



DURSLEY BIRDWATCHING AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

MAY 2025



CHIT CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

May sees the breeding season in full swing and always reminds me how vulnerable our wildlife is at this time of year. I know I'm preaching to the converted when I say we should always remember to stick to paths when walking in the countryside so as to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds. As we all know birds use various types of habitat for nesting, buildings as well as trees.

I'd like to highlight one of our versatile native trees - Common Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* - also known as the May tree named after the month in which it blooms. Mature trees/hedges can become quite dense and with their naturally thorny defence they form a great habitat for nesting birds. As well as birds such as Blackbird and Thrush, Hawthorn is also home to the Wood Mouse, Dormouse (where they occur) and Slow worm. Larvae of the Hawthorn, Orchid Ermine and Small Egger moth can also be found amongst the thorns. Through the ages humans have made the most of what the Hawthorn has to offer with the young leaves and buds known as "bread and cheese", flowers and berries all being edible. The wood of this tree is hard and finely grained which makes it ideal for turning or cabinet making as well as firewood. So when you are next passing a Hawthorn tree or hedge, spare a thought for those creatures that shelter and make their homes in its protective branches.

Bird of the Month:



Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* - one of the many red listed migrants. A beautiful songster, which makes up for its rather neutral plumage, immortalized in song as well as literature. Listen out if you visit Highnam Wood.

Dot

(Photo from RSPB website)



FORTHCOMING TRIPS - All trips will be bookable on the web site

Coombe Hill Meadow

Leader: **Mike Smart**

Sunday 27th April

Meet at 9:00 am at The Wharf, Coombe Hill GL19 4BA. Take The Wharf, a narrow lane alongside "Swan at Coombe Hill" pub (turn left at traffic lights if going north along the A38). Grid reference is SO885272. DBPWS members who don't know the site can look it up on the GWT website, which gives What3Words as [///recovery.imprints.rooting](#). If anyone wants to contact me (Mike Smart) in advance my mobile phone number is 07816 140513.

Frampton on Severn

Leader: **Nick Goatman**

Sunday 11th May

Meet at the small car park [///trappings.pity.kickers](#) at 8:30am. Nick will guide us on a circular walk looking out for Spring migrants.

Slimbridge Hides

Leader: **Dot Jones**

Sunday 18th May

Meet in the car park at 9:30am. We will enjoy a tour of the hides with Dot our new chair and superstar guide in the hide. Dot will know if there are any 'special' birds to see, and will know the best places to see them.

RSPB Otmoor

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Sunday 8th June - Further details to follow

Crabtree Hill

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Tuesday 17th June - Evening trip - Further details to follow

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

If you are able to lead a walk around your favourite birding 'patch' or you know someone who might be a good leader for a walk either locally or further afield please do let Simon know. We're always in need of extra leaders.

Email: simonashley65@gmail.com

NB: If any trip is in doubt or cancelled because of bad weather or unexpected circumstances , we will try and contact everyone by email or through the WhatsApp group. It is important therefore that we have your contact details. We will also put a notice on the website.

To be added to the WhatsApp Group, please contact Caroline Sandrey (Membership Secretary) caroline.sandrey@gmail.com or Simon Ashley (DBWPS Secretary) simonashley65@gmail.com



TRIP REPORTS

Portland Bill

Report from: Sue Beynon

Sunday 6th April

Ten of us met on the southern tip of Portland Bill in bright sun with a strong, bitterly cold wind. On looking out to sea we immediately saw rafts of Guillemots and Razorbills with a few Fulmars and Gannets flying past. Swallows, Sand Martins and a few House Martins were flying in steadily off the sea. A flock of Common Scoters flew east, low over the waves.

As we walked along the coast to the observatory, we saw three Purple Sandpipers with a Turnstone down on the rocks with waves splashing all around them. On the coastal path were Rock Pipits, the first Wheatears of the day sat up on posts, then Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs fly-catching in between the bushes as we walked up the track.



We stopped to look for the resident Little Owl in the quarry, and there it was, sunning itself at the top on the Portland stone. More Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers were flitting about in the scrub below. It was difficult to tell the difference between the two species as they were not calling or singing. Having just flown in from the ocean they were in need of food and rest!

News of Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers gave us our next target as we walked up over the heath. First we had good views of 2 male Common Redstarts. Then, on reaching the top of the hill, Mike spied a lovely male Pied Flycatcher, close by on the fence, which everyone saw before it flew. Simon also spotted a Black Redstart which others saw as it flew off. All our target birds seen before lunch, impressive! Other birds on the heath included Stonechat, Linnets, and lots of close views and song from the Skylarks.



