

# DURSLEY BIRDWATCHING AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY



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

Hopefully the society has been ticking along nicely without too much or near non-existent input from me. As I mentioned at the start of my piece last month I have not been able to attend many events during May or June. I did however, attend the trip to Greenham Common on 26th May and hopefully I can read a full report in this bulletin. We were unlucky not to see the Woodlark but we did hear several singing. For me the highlight of that trip was nearer to home as we made a small diversion to Twitchers Gate in the Cotswold Water Park and was rewarded with close views of a pair of Cuckoo. Sadly I am unable to attend both of the Sunday trips arranged during July due to other commitments. I will just have to look forward to trips and indoor lectures during the autumn and winter. Please attend the events that I can't go to and best wishes to all.

Ken

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS - Please book online

NB Devon Residential 2-5th Aug **NOW FULLY BOOKED**

If you are interested in this trip, let Simon know. He will be able to keep a 'reserve' list in case anyone has to cancel.

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[Frampton In Summer](#) July 14th @ 8:30 am - 11:30am

The Green, Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire

Our ever popular series of local walks at local hotspot Frampton, continues led by patch expert **Nick Goatman**. We'll be looking for the special birds and other wildlife of this area. Meet at 08.30 in the small car park which is situated near the bottom of the green at Frampton-on-Severn, on the track towards the sailing lake.

Nick has been birding this area for over 15 years so we will hopefully be able to connect with plenty of bird species and also find other wildlife of interest. This is probably the best time of the year for finding young birds, but maybe the most difficult for wildfowl, as the latter will be going into their autumn moult. This is a great time too for flowers, butterflies and dragonflies.

Do come and join us on this interesting 'four seasons' event. Please be aware that the route could change if interesting birds are nearby, as Nick has a habit of finding these.

This will be a flat walk over easy terrain.



## Lower Woods Nature Reserve

**Leader:** Susanne Zamze

**Sunday 21st July 10:00am-1:30pm**

Inglestone Rd, Hawkesbury Upton, GB GL9 1BX - Meet in the Reserve car Park

Lower Woods Nature Reserve is a vast ancient woodland located in Gloucestershire, England.

Although woodland birding can be challenge in the summer - when leaves tend to hide birds rather well - with a bit of luck we should see plenty of things to maintain interest.

The targets will be woodland birds such as Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Redstart and Spotted Flycatchers along with birds of prey, such as Buzzard and Sparrowhawk.

The flourishing plant life in Lower Woods during July attracts a myriad of insects and butterflies. Several species should be on the wing including Brimstone, Gatekeeper, and various skippers. White Admirals are a great species to see here and this visit coincides with their peak flight period. We'll keep an eye for them in the shaded woodlands and forest rides, the dappled sunlight these areas provide makes it an ideal habitat.

The paths are generally considered easy to moderate in difficulty, although some parts may be uneven with the odd muddy patch. Boots with ankle support are recommended.

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

We will try and contact everyone by telephone or through the 'Whats App' group. 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.

## **OUTDOOR MEETING REPORTS**

**WWT Slimbridge Spring Visit** 19th May 2024

**Report from:** Anne Nuttall

Dot greeted eight DBWPS members at WWT Slimbridge on a fine sunny morning, and began by showing us a group of beautiful bee orchids, just beginning to flower, clearly seen in the patch of unmown grass below the ramp. We spent a short time in the Peng Observatory overlooking Swan Lake, where there were several varieties of ducks and geese, mostly in pairs and some with youngsters. Throughout the day we saw lots of families, ranging from a pair of Barnacle geese with two fluffy goslings, a pair of Oystercatchers with 2 chicks, and Cranes 'Oakie' and 'Sherbert' also with two chicks, as well as Mallard, Moorhen, Greylag and Canada geese, all with their varied sized broods, faithfully following their parents on land or water.

Another place where there were babies was in the Kingfisher bank, although they were unseen. The parents flew in and out of the nest hole as we watched, taking food for them and having a quick dip in the water as they left the smelly hole in the bank. They have been feeding them for some time now, so they must surely fledge soon, and hopefully there will be a second brood shortly afterwards.

From the upper storey of the Zeiss Hide we were lucky enough to see two Garganey in the channel, both males, pointed out to us by volunteers. A Marsh Harrier was flying low, but it soon disappeared into the reeds as several corvids were harassing it. A few Lapwings were flying



around, quite a change from the high numbers that were here a short while since.

