

QUESTIONNAIRE CONCLUSIONS

Trevor Russell

'Curate's egg' - good in parts!

Back in April, Richard Clarke composed a questionnaire designed to ask how you thought the committee was doing in managing the finances of the Society and providing the sort of services you wanted.

We are very grateful to the 75 of you who responded and Richard subsequently compiled the results, together with a summary so that the committee could discuss the findings. We are also most grateful to Richard for his time and efforts.

A one-line summary would read 'Birds society is a Curate's egg - good in parts!' You justifiably slated us for a poor performance with the library (see GOS Library article on page 4 of this edition) and we received many useful suggestions in other areas of activity.

The following is a summary of the main action points agreed by the committee:

1) Library

1.1 Ensure that the library is open at every indoor meeting to improve accessibility - we've

had more keys cut.

1.2 Set up a small team to catalogue the present stock and remove old and redundant items to create more space. More interesting books will be offered for sale to GOS members at discounted prices before selling outside GOS

1.3 Introduce computerised lending.

1.4 Introduce an initial lending limit of two weeks, but amend if impractical.

1.5 Charges for borrowing videos and DVDs will be stopped.

2) Outdoor programme

2.1 Try to introduce more weekday trips (depending on leader availability).

2.2 Try to introduce new locations and vary some of the present walks.

2.3 Encourage more `added value' contributions from the leaders, particularly for

inexperienced birdwatchers.

2.4 Introduce `beginners' walks' and advertise as such.

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2.5 Continue themed walks when and where possible.

2.6 Advertise more details regarding terrain, clothing and accessibility

2.7 No re-introduction of coach trips to take members to out-of-county sites. Despite

being hugely enjoyable when tried several years ago, this proved to be an organisational nightmare, with travel by car cheaper.

3) Website

3.1 Phil Thompson, who now lives in America, wishes to step down as webmaster. We

will try to get a professional web designer to re-vamp the website and seek a local expert (a GOS member would be good!) to maintain the site. It is recognised that neighbouring bird clubs have superior websites

4) The Dipper

4.1 Duplication of bird records at NWR will be stopped.

4.2 The latest edition of The Dipper will not be published on the GOS website, as it

defeats the purpose of membership if access to current publications is available free online. An old Dipper will be displayed instead.

4.3 Holiday reports will be reduced to an agreed length or shortened as space allows.

5) Indoor meetings

5.1 We will try to continue the popular themed walks-and-talks, ie, link talks on perhaps

waders or migrants, with a walk at NWR to look for them led by local experts.

5.2 Raffle prizes will be limited to three or four, but of improved quality

6) Annual report

6.1 We need more illustrations from more illustrators - please.

6.2 We would like to introduce some line drawings for added interest.

7) Finance

No significant changes to be made to existing budgets or spending patterns.

COMMITTEE COMMENTARY

Trevor Russell

The September meeting learned that the appeal against planning refusal at Whitson Aerodrome had taken an interesting turn. It was revealed - under oath - that the site had been developed illegally, with the construction of hangars and concrete runways, and that businesses

were being operated there without permission.

The appeal was suspended until October to allow a site inspection and, perhaps, enable the environmental protests to be added to the list of objections!

The results of the Society questionnaire held in April had been discussed at a separate meeting during the summer, and a summary of conclusions appears on the front page of this edition.

While the Welsh Assembly Government has cancelled the M4 Relief Road, it still forms part of the National Transport Plan - which means that it could be resurrected and still represent a threat to the Gwent Levels SSSI

Congratulations to Luke Philips, our Field Secretary, who has gained a wonderful appointment within the RSPB and has left the county to work at RSPB Weymouth: Lodmore, Radipole and Portland Bill!

Our loss is Weymouth's gain, and we wish Luke every possible success. He will continue to assist in planning the 2010 outdoor programme as part of his handing over process.

A working party needs to be created for Goytre House Wood. Early tasks include removing sycamore saplings and other undesirables. More details at indoor meetings.