We ate lunch outside the Pebble Pig cafe overlooking East Fleet. Simon spotted at least 2 diving Red-breasted Mergansers. There were also a pair of Oystercatchers, Little Egrets a Redshank and a small flock of Dunlin flying in to feed.



A walk around RSPB Lodmoor added 3 Mediterranean gulls, several Black-tailed Godwits, 2 Little Grebes, Cetti's Warblers, Gadwall, Shoveler, a couple of singing Reed Warblers and now, singing Chiffchaffs to our list. The only bird of prey for the day was

several sightings of a Kestrel, plus a Buzzard or two on the way home. A very enjoyable day and well worth the early start, particularly as I had never seen Purple Sandpipers before and we had excellent views. The Scoters were also a first for me.

Sue.

Cleeve Hill

Report From: **Colin Greenfield**

Sunday 13th April

Ten intrepid members met with the local guide Arthur Ball at the Cleeve Hill masts car park on a fresh and cloudy Sunday morning in the hope of finding migratory Ring Ouzels. Arthur explained that he had guided a walk the previous day but alas had not seen any Ouzels and was honest in his pessimism of finding some on our walk.

However, we set off with the intention to visit the most suitable locations on the common to, at least, understand the best places that these shy birds are likely to be seen. From the car park we headed towards the dew pond where we encountered a pair Linnets and Meadow Pipit today, but we were told of a very tame Snow Bunting seen here on a previous occasion.

Further along we encountered singing Willow Warblers and showy Yellowhammers seen and heard as we continued our ramble, with a distant Wheatear spotted by one of the group. Two flighty black thrushes initially raised heartbeats as we headed towards the Padcombe Valley but where immediately identified as Blackbirds! Our guide discussed the 26 years he had been surveying the common where he has witnessed sadly a reduction of birds seen, such as Yellowhammers and Meadow Pipits by about 50% over the years although more promising has been an increase in Linnets recently.

We continued towards the Postlip Valley where Arthur pointed out the "bonfire" area and the Heather Enclosure, both good places to find our quarry. Unfortunately, we had no luck on the day and had to settle for close views of Red Kites above and a brief view of a common shrew that shot across the path for those lucky enough to see it.

Finally, Arthur showed the location of the wild daffodils that were still in bloom on the common. From here we made our way back towards the masts and the car park. Ouzel-less for the day but satisfied with an enjoyable couple of hours experiencing this special location.



FROM OUR MAILBOX

Would you like to join the bird surveys/recording team?

In Gloucestershire we are very interested in bird surveying and recording; it is an important aspect of our hobby and plays a key role in local and national monitoring, conservation, and research. Your bird sightings turn into local reports and contribute to many national projects, and all this requires plenty of organisation, administration, and communications behind the scenes.

Currently a fairly small team of volunteers keeps the system running, and none of us is getting any younger! We invite you to find out more about what we do in the hope that you might want to be involved. You might like to tackle a particular task, take on a wider role, or consider helping or taking over from one of us in due course.

You are invited to meet some of us on **Saturday 31st May** at the Village Hall in Frampton on Severn from 10am - 12 noon. Tea/coffee on arrival and pasties arriving at noon. It's a good place to do a spot of birding afterwards. We promise you won't be recruited on the spot - come along with absolutely no obligation!

Here are some of the roles and areas of activity that we cover:

- Receiving and entering records into the county database, which currently has c. 2 million records
- Producing a county bird report
- Administering the following surveys
 - ⇒ Gloucestershire Winter Bird Survey
 - ⇒ BTO Heronries Survey
 - ⇒ BTO Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS)
 - ⇒ BTO Breeding Birds Survey (BBS)
 - ⇒ Other one-off BTO Surveys (e.g. the Heathland Survey in 2025)
 - ⇒ The upcoming BTO Winter Bird Survey
- One of us is the BTO's regional representative for Gloucestershire, which involves some of the above plus other tasks such as communications with BTO members and volunteers and general awareness-raising about surveys and other BTO matters.
- Last but not least, (and very exciting!), the surveys for the next National Bird Atlas will start in 2027 and run for 4 years, so we need an Atlas Organiser for the county. We have no ambition to produce a new "Birds of Gloucestershire" this time (but you might have!). Nevertheless, this will still be a significant project for us with many surveys to plan, promote and monitor.

