

I know it's still a bit cold and wet, but there are definite signs that spring is on the way: There is plenty of frogspawn about, albeit a little bit later than usual, and many birds are starting to sing. Robin, great tit, blackbird and song thrush are always among the first to start, and have been whistling away for a while. However, I always listen out for two particular birds, namely chaffinch and nuthatch, that tell me spring is fast approaching. Well, I'm pleased to announce that I heard both last weekend, so in my opinion spring is definitely in the air.

I received an email the other day from a lady who had seen a dipper on Bettws Brook in Newport for the first time. This got me thinking about how some water birds seem recently to have become a little more confiding in their nature and are now quite often seen in towns. Dipper (pictured) are normally very wary birds and disappear when humans comes into view, however if they find a suitable stretch of urban water (such as Bettws Brook or the Afon Llwydd in Cwmbran) then they will tolerate human presence in order to take advantage of the food and conditions on offer. Another bird that appears to getting 'bolder' is the goosander. A few winters ago you could see them on Cwmbran Boating Lake early in the morning, though they would fly off as soon as dog walkers and other people started to arrive. Now however they seem happy to stay put and hunt for fish in the nearby river all day whilst people stroll past. I've even noticed one on the canal outside my home recently, seemingly unperturbed by walkers and cyclists.

If you have seen anything interesting let others know about it and post the details on the sightings page at [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk)



## Birdwatching Events

GOS have organised some great walks and talks over the next few weeks:

On Saturday 5th March, well known photographer and author Mike Leach will be appearing at Goytre Village Hall (just off the A4042 Newport to Abergavenny road) to present 'Owls of the World'. There are 133 known species of owl, and so far Mike has managed to see 86 of them on his travels.

On Saturday 19th March, Shropshire bird ringer Alan Heath will be on hand with his illustrated talk on bird identification - a subject that we all need a bit of help with! Alan has plenty of experience in this field and will be giving us an invaluable lesson in the basic principles of bird ID.

Both talks start at 7.30pm. Entry, including tea and biscuits is £1.50. No need to book, just turn up

If you fancy something a bit more active then there is a guided birdwatching walk to the Forest of Dean arranged for Saturday 5th March. The walk is being led by my good friend Steve Butler and the meeting point is Waitrose car park, Monmouth at 8.30am. The walk is scheduled to last about 4 hours and will take in several birding hotspots, giving you the best possible opportunity of seeing some very special and elusive species such as hawfinch and goshawk.

On Saturday 19th March local birder (and old school mate) Lyn Waters will be leading a walk to Collister Pill. This 4 hour walk starts at Undy Church (ST440 869) at 8.00am and takes in a stretch of local coastline that few people visit. Lyn knows this area like the back of his hand and is confident that some interesting birds will put in an appearance – miss it at your peril!

New faces (especially Argus readers) are always welcome at GOS events.

Walkers should remember to bring suitable clothing, food and drink – and binoculars if you have them.

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 GOS'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.