It was agreed to introduce a signing-in register at indoor meetings in order to better reconcile attendees with money collected at the door. It would also allow better recognition of visitors and be helpful in an emergency evacuation situation.

2011 will see the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Society and ideas are being sought for suitable celebrations.

Colour ringed White Wagtail at PW Sluice Farm — decoded ☐ ☐ ☐ ???

A long distance photograph of a White Wagtail was taken at SF on April 28 this year - there were eight birds scattered about the seafront on the day.

When one of the photos was enlarged on the computer, the bird was seen to be colour ringed on both legs. Details were sent to the BTO, and eventually I received a phone call from Dennis Elphick of the Slapton Lee (Devon) bird ringing group. He informed me that bicolour rings were used, which is why three colours could be made out on the left leg.

Apparently, there are three groups dedicated to ringing Pied/White Wagtails in the UK. In addition to the Slapton group, where they can have a surge of more than 600 birds in the second week of October, (60% being of the White Wagtail Montacilla Alba race),

GOS LIBRARY **Trevor Russell**

The performance of the library attracted deserved criticism in the recent questionnaire responses, largely because of its inaccessibility during indoor meetings.

Sadly, this was because Librarian Rob Moeller had been overtaken by care demands at home and couldn't make the Saturday meetings. In recent months, Rob's care obligations have not diminished and unfortunately he has felt compelled to resign.

The inaccessibility was not his fault - the committee should have reacted much faster and had other sets of keys cut to open the bookcase to enable lending to carry on, and we apologise for this lack of foresight.

We sincerely thank Rob for all his efforts in classifying the books in an impossibly confined bookcase, and hope that we can look forward to seeing him again in the near future.

Several things have happened since: Keith Jones has volunteered to become Librarian; several sets of keys have been cut so that, in Keith's absence, other committee members will be able to open the library to enable it to operate even if only on an `honesty' basis to record borrowings and returns; and more shelf space has been created by removing unused, out of date books and reports.

Some of these items will be offered free of charge at indoor meetings, other books will be offered to members for sale at a pound or two, some better books will be given as raffle prizes and some — those with a higher monetary value (some very high) - will be listed and first, offered for sale to GOS members at a discounted price. If not bought internally, they will be offered for sale through bookshops, eBay, and so on.

Keith has also made searching for books easier by labelling various categories, eg, avian science, monographs, global locations etc

In future, there will be no charge for borrowing books, DVDs or videos. Please come and visit your new look library — and use it!

A SAIL THROUGH THE COTO DONANA

Brian Adcock

This year, my wife May and I had chosen a cruise of the Western Mediterranean in early June with Swan Hellenic. The historic theme was on Nelson and Napoleon, the itinerary commencing in Livorno in Tuscany and taking in Elba, Corsica and Minorca before calling at various Iberian destinations en route to the Channel Islands and Dover.

This culturally rich itinerary included one outstanding birding prospect - a daytime cruise along the Guadalquivir River from the Atlantic Coast to Seville and back again the following afternoon.

Most cruise ships call at Cadiz and convey their passengers by coach to Seville, but Minerva carried only 300 people and was small enough to navigate the river and the entrance locks into the city, passing through the heart of the renowned Coto Donana wetlands.

The slow passage, taking four hours in each direction, promised a wealth of birding from the platform of Minerva's rear open passenger deck.

The ship arrived at the mouth of the broad estuary on a splendid sunny mid-morning. Until this point, the cruise had yielded a predictable and fairly narrow range of Mediterranean species: plenty of Yellow-legged Gulls, Melodious and Sardinian Warblers on Elba, a very obliging Audouin's Gull in Mahon Harbour, Minorca with over 30 more in Motril, Almeria, and lots of Pallid Swifts in Motril and Gibraltar.

A few Cory's Shearwaters followed the ship outside Elba and Corsica. But along the Gualalquivir, we sailed through a succession of habitats, beginning with saline lagoons, expanses of reed beds interspersed with scrub, open pasture and paddy fields.

