

# DURSLEY BIRDWATCHING AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY



## MAY 2024



### FROM THE CHAIR - Welcome to the May edition of the society bulletin.

Please see below outdoor events during May. The Swift Box assembly workshop was a resounding success; we were very busy all afternoon assembling the kits pre-cut by Simon with a little help from friends. In all we made 21 boxes with the entrance hole in the base to deter sparrows using them. They were available on the day for members to buy the finished box with the remainder being handed over to the Stroud Valleys Project. It was heartening to see families with children turn up to get stuck in, after all, the children will hopefully become the next generation of naturalists. I haven't been able to join any of the field trips so far in April. The alternator packed up on my car as I was driving home from the Swift Box event so that put paid to attending the morning at Frampton. Then a long standing arrangement with my Salisbury Plain moth trapping group caused me to miss the Wiltshire Downs event. However, we have some interesting events coming up throughout May so I hope nothing crops up to prevent me attending them. For the first event on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May we need to hope for warm, sunny weather or we will struggle to see any butterflies and we will have to revert to type and go bird watching or study the interesting wild flowers that the common is famous for. The Forest of Dean will be full of bird song so I am really looking forward to that trip. Then we have the trip around the hides at Slimbridge, this should be a cracking event as I can't think of anyone better to lead it than our resident expert Dot to point out all the birds. Finally, we will have a trip a bit further afield when we travel east along the M4 to Greenham Common and maybe an extended trip if we head to the South coast.

Best wishes. Ken Cservenka - Chair

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS - **Please book online**

Saturday May 4 @ 11:00 am - 2:00 pm

[Butterflies of Rodborough Common](#)

Rodborough Common, Butterrow Hill Parking, Stroud

**Leader: Simon Ashley** - A very leisurely stroll around one of Gloucestershire's pre-eminent butterfly spots, we hope to see some of the early spring butterflies. More importantly we'll have ice cream when we've finished!

Saturday May 11 @ 9:30 am - 2:00 pm

[Forest of Dean and Nagshead](#)

RSPB Nagshead, Coleford Rd, Parkend, Lydney, Gloucestershire

**Leader: Barbara Wood** - Your chance to some of those elusive summer visitors, Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher. Together with Crossbill, Siskin, Dipper, Firecrest and



Goshawk. What more could you want? We meet at the Nagshead carpark. The path can be muddy so please wear suitable footwear.

Sunday May 19 @ 9:30 am - 2:30 pm

[Slimbridge Spring](#)

WWT Slimbridge, Bowditch, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire

**Leader: Dot Jones** - Great opportunity to visit Slimbridge with our own resident expert to steer us round and give us the best chance to see everything.

Sunday May 26 @ 7:00 am - 7:00 pm

[Greenham Common](#)

Greenham Common, Burys Bank Rd, Thatcham, Newbury

**Leader: Simon Ashley** - Who doesn't love the beautiful liquid song with a downward lilt that belongs to the Woodlark? We'll go in search of these mystic birds - sadly lost to Gloucestershire. We need to leave early to have the best chance of catching them. This is also a great site for Dartford Warbler - though challenging to find. We have the option to go on from here to Keyhaven for the rest of the day.

August 2 @ 8:00 am - August 5 @ 5:00 pm

[Devon Residential 2-5th Aug](#) **EARLY BOOKING REQUIRED**

**Leader - Simon Ashley** - We're hoping to run a long weekend trip to South Devon around the weekend of 2-5 August. **Maximum numbers for this trip 8 people. Please let Simon know if you're interested by 3rd May in order to book accommodation and Pelagic trip.** There are more details and likely costs on the website; but centering the trip around Brixham the intention is to spend one day on a pelagic trip, and see a few sea specialists and for the remaining days we'll visit places like:

**Berry Head National Nature Reserve**, an internationally acclaimed site known for its coastal wildlife, historical significance, and geological formations. It's home to a variety of seabirds and offers stunning views of the South Devon coast.

**Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve:** Located about 13 miles from Brixham, Slapton Ley is the largest natural freshwater lake in the south-west of England. It's separated from the sea by a narrow shingle bar. The reserve is renowned for its diverse habitats supporting a wide range of species, including birds, insects, and plants. Birdwatchers can expect to see species such as Cetti's warblers, bitterns, and occasionally ospreys.

**Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve:** Approximately 20 miles northeast of Brixham, Dawlish Warren offers a unique combination of beach, dunes, grassland, and mudflats, making it a fantastic site for birdwatching.

**If any trip is in doubt because of bad weather or unexpected circumstances**

For bookable events, we will try and contact everyone by telephone, WhatsApp or email if an event has to be cancelled. We will also put a notice on our website and inform members who get their bulletin by e-mail. It is important therefore that we have your contact details. **SA.**



## INDOOR MEETING REPORTS

### Swift Box - Workshop Saturday 6th April: 12:30 -16:00



Simon organised an afternoon to make Swift boxes and spent several hours preparing the materials required. David, Colin and Ken were able to give some help to make sure everything was ready in time. About 30 participants spent a busy (and noisy) afternoon and managed to make 21 boxes. Many of the boxes were carried triumphantly home and the rest will be donated to the Stroud Valleys Project.

## OUTDOOR MEETING REPORTS

### Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April Morning at Frampton - Leader: Nick Goatman.

Three club members met Nick for a bracing walk around Frampton. Nick the consummate guide as ever, finding everything of interest and note. Difficult conditions in cold and wind and always threatening to rain. We did manage to tease a few hirundines into making an appearance. Always good to get out and clear away the cobwebs. Thanks so much to Nick for leading.

A more detailed report was generated automatically by eBird v3 (<https://ebird.org/home>)

Greylag Goose, Barnacle Goose, Mute Swan, Shelduck, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Buzzard, Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Kestrel, Jackdaw, Rook Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Sand Martin, Swallow, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Long-tailed Tit, Blackcap, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Starling, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, 1; House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail/White Wagtail, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Goldfinch,

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S167495195>

### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April - Wiltshire Downs – Leader: Malcome Royal

Five members departed Stroud on a bright but chilly early morning, heading for RSPB Winterbourne Downs, where we met up with Malcolm and Steve, our guides for the day. A circular walk around the reserve gave some great sightings, including Corn Bunting, Wheatear, Stone-curlew (our target bird) and Firecrest, an unexpected bonus, found in a small wooded area.







Our next stop took us along access tracks deep into the central ranges of Salisbury Plain specifically looking for Great Bustard. We were very fortunate to see groups at three locations, adding up to at least 16 birds, including birds in flight and a few displaying males. A single Whinchat was also located.

After a stop for lunch we moved onto the eastern ranges of the Plain where immediately on parking up we had great views of a singing Tree Pipit. During a walk along the tracks we heard a singing Grasshopper

Warbler and saw many Stonechats.

The wet winter and spring had left lots of vernal pools and a close inspection located a good number of Fairy Shrimps (*Chirocephalus diaphanous*). A first for all of us.

After thanking Malcolm and Steve for their guiding and spotting throughout the day we headed home, stopping at Avebury Trusloe. A short walk eventually located a row of feeders where amongst the finches, Yellowhammers and tits we saw a small number of Tree Sparrows.

In total we had at least 52 species, with a good number of lifers (for some of us) and 'New For Year Ticks' for all of us, plus the unexpected highlight of encountering one of most unusual creatures any of us had ever seen.



#### **Species List compiled by Simon Ashley.**

Gadwall, Mallard, Red-legged Partridge, Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Great Bustard, Moorhen, Stone-curlew, Lapwing, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Sparrowhawk, Red Kite, Buzzard, Green Woodpecker, Kestrel, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Raven, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Grasshopper Warbler, Swallow, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Goldcrest, Firecrest, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Robin, Whinchat, Stonechat, Wheatear, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Tree Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Goldfinch, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting.