Around the reserve there were many Avocets; it seems incredible that not so many years ago they were a rarity, only to be seen in Norfolk or Devon. Now, a large number of them were on nests, as were Black-headed Gulls. The light was perfect for showing birds at their best, with the bronze sleeping Black-tailed Godwits, the sparkling white of gulls, Little Egrets and Mute Swans, plus the brilliant blue and orange of the Kingfishers. Some birds preferred to be invisible, only identifying themselves by their song or calls - Reed, Sedge, and Cetti's Warblers, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Blackcap, Reed Bunting, Greenfinch and Chaffinch.

Butterflies seen were Brimstone, Red Admiral, Orange Tip and Small Tortoiseshell, plus the lovely sight of a newly emerged Broad-bodied Chaser dragonfly.

All in all, it was a very pleasant way to spend a Sunday morning, with a group total of 54 species. Thanks to Dot for her knowledge and expertise, and to all who contributed.

**Bird list:** Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Barnacle Goose, Egyptian Goose, Shelduck, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Garganey, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Moorhen, Coot, Crane, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Kingfisher, Great-spotted Woodpecker, House Martin, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Bluetit, Great tit, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Reed Bunting. (54 species). Plus (from Dot's list) Swallow and Roe Deer Buck and Doe

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**Greenham Common** Sunday May 26th

**Report from:** Simon Ashley

Our trip to Greenham Common was timed to try and see Woodlark, a species of conservation concern due to habitat loss and fragmentation. The bird is primarily found in southern England, with populations in heathlands, open woodlands, and grasslands. It's been lost to Gloucestershire as a breeding bird so to see them you have to travel. They tend to sing their melodious tune early in the morning - so we got there bright and early. It wasn't long before we heard them and we were able to pick up two or three singing males. Seeing them proved much more difficult and after two hours of walking the main areas we only had brief glimpses of one. We did see plenty of Red Kites and House Martins collecting nest building mud from puddles.

After lunch and tea at the excellent Control Tower cafe we took a short drive to the far end of the Common to a local wood for Nightingale. After sitting out a short sharp shower - we got plenty of warblers including sightings of Garden Warbler.

We finished the trip with a cheeky visit to Twitchers Gate at Cotswold Waterpark and were rewarded by views of not one but two Cuckoos.

**Bird List:** Woodpigeon, Swift, Great Cormorant, Little Egret, Red Kite, Kestrel, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Great Tit, Woodlark, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Wren, Starling, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit, Greenfinch, Linnet, Goldfinch, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Nuthatch, Mute Swan, Shelduck, Great Crested Grebe, Cuckoo, Coot, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Tern, Cetti's Warbler

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**Rough Bank Butterfly Conservation Reserve** Saturday June 8th  
**Report from:** Babara Wood



Eight members met in typically chilly and overcast weather. Not to be daunted, whilst still in the car park we observed a Kestrel in a nearby tree with a pair of Red Kites circling overhead. As we set off on the walk a Buzzard flew over. We thought: not bad going - three raptor species in 5 minutes.

From a bordering hedge a Willow Warbler was heard singing its lovely wistful song. We noted a small herd of Belted Galloways which had newly arrived that day, to help keep down any over vigorous

unwanted herbage. Walking on down to the end of the first field we stopped in front of a tree which had several birds with young flitting about: Blackcap, Blue and Great Tits, Chiffchaff and a Robin feeding its young on a gate below. A series of Wrens provided a background chorus as we walked down towards the edge of the wood.

Once out in the open grasslands, despite the unfavourable conditions we managed to spot several butterflies namely Small Heath, Ringlet, Large Skipper and Small Blue, and a Marsh Tit was noted singing from the trees on the opposite hill.

**Bird List:** Feral Pigeon 6; Swift 1, Red Kite 1; Common Buzzard 1; Great Spotted Woodpecker 1; Kestrel 1; Magpie 1; Carrion Crow 2; Marsh Tit 1; Blue Tit 1; Great Tit 2; Skylark 1; Swallow 1; Willow Warbler 1; Chiffchaff 2; Blackcap 1; Wren 2; Song Thrush 1; Blackbird 1; Robin 2; Dunnock 1; Chaffinch 2; Linnet 1 (23 Species)

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**Nightjars in the Forest of Dean** Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 **Report from:** Ken Cservenka

The weather forecast was not looking good for the Thursday and we were able to change the date to Tuesday 11th June, I was once again the leader for the Cannop Ponds and Crabtree Hill trip. The main focus of the trip was our traditional late evening visit to hopefully see and hear churring Nightjar. However, this was not to be as what should be restored heath land has been allowed to deteriorate into Birch scrub. Needless to say we were unlucky with the nightjars but we were rewarded with several fly passes of Woodcock. I believe that a member briefly heard one during a recent visit but despite staying to beyond 10pm we were unable to see or hear them. The earlier visit to the stone works area of Cannop Ponds was more rewarding as we saw most of the target birds, including Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher.