Birds were simply everywhere - on the lagoons and pastures, along the river and its banks and overhead under the fierce Spanish sun. As the lone birder, but with lots of interested co-passengers, it was relentless keeping track with the species and numbers counts.

The estuary mouth held large numbers of Grey Herons and a few passing Little Terns. But

within a mile or two, we encountered the saline lagoons - mainly on the right bank - each holding groups of 20 to 50 Greater Flamingoes, with over 300 birds recorded. As we sailed east, the counts of gulls and terns became more interesting. Regular Gull-Billed Terns passed along the river on either side and larger numbers of Whiskered Terns dipped low over the reedbeds and shallows just inland.

Several Collared Pratincoles showed well over the reed beds, revealing dark upper and lower wings, white rumps and forked tails, occasionally crossing the river ahead of the ship. Small groups of Black-headed Gulls flew by, together with a few Slender-billed Gulls - similar in size but with white unmarked heads and dark, slightly droopy bills.

Grey Herons were numerous along the banks; just two Purple Herons in low flight over reeds and scrub and, closer to Seville, several sightings of Black-crowned Night Herons flying low over the water and standing sentinel on bankside logs. From the mid-point on, there were increasing numbers of White Storks in small colonies close to the river in stunted trees and in large grazing groups in the paddy fields and pastures. I counted over 400 birds on the return journey. Raptor records were dominated by Black Kites — more than 20 in both directions — with only single Red Kites, a few Common Kestrels but none of the larger Eagles or Vultures.

A personal highlight for me was the inspiring spectacle of the Bee-eater colonies in the low sand bluffs along the river just before we approached Seville. We passed five colonies, each holding over 20 nest sites, with marvellous views of these spectacular multi-coloured jewels flying into the colonies, over the river and perched every 50 metres or so on overhead power lines — more than 70 birds in total.

Once inside the lock gates, there was no time to draw breath except to enjoy the colony of Pallid Swifts under the bridge next to our mooring site. The next day, we enjoyed a tour of the Jewish Quarter and magnificent Alcazar - and were off again on the return journey.

All the inward species, apart from Purple Heron, were seen again - with the addition of a splendid flock of over 30 Glossy Ibis in flight, several crossing the rear of the ship.

Any birder thinking of visiting Seville might explore the opportunity to arrive by boat. The Coto Donana

is not easy to access, even by hired four-wheel drive, and the Guadalquivir does seem to offer a unique means to appreciate the scale and splendour of this incomparable wetland from the closest of quarters.

Photographing Birds

Dave Brassey

Bird photography as a hobby seems to be growing in popularity year on year, and I thought it would be a good idea to try and clarify the legal position and in particular our Society's stance in accepting and publishing photographs.

There is, in fact, no specific law regarding photography but there is about 'disturbance'. The general rule is, of course, never to disturb any bird – especially near its nest site - and this is legally enforceable in respect of Schedule 1 birds.

In trying to find a definitive answer to the problem, I sought the assistance of Dr Sian Whitehead, Senior Ornithologist and Dylan Lloyd, Senior Species Protection Officer, both of CCW and Sgt Ian Guildford, CCW's Police Wildlife Liaison Officer.

Their response was:

1) All photos used should be obtained with appropriate legal permissions, including Schedule 1 photography licences, if appropriate.

2) If photos are not supported by appropriate licences, then the specific case should be considered to ascertain if there are legal problems and that the source of the photos has not

compromised the conservation interest of the species.

Any conservation gain in the use of images should be balanced against any potential negative impacts, and the aim should always be to encourage responsible behaviour on the part of bird photographers.

You should be aware that there have been instances where publication of photos of Schedule 1 species have led to complaints being made. Although in most cases no offences were disclosed, the complaints about the publication of the pictures did require police investigation.