#### **Sunday April 21 - Lower Moor (CWP) - Leader Ken Cservenka**

Somewhat disappointing for just the leader and ex Chair turning up for this meeting on a very pleasant Sunday morning. Taking a different route to that used in previous years we headed off to view the lake by the café. Not much to see here except two Black-headed Gulls resting on the floating platform intended for the Terns and the odd Wood Pigeon and Corvid passing overhead. Heading off through the tree lined path skirting the lake we could hear singing Blackcap and the familiar trill of the first of the numerous Wrens we heard around the site. We could also see and hear the numerous Great and Blue Tits and the two-tone call of singing Chiffchaffs. With a different view of the lake we could now see a pair of Mute Swans, while overhead a party of Rooks flew over that appeared to be squabbling or maybe they were intimidated by the presence of a Raven that was circling and calling nearby. Walking through a Silver Birch wood reminiscent of a forest in Norway we could hear the



distant call of a Green Woodpecker and the "jack" calls of the Jackdaws that passed overhead. Joining the main track through the reserve a more familiar mix of native trees lined the path and making a diversion to an area used for education we saw both Speckled Wood and Green-veined White butterflies along with a good mix of bird song to please our ears. We then headed for the hide overlooking a small lake with a good mix of wild flowers just beyond the hide windows. Here we saw a Grey Heron perched in a nearby tree and some Mallard and Gadwall on the lake. The female Mallard had at least one duckling. Outside a Willow Warbler was singing from the top of a bush giving good views. On the largest lake, apart from fishermen sitting in small boats there were numerous Mute Swans and a pair of Great-crested Grebe. The once muddy path had been renovated and in doing so much of the bushes had been cut back, so it wasn't so good for Warblers and other small birds as usual. However, there was a Cetti's Warbler shouting his song from deep in a bush and we saw Robin and Long-tailed Tit. We then made our way to the café and while enjoying tea and cake a Sand Martin appeared overhead. Before heading home we visited Lake 74, Twitchers Gate where we added Great-white Egret, Tufted Duck, Coot and Cormorant to our day's total. Sadly the Bittern that was heard booming the day before wasn't heard but was recorded nearby.

**Bird List:** Blackcap, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Mute Swan, Carrion Crow, Rook, Raven, Green Woodpecker, Jackdaw, Cetti's Warbler, Willow Warbler, Mallard, Gadwall, Grey Heron, Long-tailed Tit, Great Crested Grebe, Robin, Sand Martin, Cormorant, Coot, Tufted Duck and Great White Egret. **Butterflies:** Speckled Wood and Green-veined White.

## FROM OUR MEMBERS

### Nuture Nature Notes for May 2024 - Otis Tarda

With the Middle East wars prominent in World News, Foreign Secretaries come to mind. Many of us in our history lessons at school will remember the now famous quote of Sir Edward Grey in August 1914 at the pending outbreak of the Great War. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August, having explained cogently in Parliament why Great Britain had to go to war with Germany he returned to the Foreign Office. At dusk he could see from his desk the lamp man igniting the lamps in St James's Park. He remarked to his secretary 'The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime'. However, as well as holding a high State office he was a countryman at heart, and a great lover of Nature and an eminent ornithologist, studying robins when up at Oxford and elsewhere, and stone curlews on the family estate in Northumberland. He fed the birds at all the properties he was associated with as well as closer studies of wild fowl whilst at his beloved fishing cottage in Hampshire. Whilst Foreign Secretary he meticulously studied the flora and fauna of St James's Park. One morning the water bailiff took Grey to see a Little Grebe's newly hatched brood. Mother Dabchick, rather concerned at the presence of humans, clucked to her chicks, which paddled over to her and all got onto her back and under her wings, and with them thus concealed she swam away to



the safety of the reeds. So, it was as an ornithologist of some standing that Grey should also be remembered as he had a special relationship with Nature and wrote about such knowledgeably and charmingly. Our connection with Grey of 110 years ago, when Great Britain was at the height of her industrial power, the world's population was billions less than now and global warming would have appeared gobbledegookish with thoughts backwards in time to the then little studied Planet's hot and cold periods over millions of years. Why, it is robins! Some residents have noticed a decline in the number of these iconic birds over the recent winter of extreme inclement weather, freezing periods but mainly due to excessive rainfall resulting in flooded habitats and environments, thereby reducing food sources and shelter over prolonged periods. More wind storms than usual wiping out early nesters and ever changing climate patterns - all have made real inroads in bird and wildlife numbers pretty well over all continents. Thereby, it is our duty to do all we can to protect, help and regenerate our environment for wildlife. Let's hope the migrant numbers will be better this year, and the dawn choruses stronger. To assist in identifying and aiding songbirds [www.songbird-survival.org.uk](http://www.songbird-survival.org.uk) is a useful source.



Sir Edward Grey with a Robin on his hat.

