

Birding Surrey



No. 115



Spring 2017

Photograph Gallery



Fig 1. Long-tailed Duck, Frensham Gt Pond, 29 Nov 2016 (David Carlsson)



Fig 2. Long-tailed Duck, Frensham Gt Pond, 29 Nov 2016 (David Carlsson)



Figs 3 & 4. Red Kite. Guildford, 2 Jan 2017

(James Sellen)

Birding Surrey

The Newsletter of the Surrey Bird Club

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Front Cover: Stonechat at Richmond Park by David Carlsson

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Notice of Annual General Meeting

Surrey Bird Club presents a talk:

“Migration”
by
David Darrell-Lambert

Ornithological consultant, ex chair of London Bird Club,
ex trustee to London Natural History Society

Preceded by the
2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
on
Friday 30th June 2017

7.45pm for 8.00pm start
At the Main Hall, East Horsley Village Hall,
Kingston Avenue, East Horsley, Surrey, KT24 6QT

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2016 AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Officer's Reports for the Club's year to 31st March 2017
5. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts for the Club's year to 31st March 2017 & ratification of subscription rates
6. Election of Officers and members of the General Committee
7. Ratification of the composition of the Records Committee
8. Any Other Business

AGM Notes:

1. The minutes of the 2016 AGM were published in Birding Surrey No 113 and consequently they will be taken as read. Should you require a copy of the minutes please contact the General Secretary.
2. Nominations for election to the General Committee will be accepted at the meeting but preferably should be sent to the General Secretary before the meeting.

Light refreshments will be served between the meeting and the talk.

From the Chairman

Welcome to issue number 115 of *Birding Surrey*.

Surrey Wildlife Trust

Many of you will have heard that the Surrey Wildlife Trust are restructuring their countryside management team, with the loss of all the dedicated site rangers that currently manage the sites owned by Surrey County Council. The Club has written to the Surrey Wildlife Trust expressing our concern about the impact this will have on the habitats and birds, particularly the heathland Special Protection Areas that require careful management. There is no doubt that both Surrey County Council, as highlighted by their proposed Council Tax referendum, and the Wildlife Trust are facing very tough times financially because of repeated cuts in government funding. However, we don't believe that the most appropriate solution is removing the rangers, with their local knowledge, that are actually doing the work to protect wildlife and wild places.

Greenlist 2017

Last year I stopped working in central London after many years of daily travel. Whilst I certainly don't miss that part of the commute provided by SouthWest Trains, I also cycled to Woking station every day (birding on the way when possible). The cessation of this was having some unwanted effects, particularly around the waistline after Christmas. So I decided

that for 2017 I would, when not ringing, nest recording etc., attempt a "greenlist" - seeing as many species of birds as I could entirely under my own power, on bike and on foot. As well as fitness benefits this has a much lower environmental impact than driving with much reduced pollution and carbon emissions. Plus of course saving not insignificant motoring costs.

Guildford, being 50 miles from the coast, does not appear an ideal base for such an endeavour, as a 100-mile round-trip is rather more than I'm currently inclined to cycle. So, although not specifically limited to Surrey it's likely most of my birding will be in the county. Safe to say there is no danger that I will be challenging the Biking Birder Gary Prescott who saw 318 species by bike in Britain last year (although he did use ferries; <http://bikingbirder2016.blogspot.co.uk/>).

And I suspect I will still take the occasional motorised dose of "exotic" birds beyond the range of my muscle power. Hopefully though I will explore some under watched corners of the county and see some good Surrey birds.

As I write in early February the list has reached a modest 87 species, hampered by the short winter days and a reluctance to spend long on the bike when the temperature is near freezing, which it has been regularly recently. Highlights to date have included Red-breasted Merganser, Pintail, Firecrest,

Red-crested Pochard, Barn Owl and a flock of 70 Skylarks on Clandon Downs which is the largest I've seen in Surrey for several years. My furthest foray has been to Thorpe Park which sadly no longer has regular Smew but did produce three smart Goldeneyes for the list. I have already made three unsuccessful sorties in pursuit of the nowadays elusive Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Hopefully I will have more to report once the weather warms up and migrants start to move.