In summary, we would recommend that you should, by preference, use licensed photos and be very selective/careful when using non-licensed photos. If you do publish any non-licensed photos, then we would recommend that you include a properly worded sentence/paragraph which confirms that, in obtaining the image, the conservation interest of the subject was not compromised (specifically, you'd need to provide assurance that there was no disturbance at or near the nest site).

You should also take the opportunity to encourage responsible photography by advising that those wishing to undertake bird photography, where disturbance is a risk, should consult the appropriate statutory nature conservation body on the potential need for licences. You could also point the reader to the RSPB leaflet Bird Photography and the Law.

Unfortunately, this leaflet now seems to be out of print, but a PDF of it can be found at <http://www.birdimages.co.uk/files/documents>

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/
BIRDPHOT
~tcm5-43180.pdf and we shall endeavour to keep a small supply of photocopies in the library.

In order, therefore, to avoid appearing to condone or encourage disturbance of a Schedule 1 bird during the breeding season, the Society's policy is that no photographs of these birds will be included either in the Annual Report or on the Society website unless licence details are submitted.

The only exceptions will be of birds that either do not breed anywhere near South Wales or are clearly non-breeding or passage birds. This would then allow photos of birds such as Spoonbill and Wood Sandpiper, which feature in this year's report. Please don't let this policy deter you, however, from submitting other photos — they make a huge difference to the report and we are very grateful to all photographers for allowing us to use them.

For the record

Mike Pointon

During a visit to Newport Wetlands at Goldcliff in early July, I witnessed the farmer driving a four-wheel drive vehicle inside the electric fence. Several wader species were flying in panic. I was informed that only a few days previously, the same farmer had been driving a quad-bike with passengers - a woman and a child — onboard, causing major disturbance.

I contacted Tom Dalrymple, the Manager of the Reserve, to bring this to his attention. He informed me that the farmer had grazing rights and, therefore, the right to inspect his flock of sheep. (Even if he has the right to inspect his sheep he should do so within the law - my italics.)

After a long discussion, Mr Dalrymple said that next year he would ensure that the farmer did not have vehicular access to the land beyond the electric fence between 1 March and 31 July. He had not, he said, realised that the farmer was grazing land inside the electrified fence with sheep. Mr Dalrymple says that he intends to draw up a new agreement which will state that only cattle should be allowed to graze in this sensitive area.

Mr Dalrymple also clarified the situation with respect to sea anglers. He stated that from Gold cliff Point to Uskmouth Power Station was private land, that no one had the right to fish from the sea wall or shore and that a number of people had been reported to the police by him.

It should be remembered:

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions, intentionally to:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- have in one's possession or control any wild bird (dead or alive) or any part of a wild bird which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954.

- have in one's possession or control any egg or part of an egg which has been taken in contravention to the Act. This includes items taken or killed before the passing of the Act.

- have in one's possession or control any live bird of prey of any species in the world (with the exception of vultures and condors) unless it is registered and ringed in.
- have in one's possession or control any bird of a species occurring on Schedule 4 of the Act unless registered (and in some cases ringed) in accordance with the Secretary of State's regulations.
- disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependant young of such a bird.

SIGHTINGS

JUNE 2009

Highlights

Four Spoonbills, together with a probable Marsh Warbler were at Newport Wetlands (2nd).
Newport Wetlands Reserve

A Curlew Sandpiper was present, together with a drake Garganey (4th). Another drake Garga

ney

was reported on the

28th

. Bearded Tits were seen on a number of dates, with a maximum count of nine reported (

23rd

). Sea-watching from

Goldcliff

Point produced over 80 Manx

Shearwaters

(

18th

) and a single Razorbill (

19th

).

