



DURSLEY BIRDWATCHING AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

JUNE 2025



CHIT CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

Easter Monday 21st April coincided with World Curlew Day. Here in Stroud the 'unveiling' of a wall painting, depicting a Curlew and chick by street artist Mark Anthony (ATM), marked the occasion. Mark's specialty is bringing wildlife into urban areas by means of his art. This can be seen on the end wall of Café Fifteen opposite the Sub Rooms by the four clocks. An event, highlighting the plight of the Curlew was also held in Lansdown Hall and included speakers such as Mary Colwell of Action Curlew (if you haven't read her book *Curlew Moon* it is well worth a read) and Geoff Hilton who oversees the Conservation Evidence department at WWT Slimbridge.



The Eurasian Curlew - *Numenius arquata* - is yet another Red Listed bird having been added in 2015 with a 'near threatened' status. We have lost 48% of our breeding birds in the UK since the 1980s and in Gloucestershire of the 20 breeding pairs only two chicks survived to fledge in 2024. Sadly its hauntingly evocative call is being heard less and less these days but plans are hopefully in place that will halt the decline of this iconic species. I know at WWT Slimbridge there are plans to head-start and release birds on Dartmoor again this year. There is also The Action Plan, a crucial part of which requires 'government funded support for nature-friendly farming'. This should increase awareness, restoration and maintenance of vital habitat. These plans have hopefully been put in place for this year's breeding season. Fingers crossed we'll hear the call of the Curlew more in the future, time will tell.

Bird of the month - for me it's the Stock Dove - *Columba oenas* - A much underrated bird and is often misidentified. It is Amber Listed but on the increase since the ban on insecticides in the 70's.



FORTHCOMING TRIPS - Please contact Simon or Caroline to book

RSPB Otmoor

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Sunday 8th June

This will be a car share trip, leaving Stroud at about 7:30am. Otmoor is a flagship RSPB reserve blend of wetlands, grasslands, and woodlands, attracting a diverse array of bird species.

This trip gives us a good chance of seeing some great birds. We could see around 60 species, and there is a good chance of hearing and potentially seeing Bittern.

If time permits we may also visit Farmoor reserve.

Crabtree Hill

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Tuesday 17th June

Our annual pilgrimage to the Forest to try and see the crepuscular marvels - Nightjar. We can also look for Dipper and Woodcock. We'll meet in Parkend at 7:30. outside the Fountain Inn.

If anyone is interested we could go for a meal at the pub, before the walk.

Proposed Residential Trip

Friday 26th - Monday 29th September

Our residential trip this year is a new destination for our club. We're going to be heading to Kent in September. Kent has a wealth of birding hotspots and our timing is designed to coincide with autumn migration as birds make their way South from Northern breeding grounds towards Europe and beyond.

We've blocked booked 5 rooms in the Sandwich Bay bird observatory (4 twin rooms and one single. So room for 9 members - travelling via 3 cars. Costs are roughly £40.00 per person for accommodation plus a share of petrol and food.

There are some absolutely brilliant birding places in Kent and we should visit quite a few. To the North of our accommodation there are the fantastic Oare Marshes. Then there is of course, Sandwich and Pegwell bays. South of us Dungeness with National Nature reserves and another bird observatory.

Simon went to Kent around the same time last year and managed 129 species in 3 days. It's a great place. As an extra bonus there is a one day migration festival organised for the Sunday of the weekend we are there. So we'll be in the right place at absolutely the right time

To sign up please let us know by mid June if you're interested. If we get more than 9 members going that require accommodation then we'll either run a ballot or try and find additional places to stay.. Contact Simon: via email simonashley65@gmail.com or via WhatsApp

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, **or to book on a trip** please contact Caroline Sandrey (Membership Secretary) caroline.sandrey@gmail.com or Simon Ashley (DBWPS Secretary) simonashley65@gmail.com



TRIP REPORTS

Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows

Report from: Ken Cservenka

Sunday 27th April

Members met at the small car park down the lane next to the traffic lights at Coombe Hill for a walk along the canal and into the floodplain meadows. Our walk leader Mike Smart was the Chair for Gloucestershire Naturalist' Society for a number of years and is a champion for the plight of lowland breeding Curlews.

Before we set off our leader gave a short talk about the site and what we were likely to see. As we set off along the canal towpath a Lesser Whitethroat was singing from deep within the adjacent hedge. Overhead a pair of Bullfinch crossed the canal and a Goldfinch was singing from the top of a taller tree. As we headed along the towpath we found all the common warblers were present including Sedge, Reed, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Blackcap and the explosive song of Wrens was evident every 100 metres or so.

