

National nest box week starts tomorrow so, for readers that have yet to buy their loved one a Valentine's day gift, look no further for the ideal present. I bought Mrs Stevens one several years ago and she was delighted. Well, to be honest she threw it at me and swore.....however, after I gave her some flowers and chocolates she started to appreciate it a bit more.

Seriously, nest boxes are a great idea. Many bird species rely on holes to build their nest in, and nowadays those holes are harder to find. Wooden fascias and soffits on houses have been replaced by uPVC, and fewer dead trees are found in parks and gardens. Placing a nest box is an ideal way to attract birds to your garden and I guarantee that you will derive great satisfaction from birds using your box, especially when you hear the young calling and see the parents shuttling back and forth with food.

If you are considering getting a nest box, why not make your own? It's a simple and fun project that you and your children can carry out over half term. Your box doesn't have to look perfect, as long as it is about the right size and situated away from predators, the wind and rain, it should be fine.

There is a useful guide to making nest boxes, including a template, instructions and helpful tips at www.bto.org.uk - simply follow the 'National nest box week' link. Or, if you don't have internet access give me a call and I'll gladly try to help you out.

Birds, such as blue tits, house sparrow(pictured) and starling are already on the look out for suitable nesting sites, so if you complete and erect yours soon, you stand a really good chance of it being used this year....What are you waiting for?

Please remember to sign the on line petition to help stop the killing of migratory birds on Malta. This petition is aimed at bringing pressure on the Maltese government, who are currently considering re-opening the spring hunting season in defiance of EU laws.

Each spring, millions of protected birds migrate across the Mediterranean, where they run the gauntlet of twelve thousand trigger happy Maltese 'hunters'. Countless numbers of these birds are killed each year as a result of this illegal, senseless and barbaric practice that is regarded

as 'sport' - I hope that you agree that this has to stop immediately.

The petition can be found at www.birdlifemalta.org or at www.rspb.org.uk (follow the link under the 'latest news' section).

The petition has to be signed by March 2nd so don't delay; Add your name and help stop the massacre for good.

Coming Up

Don't forget tonight's illustrated talk (Saturday 13th) at Goytre Village Hall when Jim Almond presents 'Peregrines in Shropshire and Beyond'. Peregrine falcons are awesome birds of prey that are making a recovery after years of persecution. Jim's talk promises to give a fascinating insight into the life of the birds on his 'patch'.

Goytre Village Hall is situated just off the A4042 Newport to Abergavenny road (SO 323 046) and the talk starts at 7.30pm. Entry, including tea and biscuits is £1.50.

Another talk is scheduled for the same venue on Saturday 27th February, when Graham Wren presents 'Nestboxes – The Comings and Goings'. Graham has over forty years experience of peering into nestboxes and is going to lift the lid on the secret lives of birds such as blue tits, nuthatches and tawny owls....Put a note in your diary!

Next Sunday, 21st February there is a guided birdwatching walk at Llandegfedd Reservoir. The walk is being led by keen local birder Craig Constance and starts at the Fisherman's car park (at the North end of the Reservoir SO 333 006) at midday. Craig will lead you around this prime birdwatching spot and help you identify your sightings. The walk ends at 3.30 pm, enabling you to witness the arrival of large numbers of gulls that roost at the Reservoir each evening.

Please make sure you dress suitably and bring binoculars if you have them.

New faces are always welcome at GOS events – For more details visit www.gwentbirds.org.uk or give me a call on the number below.

Keep in Touch

Thanks to all readers who have taken the time to get in touch. I enjoy hearing from you and can be contacted at m.stevens@webster.uk.net or on 01633 866470.

Mark Stevens