

Readers might have heard in the news that thousands of waxwings are currently in Britain, having flown over from Scandinavia. At present they seem to be confined to the north and east of the UK, but it is only a matter of time before they spread out south and west in search of berries and fruit to eat.

Waxwing are beautiful, exotic looking birds that breed in the far north of Europe. Each winter, as the temperature drops they venture south and a small number cross the North Sea to Scotland. Occasionally they arrive en masse, and readers might recall that the last 'invasion' was in early 2005 when large flocks of waxwing could be seen locally from late January up until mid April.

The arrival of this year's birds is unusual because it has happened before the onset of a biting winter. Experts think that this early arrival signifies either the berry crop in Scandinavia has been very poor or that there are lots more waxwing due to a successful breeding season. Either way this promises to be a great year to see them.

I'll keep you abreast of any breaking waxwing news – In the meantime please feel free to check out what has been seen locally via the sightings page at [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk)

## **Unmissable Birdwatching Talks**

Don't forget that there is an illustrated talk tonight, Saturday 13th November. The speaker is local birder Steve Roberts and the subject is 'The Life of the Honey Buzzard'. This talk promises to be something very special – honey buzzard are rare summer migrants with a taste for wasp grubs. The whereabouts of their nest sites are closely held secrets among a handful of birders - and Steve is a man in the know!... Make sure you come along for a real treat.

The talk is being held at Goytre Village Hall (just off the A4042 Newport to Abergavenny road) and starts at 7.30pm. Entry, including tea and biscuits is £1.50. No need to book, just turn up.

On Saturday 27th November there is another talk (same time, venue and details as above). This time the speaker is Jerry Lewis (a jedi master of the birdwatching world) and he will be

talking about one of our most elusive resident birds, the hawfinch. These colourful little finches are often referred to as 'flying nutcrackers' as they are equipped with incredibly powerful beaks. Hawfinch are rarely seen as they are both rare and notoriously shy, however they are present locally, mainly in the Wye Valley and Jerry has been studying them for years.....This is a talk that you don't want to miss!

New faces are always welcome at GOS events, for more information 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.

## **Empty Tables?**

Don't worry if birds aren't visiting your feeders and tables. There is plenty of natural fare available at present and birds are taking advantage of it. Try to keep a small amount of food out for them and check that it doesn't become mouldy – The birds will return and be glad of it later in the winter.

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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