Several Lapwings were seen in a nearby field and a distant Buzzard was soaring in the distance. A Mallard with very small ducklings was on the canal but our leader didn't think they would survive the attentions of more than one resident Pike. We crossed over the canal and on entering the floodplain fields a Greenfinch flew from a nearby tree. We made our way to a hide overlooking a scrape where we found a completely different set of birds including both Little Egret and Great White Egret. Greylag and Canada represented the Geese and a Grey Heron was staring intently at the water. Shelduck were resting on the bank and Avocets were busy feeding in the water with their unique scything action. Waders including Oyster Catcher, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Lapwing and Common Sandpiper were feeding around the edges. A Red Kite flew lazily over the scrape and a Skylark was singing high above our heads. On the way back to the car park a Redstart was singing high up in a hedgerow tree.

Coombe Hill was an interesting site to visit on a very pleasant spring morning and would be well worth a return visit in the future.

Bird list.

Little Egret, Great White Egret, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Mallard, Red Kite, Buzzard, Moorhen, Coot, Oyster Catcher, Avocet, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Skylark, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Redstart, Blackbird, Sedge warbler, Reed Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch.

Frampton on Severn

Report from: Dot Jones

Sunday 11th May

With no sign of any rain in the offing Nick led ten of us out into his patch. Our sightings list was already off to a good start with eleven birds having been spotted or heard from the car park. We headed for the sailing lake, which was quiet, but a few Common Tern were flitting around. As we left a Reed Warbler announced it was back on its own territory.

Nick decided we would do the walk in reverse so we filed between the sailing lake and the garden pond out onto the lane. We had House Martins and then our first two Swifts. With the sailing lake behind us we walked down a hedge line and picked up a couple of Curlew flying over and a Common Whitethroat.



Our leader had had Lesser Whitethroat the previous day but it was a no show for us. The air was full of birdsong and a single Hobby was spotted towards the A38. Further round having ventured off piste in search of an elusive Great Crested Grebe family we could hear a cacophony of shouting from Blackbirds. Our thoughts were immediately on a possible Tawny Owl and we spent a bit time searching through the branches. Two or three were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the culprit and it was indeed a Tawny Owl.

Nick treated us to a peek at young Grey Herons in their nest and he went on to explain that years ago there had been a heronry in the area, now he has three pairs back nesting again so fingers crossed the colony builds again.

Round by Court Lake we picked up four species of geese including the little Ross's Goose that has made Frampton its home since turning up in April 2021. More Swifts and Terns, sadly no more sightings of Hobby but we had a list of 53 species altogether.

Our thanks as always to Nick for a very pleasant morning's birding.

Bird List - 53 Species: Greylag, Barnacle, Canada and Ross's Goose, Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Stock Dove, Wood-pigeon, Swift, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Tern, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Heron, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Tawny Owl, Hobby, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Skylark, Reed Warbler, Swallow, House Martin, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Goldcrest, Wren, Starling, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Pied Wagtail, , Goldfinch, Reed Bunting

Slimbridge Hides

Report from: Anne Nuttall

Sunday 18 May 2025

Nine DBPS members met Dot in Slimbridge car park on a warm and sunny Sunday morning, ready to have a guided visit around the reserve that she knows so well. We first visited the Peng Hide to see which birds were on Swan Lake. Several Oystercatchers seemed to prefer being in the air rather than on the water, but Greylag and Canada Geese, Mute Swans, the Black Swan, Mallards and Tufted Ducks, were enjoying the water. A few Swallows and House Martins made an appearance, but surprisingly, not many more were seen during the course of the morning.



The new Estuary Shoreline wetland habitat area near the restaurant is now fully open, looking fantastic with swathes of Ragged Robin dominating the wildflower area, but with many other species beginning to push their way through. Early Purple Orchids were beginning to show in their usual place on the other side of the track.





© Anne Nuttall

We went next to the Summer Walkway, with Skylarks singing overhead, and Wrens, Robins and Blackcaps trying to outdo each other as they mingled their songs. Wherever there were reed beds Cetti's, Reed and Sedge Warblers made their presence known. Chiffchaffs were also vocal, but not as much as they were a few weeks ago. Chaffinches, too, were in full voice. The male White-spotted Bluethroat that had returned for the fifth year was our objective, so we made our way to the sea wall beside the shepherd's hut. The tall sticks that Martin McGill had placed there a few years ago, which this bird uses as viewpoints, were carefully scanned, but at first there were only smart Reed Buntings and a Sedge Warbler on them.