General Committee Vacancies

The positions of General Secretary and Field Meetings Officer for the Club remain vacant, please do get in touch if you may be interested in helping out.

Steve Chastell

Bird News - Autumn 2016

Shaun Peters

♦ Highlights of the quarter

These included a **Gannet**, five **Great White Egrets**, a **White Stork**, five **Spoonbills**, a **Pectoral Sandpiper**, four **Great Skuas**, a **Sabine's Gull**, a **Guillemot**, a **Blyth's Reed Warbler**, 13 **Yellow-browed Warblers** and two **Lapland Buntings**..

Shelduck Birds were seen at Island Barn Res, the London Wetland Centre, QE2 Res and Walton Res, with the largest number three at Island Barn Res on Aug 1st.

Pintail At Walton Res there was one on Sep 15th and 18th, a flock of 17 flew high west on Sep 21st and up to three were present from Oct 6th-31st. At Beddington SF two flew over on Sep 16th, four were present on Oct 16th and single birds were seen on Oct 20th and 22nd-23rd. There were two at QE2 Res on Oct 4th and four at Frensham Great Pond on Oct 16th.

Garganey An average autumn with a minimum of four seen. Two were present at the London Wetland Centre from Jul 24th-Aug 23rd, with one remaining to Aug 27th. At Beddington SF there was a female on Aug 3rd and a juvenile from Sep 23rd-29th.

Red-crested Pochard At Walton Res a female was present on Aug 2nd and a pair from Oct 22nd-29th.

Common Scoter There were seven at Holmethorpe SP on Jun 30th.

Great Crested Grebe There were 122 at QE2 Res on Aug 14th.

Black-necked Grebe A good autumn with around ten birds recorded. There were two at Walton Res on Jun 22nd-23rd with another there from Aug 29th-Sep 5th. Up to three were at Island Barn Res from Sep 14th-20th with two there from Sep 25th-30th. Single birds were at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) from Aug 12th-13th and Sep 8th-11th.

Gannet An immature flew low SW over the Thames at Chiswick Bridge on Oct 2nd.

Bittern One was at Frensham Little Pond on Sep 25th.

Little Egret At least 35 were reported from 19 sites. The only record involving more than three birds was of four at Walton Res on Sep 7th and 8th.

Great White Egret One flew west over Dorking Tennis Club on Jul 14th, one flew SE over Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 8th, one was at Holmethorpe SP on Oct 11th, one was at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Oct 13th and one flew east over Chilworth on Oct 30th.

White Stork One was at Beddington SF from Jul 26th-30th. On the latter date it left high SE at 1315hrs and was seen flying over Wallington half an hour later. The next morning it was at Holmethorpe SP until 0830hrs, when it flew off north. It was back at Beddington SF from Aug 1st-6th.

Sightings over Selsdon Park Hotel on Aug 3rd and North Cheam on Aug 4th presumably relate to the same bird "stretching its wings".

Spoonbill There were five at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Sep 29th.

Honey Buzzard Single birds were seen over Selsdon Wood on Aug 15th, Banstead on Aug 22nd and Sep 6th, Lloyd Park (Croydon) on Aug 22nd, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 30th, Beddington SF on Sep 7th and Thursley Common on Sep 18th.

Marsh Harrier An average autumn with six seen between Aug 8th and Oct 3rd. Single birds were at Compton on Aug 8th, Thorncombe Street on Aug 30th, Barn Elms Playing Fields on Sep 19th and Walton Res on Oct 3rd, whilst two separate birds flew over Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 2nd.

Hen Harrier A male flew south over Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 2nd.

Osprey An average autumn with eight recorded between Jul 25th and Oct 2nd. Single birds were at Unstead SF on Jul 25th, Woking on Aug 14th, the London Wetland Centre on Aug 31st, Leith Hill on Sep 7th and 14th, Thorncombe Street on Sep 8th, Godalming on Sep 21st and Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 2nd.

Merlin One flew south over Barn Elms Playing Fields on Oct 19th.

Hobby The last to be reported were at Richmond Park and Thursley Common on Oct 3rd.