**Bird List, Cannop Ponds:** Greylag Goose, Swallow, Mallard, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Coot, Moorhen, Dipper, Blackbird, Kingfisher, Chiffchaff, Mute Swan, Song Thrush, Tufted Duck, Mandarin, Wood Pigeon.

**Bird List, Crabtree Hill:** Buzzard, Swift, Willow Warbler, Woodcock. Also seen: Fallow Deer.

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Report from: Anne Nuttall

There were 8 members on this trip. When our two cars arrived at RSPB Martin Down, I was taken aback, expecting our ears to be assailed by the sound of birdsong as had happened on previous visits, but there was utter silence for a few minutes. Then it began gently with a Chiffchaff, joined by an unseen Yellowhammer and a distant Blackcap. However, during the course of our morning walk in pleasantly warm weather and sunshine, it was noticeable that compared with previous visits over the years there were fewer birds, so less birdsong. We saw a reasonable number of Skylarks, Corn Buntings, Yellowhammers, Linnets, Goldfinches, a couple of Stonechats, a Whinchat and a Whitethroat. Several Red Kites and Buzzards flew above us, and Magpies, Carrion Crows and Rooks were in the fields below the ridge that was once a Bronze Age earthwork.



There was also a dearth of butterflies, both in numbers and species. A few Marbled Whites, Small Heaths, Large Whites and Meadow Browns were the sum total seen.

Martin Down is one of the reserves where the spectacular and rare Burnt Tip Orchids can be found, but they had flowered earlier and all that remained were the spikes without the flowers. (The photo shows them in full flower 5 years ago!) There were plenty of Common Spotted Orchids, and Pyramidal Orchids were just developing, but no Butterfly Orchids.

After the enjoyable morning walk, it was agreed to set off for the coast where a pair of Roseate Terns are nesting amongst other tern species on an island in Normandy Lagoon, on the North Solent marshes. This is a rare occurrence as normally they nest in the north on Coquet Island, one of the Farne Islands, in Northumberland. Standing on the sea wall between the Solent and the lagoon we had excellent views of nesting Common and Little Terns, some with youngsters, but the Roseate Terns were difficult to see in the dense vegetation. I caught a glimpse of pinkish plumage, but some of the group had better sightings. However, I enjoyed watching the other Terns hovering and fishing, as well as Avocets, Redshanks and Black-headed Gulls with their youngsters, a Ringed Plover, and a Mediterranean Gull in flight. Oystercatchers, Egyptian Geese and Canada Geese were there in good numbers, and I found a solitary Wood Sandpiper keeping to itself on the other side of the sea wall, dabbling in the weed on the edge of the Solent. Continuing around the lagoon we added Sedge and Reed Warblers, House Sparrows, Starlings, Reed Bunting, Lapwing with a youngster, Mallard and Stock Doves to the bird list, with a 'grand finale' from a Cetti's Warbler as we arrived back at the cars. All agreed that it had been a splendid day's birdwatching, and thanked Mike and Simon for doing the driving.



My 'birds of the day' were the terns, especially the beautiful Little Terns.



**23rd June Group bird list:** Great-crested Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Canada Goose, Egyptian Goose, Shelduck, Mallard, Red Kite, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Mediterranean Gull, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Great black-backed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Roseate Tern, Little Tern, Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Skylark, Swallow, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Whinchat, Stonechat, Blackbird, Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Corn Bunting, Goldcrest, Treecreeper. (60 species)

## FROM OUR MEMBERS

### Nurture Nature Notes for July 2024 - Otis Tarda

Some readers have asked where they might catch a glimpse of Crested Tits and Bearded Tits. You won't see them on your bird tables or feeders locally. One is unlikely to see the Crested Tit anywhere in the British Isles, except in Scotland. The Spey Valley pine forests provided a sanctuary for them and they have now spread to Grampian and Sutherland. For Bearded Tits go to Titchfield Haven on the Hampshire Coast. Reports so far indicate that warbler populations are down again this year. Chiffchaffs were once pretty widely spread and were one of the first species to arrive. Not so this year, so far.