Other sites

A pair of Barn Owls successfully fledged four chicks at Portskewett. Two pairs of Nightjars

were reported from

Wentw

ood

(1

1th

), with another pair reported from

Cleddon

(

8th

). Single Red Kites were recorded at

Abergavenny

(

14th

and

21st

),

Pontypool

(

24th

),

Caldicot

(

24th

),

Goytre

(

24th
) and a pair was present at
Blaenserchan
(
30th
) . Other sightings of note included 25 Manx
Shearwaters
past
Peterstone
(
25th
) , two male Grasshopper Warblers at
Garn-yr-erw
(
27th
) and a Spotted
Redshank
at
Peterstone
(
30th
) .

JULY 2009

Highlights

An Aquatic Warbler was trapped and ringed at the Newport Wetlands Reserve (22nd). A Spoonbill was also at this site (18th).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

A female Marsh Harrier was present (2nd). 12 Bearded Tits were reported (6th).

16 Little Egrets were recorded (8th) and a Wood Sandpiper was present (17th to 27th). Other

sightings of note included a Merlin (12th), a Lesser-spotted Woodpecker (23rd), a Little Stint (24th), a Black Tern (25th) and a Garganey (27th).

Other sites

Single Mediterranean Gulls were reported from Bettws (1st), Llandegfedd reservoir (6th), the second Severn crossing (8th) and Caerleon (27th). Two Ruddy 'type' Shelducks were seen at several coastal locations (8th to 29th). Two Yellow-legged Gulls were seen at the Whiteheads fields, Newport (18th) and a Gannet was reported from Magor (20th). Two Red Kites were reported from Abergavenny (24th), with a single bird at Brynmawr (

30th
) Other sightings of note included 27 Common Terns at
Llandegfedd
Reservoir (
23rd
) 230 Black-tailed
Godwits
at St. Brides (
24th
) and three Spotted
Redshanks
at
Caerleon
(
27th
)

AUGUST 2009

Highlights

A Wood Sandpiper was reported from the Newport Wetlands Reserve (5th). A Black Redstart was seen at the Moorings, Newport (
6th
).

Newport Wetlands Reserve

Two Ruddy Shelducks were present during the early part of the month. A maximum count of 22 Avocets was recorded (
1st). Sea-watching from Goldcliff produced
21 Manx
hearwaters
(
7th
) Other sightings of note included a Spotted
Redshank
(
1st
) a Barnacle Goose (
S

2nd
) , a Mediterranean Gull (
4th
) , six Bearded Tits (
18th
) and a Little Stint (
18th
).

Other sites

Two Common Scoter were at Llandegfedd Reservoir (3rd), with 23 Common Sandpipers also recorded at this site (5th). Up to five Hawfinches

were observed at Lower Minnetts

Wood (
26th
) . Mediterranean Gulls were recorded at the Moorings, Newport (
6th
) , Black Rock (
15th

,
17th

,
19th

,
25th

- two birds - and

27th

, also two birds),

Caerleon

(
16th

and

30th

) and

Sudbrook

(
24th

).

Red Kites were reported from Abergavenny (two on 4th, one on 6th, 8th, 15th ,18th and 24th),
Pentrepiod
(
4th
) ,
Cwmbran
(
4th
) ,
Tredegar
(
12th
) ,
Llanfihangel
Crucorney
(
18th
) ,
Gilwern
(
20th
) and
Abertillery
(
27th
) .

Other sightings of note included a Spotted Redshank at Peterstone Gout (8th) a Lesser-spotted Woodpecker at Cwmbran
(
23rd
) and seven Red Grouse on the Blorengge
(
23rd
) .

BTO NEWS

Jerry Lewis, BTO Regional Rep

I'm sure that most members will have realised by now that it is 100 years since Bird Ringing first took place in Britain and Ireland. A number of press releases have been issued by the BTO during the year to celebrate this fact.

The first bird to be fitted with a metal ring was on May 8, 1909 by ornithologists at Aberdeen University - a Lapwing chick.

The first British ringed bird to be found abroad was also a Lapwing and was found in France. Since then, some 36 million birds have had rings fitted by volunteers acting on behalf of the BTO.

During the last 100 years, 'British' birds have been found in the Siberian tundra and Arctic Canada, in the Antarctic Ocean and on beaches in Australia - and in some very unusual circumstances.