Oystercatcher A poor autumn with just eight recorded. Single birds were at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Jul 12th and 28th, Frensham Great Pond on Jul 23rd and the London Wetland Centre on Jul 30th. At QE2 Res there were three on Jul 18th and one on Aug 8th.

Avocet One was Beddington SF on Sep 13th and 14th.

Ringed Plover Birds were reported from Beddington SF, QE2 Res and Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea), with the only records not involving single birds being two at Tice's Meadows on Jul 12th and Aug 18th.

Golden Plover One flew over Island Barn Res on Sep 17th, a flock of 40 flew over Clandon on Sep 27th and one was at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Oct 30th.

Grey Plover One flew east at the London Wetland Centre on Sep 16th.

Knot One was at Walton Res on Oct 4th.

Sanderling One was at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 4th.

Pectoral Sandpiper One was at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Sep 8th.

Curlew Sandpiper One was at Beddington SF on Aug 24th.

Dunlin Birds were reported from Beddington SF, Holmethorpe SP, the London Wetland Centre, QE2 Res, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) and Walton Res. The only number greater than two was of seven at Walton Res on Sep 22nd.

Ruff A below average autumn with seven recorded between Jun 26th and Sep 24th. There were two at Beddington SF on Jun 26th and single birds at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 18th and 21st. At Walton Res there were two on Sep 16th, with one remaining to Sep 20th and another on Sep 24th.

Black-tailed Godwit An excellent autumn with around 86 birds recorded between Jul 1st and Aug 29th. Birds were seen at Beddington SF, Holmethorpe SP, the London Wetland Centre, QE2 Res, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) and Walton Res. The largest numbers were 12 at Beddington SF on Jul 1st, 11 at Walton Res on Jul 26th, and 17 there on Aug 8th.

Bar-tailed Godwit An excellent autumn with 63 birds recorded. On Sep 10th a flock of 25 flew over Chipstead and a flock of 31 flew over Papercourt GP and Stoke Lake. There were three at Beddington SF on Sep 12th and four at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Sep 22nd.

Whimbrel A poor autumn with just four birds recorded. Single birds were at the London Wetland Centre on Jul 1st and 2nd, Island Barn Res on Jul 19th, Beddington SF on Jul 30th and QE2 Res on Aug 8th.

Curlew Single birds were at Shalford Water Meadows on Jun 18th, QE2 Res on Jun 26th, Jun 28th and Jul 15th-16th, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Jul 5th, Womersley on Aug 24th and Walton Res on Oct 30th, whilst two flew west at Holmethorpe SP on Jun 26th.

Greenshank A below average autumn produced around 30 birds between Jul 15th and Sep 29th. Birds were reported from Beddington SF, Farncombe, Holmethorpe SP, Island Barn Res, the London Wetland Centre, Norbury, South Norwood CP, Thursley Common, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) and Walton Res with the largest group eight east at South Norwood CP on Jul 22nd.

Green Sandpiper The first of the autumn was at the London Wetland Centre on Jun 12th. As usual, the largest numbers were at Beddington SF which saw monthly maxima of 14 on Jul 27th and 30th, 16 on Aug 20th, 11 on Sep 10th and 19th, and five on Oct 15th. Birds were reported from a further ten sites, with most holding one to three birds. The only larger numbers were six at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 12th and four at Holmethorpe SP on Aug 23rd.

Wood Sandpiper Five birds were seen this autumn. Single birds were at Beddington SF on Aug 3rd, 8th and 12th, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 8th and Thursley Common on Aug 16th.

Common Sandpiper The first of the autumn was at Frensham Little Pond on Jun 23rd. Birds were reported from 15 sites, with the largest numbers eight at Island Barn Res on Jul 12th, 16 at Beddington SF on Aug 24th and six at Buckland SP on Sep 5th.

Turnstone Single birds were at Walton Res on Jul 18th and Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 2nd and 30th.

Great Skua Four flew over Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 2nd.