You don't have to be a top birder (or any kind of birder..) to do any of these things – the range of tasks includes data entry, communications (emails, newsletters), IT skills, marketing, and much more. But the main requirement is simply enthusiasm for making a difference to local birding knowledge, spreading the word, and supporting other birders! The existing team would give you plenty of support.

If you would like to come along on 31st May please let us know by emailing gordonkirk@aol.com

Kind regards from

Richard Baatsen, Andrew Bluett, Claire Carpenter, Gordon Kirk, Andy Lewis, and Mike Smart



FROM OUR MEMBERS

NATURE NURTURE NOTES FOR MAY

Otis Tarda

SUMMER VISITORS

House Martin: (*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. According to the RSPB their population has halved since 1969, and they are now on the Red List.

Sand Martin: (*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 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.

Swallow: (*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.

Swift: (*Apus apus* - 18cms) 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. Swifts were added to the Red List in the 2021 UK Conservation Status Report. Swift sightings can be reported to Bradford-on-Avon Swift Group at climatechampions@gmail.com, or 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.

Cuckoo: (*Cuculus canorus* - 33cms) 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.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

You can refer to the Gloster Birder web site for up to date bird sightings in the county. Please enter your sightings at <https://theglosterbirder.co.uk>
Do let us know of anything rare or unusual you see.



THE MANDARINS

Gordon Wilcox

Upon reading in last month's Bulletin that we had been unsuccessful in our search for Mandarin Ducks on our recent trip, Gordon Wilcox was moved to send his photographs of a pair he spotted on the River Frome last year.



THE ANNUAL ARRIVAL

Tony Johnson

Our local farmer is a cattle man and he fattens young steers on luxuriant grass in a nearby field. The cattle are brought into this plentiful grass paddock in late summer/ early autumn, and they feed very contentedly until November, when the weather changes, and the grass growth slows dramatically. They are hardy creatures and no matter how severe the weather becomes it presents no problem to them.

Hunger could become an issue but the farmer is very aware of this and feeds them daily with hay and silage to keep them in top condition and weight, ready for market. He arrives with the cattle feed in a huge green John Deere tractor which has four foot diameter wheels. He drives through the gateway and 100 yards into the field to deposit the silage into the cattle ring feeder. The cattle recognise the sound of the tractor from a quarter of a mile away and are more than ready for lunch! The tractor reverses back through the gateway until the next day when the operation will be repeated all over again. This repeat action at feeding time is OK to start with but soon the whole area becomes a muddy bog which with the cattle weight and sharp hooves really creates a new muddy swamp habitat.

Now, once a year at this precise time there is a new arrival - a Little Egret! This is an amazing annual occurrence. It's superb to watch him paddling around, lifting his yellow feet as he walks in the swamp looking through the mud for food. A real happy bonus!





THANK YOU

Thank you to Dot Jones, Gordon Wilcox, Tony Johnson, Colin Greenfield, and Otis Tarda for their contributions this month.

Please think about sharing any items of news you have, or birds you have seen - Send any articles or photographs for the next bulletin by 15th of the month to me by email.

caroline.sandrey@gmail.com or by post to me at the address below.

CMS

APOLOGIES

The date of the Society's AGM was given in the minutes as Monday 30th March, it was of course the 31st. I have corrected this and the corrected minutes are now available on the website.

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.

Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society - Officers & Committee 2025-2026

Chair	Dot Jones	dorothy.jones3@me.com	07478 662363
Vice Chair	Amanda Sultan-Black	amanda.sultanblack@gmail.com	07419 843042
Treasurer	Mike Tranter	mike.tranter22@gmail.com	07421 102412
Secretary	Simon Ashley	2 Victoria Villas, Spillmans Patch, Stroud GL5 3LU simonashley65@gmail.com	07825 668389
Outdoor programme			
IT & Communications			
Indoor Programme	Rebecca Paisey	crazypaisey@hotmail.com	01453 811408
Membership Secretary	Caroline Sandrey	15 Spey Close, Thornbury, Bristol BS35 2NR caroline.sandrey@gmail.com	07972 125959
Bulletin Editor			
Bulletin Distribution			
General Committee	Peter Steele, Ken Cservenka, Colin Greenfield		



Secretary: simonashley65@gmail.com



[@DursleyBirds](https://twitter.com/DursleyBirds)



www.dbwps.org.uk



[DursleyBirds](https://www.facebook.com/DursleyBirds)