An Osprey was eaten by a crocodile in The Gambia, a Buzzard was eaten by a chimpanzee (in a zoo), a Reed Warbler died in an African spider's web, an Arctic Tern flew into a whaling ship in a snowstorm and several gulls and ducks have been hit by golf balls.

There is still much to learn, however, especially about the parts of the life cycles of our migrants when they leave our shores. The BTO is currently fundraising to establish research projects in the African winter quarters for some of our migrants (visit www.bto.org.uk and select 'current surveys' to find out more).

The oldest known British birds are a Manx Shearwater (51) and a Razorbill (42) - both ringed on Skomer. Even more remarkable is Europe's oldest Puffin (34) that was originally ringed, and then re-caught by the same ringer, on the Shiant Islands earlier this year.

Closer to home some longevity records include: Goshawk (19), a chick from the Forest of Dean, found dead in the Forest, Peregrine (19), a chick from Gwent whose ring was found in Cheddar Gorge (exact date of death not known, however, so it could be several years earlier) and Grey Wagtail (7), which was ringed as a chick in Brynmawr and then caught on the Grwyne Fawr in the Black Mountains.

The Cuckoo seems to have joined the ranks of those species showing the greatest declines, having problems finding enough food on the breeding grounds, and suffering a similar fate in its African wintering quarters.

A newly published book, *Say Goodbye to the Cuckoo*, by Mike McCarthy, laments the disappearance of this iconic bird of the spring/summer. Its distinctive song, one of the most easily recognised by everyone, may not be heard for much longer if current declines continue.

In contrast, it's boom time for Long-tailed Tits. While the bad weather of 2007 and 2008 caused poor breeding for many species, the early nesting Long-tailed Tits seem to have avoided the worst of the rains and are visiting gardens in ever increasing numbers.

Weighing less than 10g, they are particularly vulnerable to cold weather, and will roost communally to retain warmth. This is one species that has benefited from the recent run of mild winters.

Recent research from the BTO's Garden Ecology Unit has revealed that urban birds are lazy. They often arrive later at a bird table than their rural counterparts, and this is put down to the slight increase in temperature in urban areas.

The Shortest Day Survey has also revealed that birds with larger eyes (Robins and Blackbirds) are able to start feeding earlier after daybreak – presumably because their larger eyes are better able to cope with poor light conditions than those species with smaller eyes.

We are now at the mid point of the Bird Atlas, with two winter and two summer survey periods completed. Over three million observations have been recorded so far and overall coverage in our area has been very good.

There are, however, still a few gaps - and for this coming winter period, more timed tetrad visits (TTVs) are particularly needed in three of our 10 km squares, where coverage is currently well below the minimum number of eight TTVs.

These are SO 32 - the area in the north of the county and extending into Herefordshire, including Llanvihangel Crucorney, Hatteral Hill, Pontrilas and the Campston Hill areas; ST 38 - most of Newport and extending out to Underwood, Llanwern, Whitson, Goldcliff and the Wetlands Reserve; and ST 49 - most of Wentwood Reservoir, Devauden, Shirenewton and Caerwent areas.

At the start of the Atlas project, a few recorders reserved a number of tetrads to survey over the whole four-year survey period. I would be grateful if they could each confirm that they are

still on schedule to complete them all.

If for any reason you are falling behind in your planned programme, please let me know because someone else may be able to take on one of your reserved tetrads.

Anyone who is not able to spend some time in any of the squares mentioned above, and has no more TTVs allocated to them can now access the full species list for their own 10 km square (visit www.bto.org/birdatlas/ and select 'any square summary').

Then specifically go birding to look for those species not yet recorded and submit them as casual records.

You could also look at 'key statistics' on the Atlas home page, click on the Gwent map and 'local results' - you will find the proportion of species considered present that have been recorded so far for each of Gwent's 10 km squares - the 'species richness'.