Mediterranean Gull A good autumn with at least 13 recorded. A second-summer was at Walton Res on Jul 16th, a second-summer was at the London Wetland Centre on Jun 20th with an adult there on Jun 28th and there were four at Beddington SF on Jun 22nd. At QE2 Res there were two adults on Jun 23rd, an adult and second-summer on Jul 13th and an adult on Jul 14th. Adults were at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 4th and Sep 15th. A juvenile was at Holmethorpe SP on Aug 16th, Sep 27th and Sep 29th. Finally, a second-winter flew over Barn Elms Playing Fields on Sep 7th.

Little Gull A good autumn with 33 birds recorded. Single birds were at the London Wetland Centre on Aug 6th and Oct 6th, and Frensham Great Pond on Aug 29th. At Beddington SF 30 flew through on Oct 6th.

Sabine's Gull An adult flew south at Beddington SF on Sep 13th.

Kittiwake An adult was at Beddington SF on Sep 15th.

Sandwich Tern Two flew east at Holmethorpe SP on Jun 19th, one was on the Thames at Rotherhithe on Jul 12th, two were at QE2 Res on Jul 19th and at Beddington SF there was one on Aug 19th, two at Sep 12th and one on Sep 14th.

Common Tern The last to be reported was at the London Wetland Centre on Oct 23rd.

Arctic Tern An average autumn with 16 birds recorded. At the London Wetland Centre there was one on Jul 12th and seven flew south on Aug 11th. Three flew SE at Berrylands SWks on Aug 17th. At Frensham Great Pond there were three on Aug 26th and two on Sep 5th.

Black Tern An average autumn with 26 birds recorded. Two were at the London Wetland Centre on Aug 6th and 21 flew through Beddington SF on Aug 19th. One commuted between Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) and Badshot Lea Pond from Aug

28th-Sep 4th, one was at Hedgecourt Lake on Sep 3rd and 4th, and one was at QE2 Res on Sep 12th.

Guillemot One was on the Thames at Bankside on Oct 5th. Presumably the same bird was seen further up river at Teddington Lock on Oct 14th and at Eel Pie Island the next day.

Stock Dove There were 750 at Walton Downs on Sep 26th.

Turtle Dove Single birds were at Unstead SF on Jul 1st, Thorncombe Street on Jul 28th, Molesey Heath on Aug 31st and Shere on Oct 31st.

Cuckoo The last to be reported was in Richmond Park on Sep 8th.

Short-eared Owl Single birds flew over Barn Elms Playing Fields on Sep 7th, Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 8th, Papercourt Water Meadows on Oct 13th and the London Wetland Centre on Oct 23rd.

Nightjar One was at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 30th.

Swift The last to be reported was at Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Sep 8th.

Woodlark Single birds flew over Walton Downs on Aug 12th, Chilworth on Sep 21st, Lonsdale Road Res on Oct 8th, Holmethorpe SP on Oct 31st and Capel on Nov 1st.

Sand Martin The last to be

reported was at Holmethorpe SP on Oct 1st.

Swallow The last to be reported were at Clandon and Horsell Common on Oct 18th.

House Martin The last to be reported was at Normandy on Oct 15th.

Tree Pipit A total of 16 birds was recorded at nine non-breeding sites between Aug 24th and Oct 5th. Two flew over Capel and one was at Wimbledon Common on Aug 24th, whilst one flew over Barnes on Aug 26th. At Richmond Park there were two on Aug 28th, three on Sep 3rd and one on Sep 5th. Single birds flew over Thorncombe Street on Sep 8th, Riddlesdown on Sep 12th, West Clandon on Sep 20th and St Martha's on Oct 3rd and two flew over Beddington SF on Oct 5th.

Rock Pipit A below average autumn with five reported between Sep 19th and Oct 20th. Single birds were at Barn Elms Playing Fields on Sep 19th, QE2 Res on Oct 2nd and the London Wetland Centre on Oct 20th, with two at Lonsdale Road Res on Sep 20th.

Yellow Wagtail Birds were reported from 23 sites, with nine reports involving more than six birds. The largest of these were 22 over Shalford Water Meadows on Sep 7th, 15 over Beddington SF on Sep 16th,

30 at Horsell Common on Sep 20th and 20 at Shackleford on Sep 21st. The last was one over Barn Elms Playing Fields on Oct 7th.