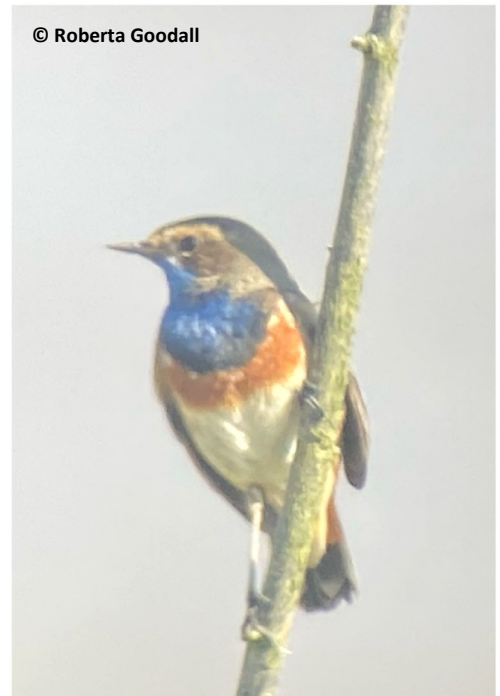
Suddenly 'our bird' appeared, it was rather flighty and didn't settle for long, but we all managed to get good views of it on the sticks and in the reeds - grateful thanks to those of our group who lent the use of their telescopes.

Rivalling the excitement of that tiny bird was another larger one, a very distant Short-eared Owl that Oliver's splendid camera shot helped to place. Black-headed gulls, a Great Black-backed Gull, and some Shelduck were on the river and sandbanks; the tide was just turning and we could hear its noise as it began to flow up-river.

From the Zeiss Hide we saw the adult and juvenile Spoonbills, asleep as usual, and Redshank, Crane, Teal, Shelduck, Ringed Plover and a Common Sandpiper - thank you Roberta for pointing those two out and for the use of your telescope. After that, some of the group went on to the Kingfisher Hide where the pair are now feeding fledglings but were not seen, and others went their various ways. I went to South Lake where I added Little Grebe, Great-crested Grebe, Kingfisher, Cormorant and Black-tailed Godwit to the group total, as well as seeing numerous Avocet and Black-headed Gulls, some on nests.

From the Decoy Hide I saw another Kingfisher taking food to its nest in the far bank, after which it had a quick dip in the water before flying off to do some more fishing. And I heard my first cuckoo of the year! All in all, it was a very pleasant and productive morning; I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did. The group total was 54 species. Thank you, Dot, for leading us, and for the bird list.

Bird list:- Little Grebe, Great-crested Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Spoonbill, Mute Swan, Black Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Barnacle Goose, Shelduck, Gadwall, Mallard, Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Coot, Crane, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Cuckoo, Short-eared Owl, Kingfisher, Skylark, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Wren, Robin, White-spotted Bluethroat, Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Reed Bunting.



© Roberta Goodall



FROM OUR MEMBERS

NATURE NURTURE NOTES FOR JUNE

Otis Tarda

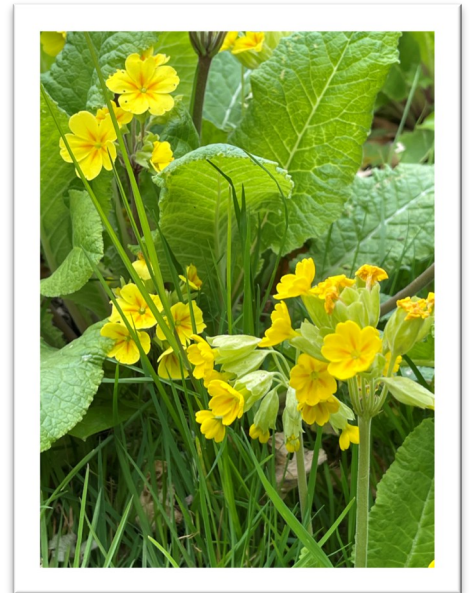
We are encouraged not to mow our lawns in May to allow the wild flowers to grow and bloom. This was especially relevant this year with the Met Office informing that this is the driest spring on Record. Some gardens have seen cowslips flowering early, so we are advised not to have the mower blades set too low so as to allow the wild flowers to set their seed.

There are many insect hatches at this time of the season, including unwelcome greenfly and blackfly. Please don't use chemical sprays, we use washing up liquid + water in a spray bottle, which does the job, although it has to be done probably the next day, etc. Better still is to let the birds, especially the tits and some finches, major on them to feed their young. Washing up liquid won't harm them. An enthralling sight in our garden was the discovery of a web full of a dense ball of tiny spiderlings all clustered together. They dispersed on their own gossamer lines when discovered, but soon reclustered again. These minute babies transpired to be baby garden spiders, being yellow with black on their rear ends.