Alternatively, you could venture further afield and help in other parts of the country, in Mid Wales or parts of Scotland - see the website for areas where help is still needed.

Newport Wetlands

Tom Dalrymple

JUNE

Sad news — Mary Price, a volunteer who has helped us since 2000, passed away this month. Mary will be fondly remembered and missed by all at Newport Wetlands.

Birds

The fox fence continues to work well. We now have 15 fledged Lapwing from 25 laying females and five Lapwing chicks that may just make it. This is a big improvement from the one fledged chick from 38 pairs last year.

The Avocet has had a disastrous year - no chicks have survived to fledge. This is probably due to a particularly persistent Lesser Black-backed Gull, but we will await the results of the saline lagoon benthic invertebrate study with interest.

Bearded tit juveniles have been seen in the reedbeds, confirming breeding success for another year. Shovelers have successfully bred on the reserve for the first time this year, with three females rearing broods.

Management

Mike has weed wiped the hard rush in the few fields that didn't have ground nesting birds and where the grass had been sufficiently grazed to prevent scorching. Opportunities have been limited over the past two years due to wet weather, so we have to take any chance we get.

On the saline lagoons, the stock have now been introduced. The hot weather has meant that we have had to introduce freshwater for the first time this year to maintain the salinities within target.

The visitor counters indicate that the total number of visitors to the reserve for the six months until the end of June is excess of 30,000.

The National Grid has begun the preparatory work for changing the wires on their pylons. Disturbance to wildlife and visitors should be minimal.

Events and visits

Kevin led a moth count event on the 6th, RSPB voluntary wardens gave guided walks on the

7th

and

21st

and the education team at the visitor centre ran 'Monsters of the Deep' on the

8th

.

Volunteers Sheila, Richard and Reece led a walking to health guided walk on the 11th. Trista

n

Hatt

on-Ellis

CCW's

senior fresh water ecologist, came to advise us on management on the same day.

Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd (The Edward Lloyd Society) ran a guided walk conducted in
Welsh on the 13th. The RSPB Conservation Management Team
visited on the 16th. Kevin gave a

guided walk to the

Caerleon

Rotary Club on the

18th

.

Roger James, Vice President of the Gwent Wildlife Trust, gave a guided walk to over 80
people on the 20th. A 25th anniversary celebration
was held for the RSPB

volunteers on the

21st

.

The reserve showed a display at the Nash fete on the 27th. Adrienne from the visitor centre
led a 'Beginners Guide to Medicinal Plants' on the same day. Cardiff Astronomical Society
organised a solar event on the

28th

JULY

Birds

Final scores for wader breeding are: Lapwing - 25 nests, 16 fledged; Redshank - 23 pairs, fledging success not certain thought to be 20-plus; Avocet - six pairs, none fledged; Oystercatcher three pairs, none fledged; Ringed Plover - two pairs, one fledged. Our Barn Owls successfully reared three young.

Management

Another wet July! It rained on 22 days and we had 170mm of rain, compared with 19 days and 148 mm last year, and 25 days and 160mm in 2007. Amazingly, the salinities of the lagoons have remained within target without allowing any tides on. All the water levels on the grasslands have been lowered to allow the rush to be cut in August.

The warm wet conditions have meant lots of plant growth. Our Thursday volunteers (Sheila, Richard and Reece) have been busy cutting rank vegetation from the paths.

On the saline lagoons, the stock has now been introduced. The hot weather has meant that Richie has been removing potential Crow perches, taking the opportunity to work on the grasslands before the birds return in September.

We have had the largest fly tipping incident since the reserve started. A whole tractor-trailer load of household rubbish dumped near the saline lagoons. Fortunately the culprits left their names and addresses in the rubbish, so hopefully they will be fined.

The reserve passed its ISO 14001 Green audit on the 8th. A long term volunteer discovered the rare plant Yellow Bird's Nest near the cycle track at Uskmouth

Events and visits

Welsh Assembly Member Andrew RT Davies was shown round the reserve on the 10th. The reserve open day was held on the 12th, with warm sunny weather helping to make it enjoyable for exhibitors and visitors alike.