Black Redstart Single birds were at Beddington SF on Aug 13th, Oct 4th and Nov 2nd, Island Barn Res on Oct 13th, Banstead on Oct 28th and Godstone on Nov 1st.

Redstart A below average autumn passage with eight birds recorded from four non-breeding sites. At Richmond Park there were single birds on Aug 21st-22nd, Aug 25th and Sep 7th, with two on Sep 4th-5th. Elsewhere, single birds were at Holmethorpe SP on Aug 30th, Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Sep 1st and Smithwood Common (Cranleigh) from Sep 1st-8th. The last was at Thursley Common on Sep 20th.

Whinchat Birds were reported from 24 sites. Passage was heavier than in recent years with counts of five or more at six sites. These were eight in Richmond Park on Aug 28th and Sep 5th, five at the London Wetland Centre on Sep 7th, five at Papercourt Water Meadows on Sep 8th, five at Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Sep 11th, five at Riddlesdown on Sep 11th and seven at Priest Hill (Ewell) on Sep 12th. The last was at Walton Res on Oct 13th.

Wheatear Autumn passage was heavier than in recent years with birds were reported from 32 sites and

counts of three or more from six of them. The largest numbers were four at Leith Hill and four in Richmond Park on Sep 11th, five at Beddington SF on Sep 16th and four at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Oct 2nd. The last was at QE2 Res on Oct 31st.

Ring Ouzel An excellent autumn with at least 60 birds recorded between Oct 5th and Nov 3rd. There were two at High Breach (Chelsham) on Oct 5th, with one still present on Oct 7th. One was at Holmethorpe SP on Oct 6th. There were six in the Devil's Punch Bowl on Oct 7th, with three still there on Oct 9th and another three present on Oct 25th. At Nore Hill (Chelsham) two were present on Oct 7th with four there on Oct 9th. Two in Richmond Park on Oct 7th were joined by a third the next day. At Leith Hill a total of 19 flew over on Oct 8th, then one was present the next day, three on Oct 10th, two on Oct 12th and three on Oct 17th. There were two at Frensham Common on Oct 9th with another two there on Oct 15th. At Bricksbury Hill one was present on Oct 10th, with three there on Oct 14th and one on Oct 17th. Single birds were in Battersea Park on Oct 11th, at Capel on Oct 12th and 13th, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Oct 12th, Putney on Oct 22nd, Chilworth on Oct 31st, Thorncombe Street from Oct 31st-Nov 2nd and Great Brook on Nov 3rd.

Grasshopper Warbler Single birds were in Richmond Park on Sep 5th,

Worplesdon on Sep 6th (with two there the next day), Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Sep 18th and Wimbledon Common on Sep 24th.

Sedge Warbler October birds were at Beddington SF on the 1st and Walton Res on the 8th.

Blyth's Reed Warbler One was at Lonsdale Road Res on Sep 10th and 11th. If accepted, this will represent the first county record.

Reed Warbler October birds were at Walton Res on the 1st and Battersea Park on the 8th.

Dartford Warbler One was at Wimbledon Common on Sep 29th.

Lesser Whitethroat The last to be reported was at Molesey Heath on Sep 22nd.

Whitethroat The last to be reported was at Worplesdon on Sep 30th.

Garden Warbler The last to be reported was at Worplesdon on Sep 14th.

Yellow-browed Warbler With the large numbers present in the country this autumn it came as no surprise that possibly as many as 13 birds were seen in the county. They were at Battersea Park on Oct 7th, 11th and 15th, Beddington SF on Oct 10th, Capel on Oct 10th-11th, 18th and 28th, Holmethorpe SP on Oct 10th,

Guildford on Oct 11th, Selsdon on Oct 14th, Badshot Lea on Oct 21st, Godalming on Nov 1st and Farncombe on Nov 25th.

Wood Warbler One was at Thorncombe Street on Aug 18th and one was at Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Oct 24th.

Willow Warbler The last to be reported was at the London Wetland Centre on Sep 29th.