Hirondininae are also well down in numbers, and who has heard a Cuckoo this spring? Anyone who is lucky enough to hear a Nightingale, please post the info on your local Facebook and inform your County Bird Website. Other species of the tit family which formerly were visitors to gardens and used to enjoy the food in bird feeders are Marsh and Willow Tits, they are difficult to tell apart. Coal Tits too are in decline. On the positive side it was pleasing to see families of Long Tailed Tits on feeders during the colder spells last winter. Referring to warblers, as mentioned above with Chiffchaffs, numbers are down again this year. Blackcaps & Garden Warblers - both beautiful songsters - have hardly been heard. Warblers, such as Sedge, Reed, Willow and others formerly regularly seen on hedgerows, along water courses, in field hedgerows and woods, are in decline.



Sedge Warbler in Northumberland

As reported in previous articles, there has been a dramatic decline in bird numbers and species since the 1970s, the BTO has further reported that between 2016 and 2021 UK bird species declined by 46%. Readers can find more information and how to help to stem the tide in species decline at [www.bto.org/biodiversity-loss](http://www.bto.org/biodiversity-loss). Should you wish to know more about how birds are faring worldwide, go to [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org). "Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world as universal as a bird?" (Sir David Attenborough, Broadcaster). Enquiries have been made about Nightjar migrants, but these are unlikely to be seen or heard locally. Nightjars fly silently and then suddenly start clapping their wings in display and making long drawn out churring noises on warm summer



nights. Staple Plain and Stock Hill Woods in the Quantocks in Somerset and the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire have been haunts for Nightjars having migrated 6,000 kilometres from Central Africa. Still, warm nights in June are perfect for seeing and hearing Nightjars - try Staple Hill in the Blackdowns, Staple Plain in the Quantocks, Stockhill on Mendip, or Webber's Post on Exmoor.

Another migrant which may be mistaken for a Nightjar, though not of the same family, is the Wryneck, a species of the Woodpecker family. However, they are becoming very rare and one would be very lucky to see one. The writer has only seen one, a juvenile, in a semi rural Wiltshire garden in the 1970s.

Make Nature a happy place for us all!

Otis Tarda

P.S. Migrant Cuckoos will soon be on their flights back to Central Africa. One can track their progress on [www.bto.org/cuckoos](http://www.bto.org/cuckoos). Also, for Dartford Warblers go to RSPB Arne Reserve in Dorset.

## MEMBERS BIRD SIGHTINGS

Whilst travelling in Scotland we watched Sand Martins flying and feeding over a river, they seemed to be nesting in the river bank - I had not realised that this was a natural habitat for them having previously only seen them in Coastal areas or man made sand banks.

One of my favourite 'spots' was this little Whitethroat. We had parked overnight right beside the hedge where it was nesting.

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## EDITOR'S 'BIT'

Firstly, some sad news— Jane Bridge who was our Programme Secretary for a time, died earlier this month. Many members will have known her and we will pass on her funeral arrangements as soon as we hear more from Jane's family. I have also learnt that Tom Brown and Jaquelin Hill died recently, and they have both been active members of the Society. If you do have any memories to share, please let me know and I will add it to the Bulletin. Perhaps we might have an Obituary section so members can perhaps share their recollections of them.

I would like to know what you would like from the Bulletin. While on a trip recently I discussed this with members, see suggested headings on the last page for some of the things we thought of and I will wait to hear from other members. You can email or write to me with your comments. Caroline

**Thank you to all those who have contributed reports and articles. Please send all articles for the next bulletin by 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. [caroline.sandrey@gmail.com](mailto:caroline.sandrey@gmail.com)**



## FOR SALE

We could have this space for members to buy or sell such as binoculars, scopes, tripods - or even bird feeders or nest boxes. Sellers should give accurate descriptions and buyers should ensure they are able to pay the agreed price.

Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society would accept no responsibility or liability for sales between members.

## ANY QUESTIONS?

Would you like a space to ask questions or for recommendations of ... tour operators / favourite birding spots / equipment ?

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

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.

## SOCIETY NEWS

### Dursley Pet Shop

Remember, if you show your membership card in the Dursley Pet Shop you will 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.

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

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