

Readers might be aware of recent news coverage about a disease that is affecting garden birds. The disease, Trichomonosis, is caused by a protozoan parasite (not a virus) and is well known for affecting pigeons and doves, but in recent years other birds have become susceptible to it, especially greenfinch and chaffinch.

The disease can have a dramatic impact on finch numbers; In some parts of England, greenfinch populations have dropped by a third and chaffinch by nearly a quarter. I have heard some anecdotal evidence of the disease being present in Monmouthshire and think that it is important that Argus readers are aware of it and how to help stop its spread.

Trichomonosis is passed between birds via saliva and causes the bird to have difficulty swallowing. Affected birds are quite easy to recognise; they appear lethargic and stay close to feeders, tables and sources of water, they may also drool or appear 'fluffed up'. Over the past few years the disease has been most noticeable between August and October - so keep an eye open in your garden now.

It is very important that you help protect the health of your garden birds by ensuring that contamination via your garden feeders is minimised. Empty, wash and disinfect your feeders regularly and make sure that drinking water is changed daily. However, please don't stop feeding birds because they might look elsewhere and start using less sanitary gardens.

## **Saturday Night Entertainment**

Gwent Ornithological Society's autumn programme of talks kicks off on Saturday 18th September when the Wye and Usk Foundation give an illustrated presentation of the work they do to improve the habitat, water quality and fisheries of these magnificent local rivers - I've just had a look at their website and I'm thinking about dusting off my rod.

Rivers are vitally important habitats for countless creatures, including birds and this talk promises to be very enlightening.

The talk is being held at Goytre Village Hall (just off the A4042 Newport to Abergavenny road)

on Saturday evenings and start at 7.30pm. Entry, including tea and biscuits is £2. No need to book, just turn up.

## **Guided Birdwatching Walk**

Don't forget that there is a guided birdwatching walk taking place on Saturday 18th September when local birder Lyndon Waters will be leading a coastal stroll. This easy five mile walk starts at Undy church (ST 440 869) at 8.00am and takes in the stretch of coast between Collister Pill and Magor Pill - places often overlooked by walkers and birders.

Lyndon knows the area like the back of his hand and will ensure that you get a warm welcome as well as showing you the local sights and birdlife.

New faces are always welcome at GOS events – Please wear suitable clothing, bring refreshments and binoculars if you have them.

If you would like more details of these events visit [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk) or give me a call on the number below. Likewise, if you want me to send you a copy of Gwent Ornithological Society'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](mailto:m.stevens@webster.uk.net) or on 01633 866470.

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