Firecrest Single birds were at Frensham Outlet Pond on Aug 14th, Sep 25th and Oct 24th-29th, Merrow Downs on Sep 10th, Horsell Common on Sep 20th and Oct 19th, Farnham on Sep 28th, Battersea Park from Sep 29th-Oct 22nd, Purley Beeches on Oct 5th, Sydenham Hill Wood from Oct 6th-13th (with two there on Oct 14th), Cranleigh on Oct 9th, Croham Hurst on Oct 10th, Beddington Park on Oct 14th, Dulwich Woods on Oct 16th, Wandsworth Common on Oct 18th, Frensham Great Pond on Oct 23rd, Richmond Park on Oct 26th, Waterloo Ponds (Albury) on Oct 29th and Bramley Mill Pond on Oct 30th. There were two at Witley Common on Sep 28th, with one remaining to Oct 29th.

Spotted Flycatcher The last to be reported was at Battersea Park on Oct 1st.

Pied Flycatcher Single birds were at Brockwell Park on Aug 24th

and Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) on Aug 25th.

Bearded Tit One was at Beddington SF on Jul 23rd and up to eight were at Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) from Oct 11th-18th.

Raven Reports came from eight sites with, as usual, most being in the west and south of the county. More unusual was one over South Norwood CP on Oct 20th.

Crossbill Numbers remained low throughout the autumn. A total of 27 birds were reported from seven sites in July, with the only report involving more than three being 15 over Thorncombe Street on the 28th. August produced just five birds at four sites and September 13 at two sites, including 12 at Leith Hill on the 14th. There was a further increase in October with 37 birds reported from six sites. The flock remained at Leith Hill, peaking at 17 on the 14th.

Hawfinch Single birds were at Unstead SF on Sep 11th, Morden Hall Park on Oct 9th, Frensham Little Pond on Oct 15th and Thorncombe Street on Oct 24th, and three were in Richmond Park on Oct 19th.

Lapland Bunting Single birds flew over Barn Elms Playing Fields on Oct 19th and Beddington SF on Oct 22nd.
**Some records are subject to final check by the county or national records committees.*

♦ Escapes/Hybrids

Whooper Swan An adult was at Walton Res on Aug 13th.

Black Swan Two were at Island Barn and Walton Res on Sep 22nd and one was at the London Wetland Centre on Sep 24th.

♦ Contributors

*Barn Elms Bird Group/
WWT,
Beddington Farm Bird
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Doug Boyd,
Croydon Birders website,
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*Dave Harris,
Haslemere Natural History
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David Knight,
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Brian Milton,*

*Surbiton & District Bird
Watching Society,
Tice's Meadow Bird Group
Unstead Bird & Wildlife
Group, and the
'twittersphere'.*

Note: October to December 2016 news to Shaun Peters ASAP please at: 'Glendeven', School Rd, Rowledge, Farnham, GU10 4EJ. Tel. 01252 793887 Email: recbirds@yahoo.co.uk

Tice's Meadow 2016 Review

2016 was a truly record-breaking year at Tice's Meadow, with a new record annual count of bird species recorded, along with record levels of visitors and volunteer hours spent on site to improve the habitats and visitor experience.

152 species of bird were recorded at Tice's Meadow in 2016, 2 better than our previous best year of 2014. 4 new species for the site were recorded this year: Common Crane, Nightjar, Whooper Swan & Yellow-browed Warbler.

Birds of conservation concern recorded on site in 2016 included 21 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species, 52 Amber List Species and 28 Red

List Species.

Site record counts for 29 species were set in 2016, a good indication of the increasing numbers of birds to be found on site, as well as a reflection of the welcomed increase in the number of visitors who are recording and reporting their sightings - 4,385 sightings were entered into our database this year, with reports received from 46 different people, covering 256 days of the year.

Winter

The first winter period of 2016 was relatively warm and wet - the third-warmest and second-wettest for the UK since 1910 - leading to high water

levels on site.

Good numbers of wildfowl were present on site, including a record count of Teal (200). 4 Pintail were the only notable rare wildfowl visitors.