A group from the Corporate Strategy Unit, Department of the Environment, Sustainability and Housing at the Welsh Assembly Government was given a guided tour of the reserve and a talk from David Trotman, RSPB Wales Head of Marketing, and Joanne Gossage, Newport City Council Conservation and Countryside Manager.

Steve and Linda Davidson led a bat watch event on the wettest day of the year so far (29th). A total of 55 people braved the rain to see the bats.

AUGUST

Birds

There seems to have been fewer species of migratory waders than last August. However, migration has been evident, with a flock of over 150 Ringed Plover. The Black-tailed Godwit flock reached over 200 on the 19th. The Goldcliff Ringing Group caught and ringed an Aquatic Warbler on the 22nd

Management

There has been just enough dry weather to allow the essential work to be done. All the wet grassland fields have been topped and the rush removed, the saline lagoon vegetation cut, the ditches flail mowed and the islands cleared in preparation for the winter birds. The IDB has begun the routine ditch casting.

Volunteers Richard Garman, Sheila Dupe, Rhys Rice and Philip Price have been busy repairing the steps on the viewing platforms at the saline lagoons. They have also cut back the overhanging brambles on Saltmarsh Lane.

CCW commissioned a bee survey this month. The contractor found a Shril Carder Bee nest, as well as several hundred Shril Carder Bee workers spread across the site. The highest densities were at Uskmouth on the reedbed tracks. Almost as many Brown-banded Carder Bees as Shril Carder Bee workers were found.

Kevin and I collected the Benthic and Nektonic invertebrate samples from the saline lagoons, as we do every year.

Events and visits

JJ's education team ran beginners' bird watching every Tuesday and 'Pondimonium', a pond dipping event every Thursday.

A total of 15 children attended JJ's 'What a Load of Rubbish' art event on the 2nd.

Kevin ran the Dragonfly event, 'Damsels and Dragonflies', for 35 people on the 5th. JJ's team ran Summer Wildlife Fun Days, an arts and crafts event, on the

9th

. A teddy bears' picnic event was held at the visitor centre on the 16th

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JJ's

team ran a `Wildlife Homes' event on the 23rd

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SITUATIONS VACANT

Trevor Russell

SOS — Save our Society!

In just over a year, 2011 will see the 50th anniversary of our founding in 1961. BUT without your help, we won't make it! WE HAVE FAR TOO MANY COMMITTEE VACANCIES!

Present vacancies are:

1) Vice Chairman

2) Field Secretary

3) Six committee members — we currently have just two!

Furthermore the Report editors (who have been doing this job for five years) have expressed a wish to spread the load and job share by alternating year-on-year. County Recorder Chris Jones has been 21 years in the role (!) and wishes to step down - but feels trapped due to lack of a replacement.

At the end of 2010 we will also lose

4) Keith Roylance as Treasurer

5) Helen Jones as Membership Secretary

So we are already eight people short of a full committee.

If you don't react or care, the Society will collapse because the necessary duties will not be carried by an ever-diminishing number of people.

If you do want to help us see our Golden Anniversary in 2011 please contact me, Trevor Russell, for further information. Tel 01600 716266, or e-mail secretary@gwentbirds.org

Chairman's Chatter

Dave Brassey

More musical chairs since the last Dipper. Sadly, Luke is leaving us for pastures new and Rob has resigned as Librarian. We wish them both well and thank them for all they have done for the club.

Keith Jones has volunteered his services as Librarian and has already, with the help of other committee members, started to resort and catalogue the collection. There

will be plenty of books that will have to go, so all suggestions welcome.

The committee have now had a chance to discuss the findings of our recent questionnaire which was analysed by Richard Clarke, and you should have read the relevant article by Trevor

earlier in this edition.

Once again, I thank all who participated.