Remember to bring boots and waterproof clothing, refreshments, drinks and binoculars if you have them.

If you would like more details visit www.gwentbirds.org.uk or give Steve Butler a call on 01873 854583.

There is a fantastic opportunity for readers to see Newport Wetland Reserve in Bloom on Saturday 16th June, when Roger James of Gwent Wildlife Trust will be leading a walk around the Reserve's reedbeds to point out and talk about the plants that occur there – including hundreds of orchids! The walk starts at the Visitor Centre at 1.45pm and lasts 3 hours (the 1.00pm number 63 service from Newport Bus Station will get you there on time). Suitable footwear and clothing is advised and walkers are asked not to bring their pet dogs. For more information call 01633 636363

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