Other winter highlights included 6 Golden Plover, a handful of Jack Snipe, an over-wintering Common Sandpiper (the only one in Surrey this year), a Mediterranean Gull, 3+ Yellow-legged Gull, a Caspian Gull and at least 2 over-wintering Chiffchaff.

Spring

Spring was cooler than expected, with average rainfall, except for March which was exceptionally wet, with the site's water-bodies remaining high throughout the spring.

Wader species recorded during the spring included an Oystercatcher, 2 Avocet, 5+ Little Ringed Plover, 9 Dunlin, a Jack Snipe, 3 Whimbrel, a Redshank, 3 Greenshank and 2 Wood Sandpiper. The spring wader passage was relatively poor, especially compared to last year's. This was thought to be due to the high water levels on site and lack of exposed mud and gravel islands.

Whilst the wader passage was relatively poor, the number and variety of other birds on site more than made up for it. The Non-wader spring highlights included 4 Mandarin Duck, a record count of Wigeon (148), a Garganey, 2 Goosander, a Common Crane (a site first), 27 Mediterranean Gull (including a new county record flock



Jay

(Kev Campbell)

of 21), 2 Little Gull, 2 Yellow-legged Gull, a Caspian Gull, 2 Black Tern, a Sandwich Tern, 2 Arctic Tern, a Rose-ringed Parakeet, a Cuckoo, a Tawny Owl, a Tree Pipit, a Water Pipit, 20+ Yellow Wagtail, 2 Nightingale, a Black Redstart, a Redstart, 3 Whinchat, 3+ Wheatear, a Grasshopper Warbler, 2 Lesser Whitethroat, a Spotted Flycatcher, 2 Brambling and 2 Yellowhammer.

During the spring we saw the first 2015 sightings in Surrey for Little Ringed Plover, Common Tern, Greenshank and Wood Sandpiper. We also recorded the highest spring counts in Surrey for Yellow Wagtail, Wood Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper.

Birds which bred on site included Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Little Ringed Plover, Black-headed Gull, Common Tern, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Garden Warbler and Bullfinch.

Summer

Summer started with a very wet June, but that was the last month of 2016 to see above average rainfall, with the

rest of the year being very dry. A late heat wave was a sign of things to come.

Summer highlights included 2 Garganey, a Black-necked Grebe, a Honey Buzzard, 3 Oystercatcher, 3+ Little Ringed Plover, 13 Ringed Plover, a Sanderling, 154 Dunlin, a Ruff, 4 Black-tailed Godwit, a Curlew, 9 Redshank, 2 Greenshank, a Wood Sandpiper, 2 Turnstone, 2 Yellow-legged Gull, a Black Tern, a Cuckoo, a Nightjar (a site first), 3+ Yellow Wagtail, a Redstart, a Wheatear, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Dartford Warbler, a Pied Flycatcher and a Yellowhammer.

Autumn

Autumn began with an unseasonably warm period and saw continued below average rainfall, leading to dramatically falling water levels on site.

The welcome return of 8 Bearded Tits, following last year's first ever sightings, again showed that the countless hours spent by our volunteers clearing invasive willow from the Reed beds is time well spent. Other autumn highlights included 2 Whooper Swan (a site first), a Black-necked Grebe, a Great White Egret, 5 Spoonbill, 2 Ringed Plover, 81 Golden Plover, a Pectoral Sandpiper, 12 Dunlin, a Jack Snipe, 4 Bar-tailed Godwit, a Curlew, 3+ Yellow-legged Gull, a Black Tern, 2 Rose-ringed Parakeet, 3+ Yellow Wagtail, 5 Whinchat, 4+ Wheatear, 1 or 2 Ring Ouzel, a Yellow-browed Warbler (a

site first), 2 Brambling and a Yellowhammer.

Winter

The second winter period of 2016 was generally warmer than average, apart from a late cold-snap before Christmas. Rainfall was 83% below average, leading to the water-bodies on site lowering by as much as 10cm a week.

Winter highlights included a Brent Goose, a number of Golden Plover (flocks of 70, 15 & 10), a Jack Snipe, an over-wintering Common Sandpiper, a Barn Owl, at least 3 over-wintering Chiffchaff, a 50-strong flock of Siskin, a 20-strong flock of Lesser Redpoll and a 6-strong flock of Bullfinch.