**NOTE** It may be of interest to know that Sir Edward Grey was the first British politician to establish the 'special relationship' with the United States. With the help of a songbird common to both Britain and the US, whilst on a walk with the former President of the US, Theodore Roosevelt, in the New Forest. Roosevelt heard a bird song which he recognised as the bird was also a resident in his country. The bird - the tiny Gold Crested Wren! Let's trust that this 'special relationship' remains strong in helping to solve the current difficulties in the world.

## **SUMMER VISITORS**

**House Martins:** (*Delichon urbica* -12 cms) These lovely migrant birds fly from Africa to nest in the British Isles, many in our area. They spend a long time making their mud nests under the eaves of houses. Please be tolerant of their building habits. The birds do not cause too much mess and they become distressed if all their hard work is destroyed. If house martins cannot raise their broods, yet another species will be endangered.

**Sand Martins:** (*Riparia riparia* -12 cms)

These migrants can be seen from April to September especially around sand quarries and sandy banks, where they burrow out their nesting sites. Many of their ancestral breeding sites have gone. In some East Anglian areas the local ornithological groups have had built artificial banks for nesting which are well used. A site near Blaxhall, Suffolk has enabled the





sand martins to thrive. However, they can be seen in many areas of the British Isles. Plumage is a sandy brown above and whitish below. Once numerous they can still be spotted in their traditional British Isles habitats with fresh water nearby. These agile fliers make harsh twitter calls in flight.



**Swallows:** (*Hirundo rustica* - 20 cms) These beautiful birds always return to their old nest sites, so please ensure access to them. If, for reasons of security, access has to be shut, swallows will fly through small openings in order to reach their traditional nesting sites.

**Swifts:** (*Apus apus* - 18 cms) Their nesting sites, some of which are centuries old, are fast disappearing, due to development and property maintenance. They require an access tunnel of at least 18" long with a small entrance hole;

please don't block them off. Swifts are believed to spend as much as nine months to a year on the wing, and they are known to nap whilst flying.

Swift sightings can be reported to Bradford-on-Avon Swift Group at [climatechampions@gmail.com](mailto:climatechampions@gmail.com), or [www.swift-conservation.org](http://www.swift-conservation.org).

Note: These birds are all, of course, protected species - it is a criminal offence to disturb or destroy their nest sites and environments. There was the distressing sight a few years ago when an active house martin nest had been wired over, preventing the juveniles from flying out, and they perished inside the wire.

**Cuckoos:** should a reader wish to track cuckoo migrations there are websites (such as the BTO one) which should give up to date progress of incoming birds. Please post any cuckoo sightings and hearings on your local Facebook page.

Submitted by Otis Tarda.

## FROM YOUR EDITOR

I haven't been out on as many birding trips as I would like, but I love seeing the photographs taken by others. I am a follower of several Facebook groups such as the RSPB Birders, Chepstow and District Wildlife Photography, and All Things Birdwatching UK. The recent storms have brought some interesting visitors: A Golden Oriole has been photographed in Cornwall on The Lizard, two male Golden Oriole were pictured on the Gower in S. Wales, and a Hoopoe has been photographed in a private garden in Norfolk.

Thank you to all who have submitted reports and articles recently. Please send all articles for the next bulletin by 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. Preferably by e-mail.

## MEMBERS BIRD SIGHTINGS

Please enter your sightings at [www.universalquestions.com/nature](http://www.universalquestions.com/nature) OR <https://theglosterbirder.co.uk> And do let us know of anything rare or unusual you see.



## GLOUCESTERSHIRE BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

We suggest you refer to The Gloster Birder website: <https://theglosterbirder.co.uk> for up-to-date news of interesting birds seen in the County.

### SOCIETY NEWS

#### 2024/2025

Your new programme card will be produced shortly. It has been designed with the whole membership in view and hopefully offers something for everyone. We look forward to welcoming you to our varied field trips and meetings.

#### **Dursley Pet Shop**

The Dursley Pet Shop are again supporting the Society and we are pleased to announce that if you show your membership card in the shop, you will now be entitled to a 10% discount on a wide range of gardening items sold in the shop such as seeds and bulbs etc., as well as the usual discount received on bird related items. Just right for the new gardening season!

#### Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society - Officers & Committee 2024-2025

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