Remember to keep feeders and bird baths scrupulously clean, as some of the less well trained birds have dirty habits, and foul the water. Such contamination can infect other birds with diseases, viz bird flu. It's difficult to say at the moment how the nesting season is going, as there are many predators and scavengers about. It's doubtful that some species will even be able to keep their population numbers up. Certainly hirondine numbers are down, we have only seen two Swifts and three Swallows so far, with no House Martins, heard no Cuckoos, seen no Flycatchers doing their aerial displays, no Nightingales and fewer Warblers singing, apart from Chiff chaffs. Species numbers of garden birds are generally low, although Robins appear to be doing reasonably well. Think what it will be like for birds and animal species in the many war zones around the world.

A recent piece of interesting raptor news is from the Peregrine Falcon nest on Taunton Minster, where a last year's fledgling, now an adult, has come back to help feed the nestlings in this year's nest. It remains to be seen whether the parents will welcome this help, or maybe chase him away as an intruder, one who is possibly looking to take over the territory. Has any reader heard of this unusual behaviour anywhere else? One can watch live feed from the web cam on the peregrine nest on Salisbury Cathedral to see how the chicks are fed and as they grow, we saw four.

We didn't have any hedgehogs using our hibernaculums, and have only seen one hedgehog so far this year - has this been the experience of readers generally? In last year's August nature notes readers were encouraged to make time to spend sitting in their gardens from various vantage points for half an hour or so at a time, and learn and enjoy the nature all-around them. You will be surprised at all the different activities going on throughout the year. The writer is going to do more of this, and after 25 years of writing this column for local magazines he is going to put his feet up. So, should you be interested in taking on this column please contact the Editor.



Last autumn the Government announced Envoys for Nature and Climate. We now know who they are: Rachel Kyte CMG is the UK's Special Representative for Climate and Ruth Davis OBE is the Special Representative for Nature, effective from 21 October and 15 November 2024 respectively. However, we have not yet seen or heard of any pronouncements, so perhaps a new columnist could do a bit of prodding to reveal aims and objectives.

For up to date bird news consult your county websites.

Otis Tarda

A SPRING DAY OUT IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Tony Johnson

We visited Nature in Art, Twigworth for the second time, to see their superb exhibition depicting 'Gold Thread Embroidery' across 2.000 years from Roman times through the Tudor period and on to the present day. The Backdrop theme being disappearing skills and woodlands... The displays were both beautiful and astonishing. The gold stitching featured on some Roman garments and Henry V111's bling wardrobe, was valued in today's currency at eight million pounds! Hence his raiding of the monasteries for their gold and silver!



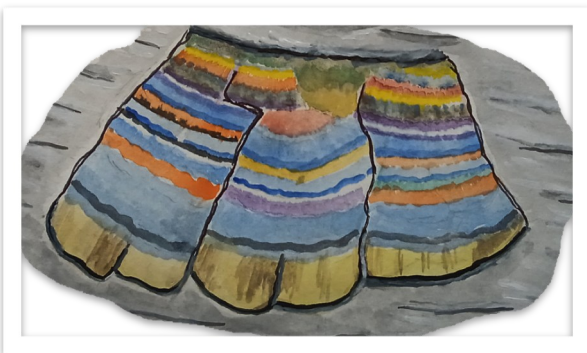
After enjoying the displays and our lunch, we decided to visit Coombe Hill Nature Reserve, as we knew that we were unable to attend the Society's field trip. It was a lovely sunny afternoon and we walked the Dragonfly Walk, listening to the bird song. How that little Wren can create such a volume of sound always amazes us. Other birds we heard were Blackbirds, Blackcap, Robin, Sand Martin and a first for us this year, Sedge Warbler.

Orange Tip Butterflies were on the wing, and the perfume of the bountiful and beautiful May blossom drifting on the air in the warm sunshine was wonderful, a true herald of spring.

Then just to confirm that Spring really had arrived, a very proud and protective mother Mallard swam gently by with twelve new ducklings skipping and skittering behind her on the mirror smooth water of the canal.



We also spotted this colourful Bracket mushroom growth (there were over 100) on a five foot rotting log on the canal bank.



By now we were ready for a rest and enjoyed a cup of tea from our trusty flask sitting on the clever Dragonfly bench. We set off homewards to Coaley Peak for a sunset across the River Severn.

... A splendid day



THANK YOU

Thank you to Dot Jones, Tony Johnson, Anne Nuttall, Ken Cservenka, Roberta Goodall 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**

SPECIAL MENTION

Our chair Dot Jones was mentioned in the Guardian. 22/05/25

[How a dawn chorus break in Gloucestershire opened my ears to the birds | Gloucestershire holidays | The Guardian](#)

"WWT volunteer Dot shows me around the reserve, and she too seems attuned to bird-song. Spurred on by the morning's session, I ask how to improve my bird listening skills, admitting that I've always struggled with identifying wildlife. As we gaze at the Severn estuary from the accessible observation tower, she assures me it takes time, and to practise picking out the ones I now know." Caroline Butterwick

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

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