The worryingly low water levels saw reduced numbers of most wildfowl species on site, though this trend was bucked by a record count of Shoveler (63) who are more suited to feeding in the shallower water-bodies.

Other Wildlife

At the end of the year our pan-species list stands at 1,032, with 75 new species added in 2016. Butterflies, moths & dragonflies were once again in abundance on site, with our Wasp Spiders (now numbering in the 100s) drawing visitors to the site.

2016 also saw confirmation that we have Great Crested Newts and Badgers on site, and a report of an Otter in December has caused great excitement.

BioBlitz

Over the weekend of April 29th to May 1st, the Tice's Meadow Bird Group held their second 48 hour BioBlitz. Building on last years successful event, this year we decided to go bigger and better and involve as many members of the public and local conservation organisations as possible.

Over the course of the weekend around 90 members of the public visited the site, took part in the activities and enjoyed the wildlife present. As well as seasoned birders, naturalists and 7 members of the Army Ornithological Society, local residents and families with young children were well represented.

We are holding our 2017 Bio-Blitz over the weekend of Friday 28th April to Sunday 30th April. Full details can

be found on our website and in this issue of Birding Surrey. We hope to see you there.

Tice's Meadow Bird Group

2016 saw the Tice's Meadow Bird Group become more formalised - a constitution was adopted, an inaugural AGM held, executive positions filled and a bank account opened. We are delighted to announced that Lt. Col. Roger Dickey (chairman of the Army Ornithological Society, a BTO Trustee and member of the BTO Governing Council) has graciously accepted our invitation to become the group's President.

Work parties were held throughout the year, with our volunteers clearing prodigious amounts of invasive willow, litter picking, building nest boxes, building stumperies (for stag



Tice's Crew

(Rich Mooney)



Tice's Meadow Spring 2017 BioBlitz

28th to 30th April - Tice's Meadow Nature Reserve

Friday 28th April

Afternoon Setting-up camp. Laying out the mammal traps. Informal birdwatching & socialising.

Saturday 29th April

10:00 am Surveying the Mammal Traps

Checking & recording the contents of the mammal traps with the Surrey Mammal Group.

11:00 am Birdwatching Walk

A guided walk around the site. Learn how to identify the birds seen on site. Ideal for beginners. Binoculars / scopes will be available for use for those who don't have them.

All Day Bird Ringing Demonstration

A licensed bird ringer will be trapping and ringing birds on site. An excellent opportunity to see birds up close and learn the finer details of identifying them.

7:00 pm Creatures of the Night

Be a bat and moth detective. Help us set up the moth traps. Use a bat detector to listen-in on passing bats during an organised walk. Outside chance of hearing an owl.

Sunday 30th April

9:00 am Moth Trap Results

Help us empty the moth traps, identify and record the species caught.

10:00 am Birdwatching Walk

A guided walk around the site. Learn how to identify the birds seen on site. Ideal for beginners. Binoculars / scopes will be available for use for those who don't have them.

All Morning Bird-ringing Demonstration

A licensed bird ringer will be trapping and ringing birds on site. An excellent opportunity to see birds up close and learn the finer details of identifying them.

Throughout the Weekend

Members of the Tice's Meadow Bird Group will be camping on site all weekend to help you identify the birds seen on site, let you use their scopes / binoculars, discuss the development of the nature reserve and answer any questions you have. In addition to birds, we can also help you identify the insects, spiders, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, plants and fungi that can be found on site.

All events will start from Horton's Mound – please follow the signs from the entrances to find us.

Website: www.ticesmeadow.org
Twitter: @TicesMeadow

Email: ticesmeadow@hotmail.co.uk



beetles) and spreading woodchippings across the site's paths.

The Tice's Meadow Bird Group entered Aviva UK's Community Fund competition and won £1,000 funding to build a shelter on Horton's Mound. We received a remarkable 1,602 votes from members of the public. This award has opened up the possibility of further funding and an exciting project is currently in the works. More details will be announced soon. Thank you to everyone who voted for us.

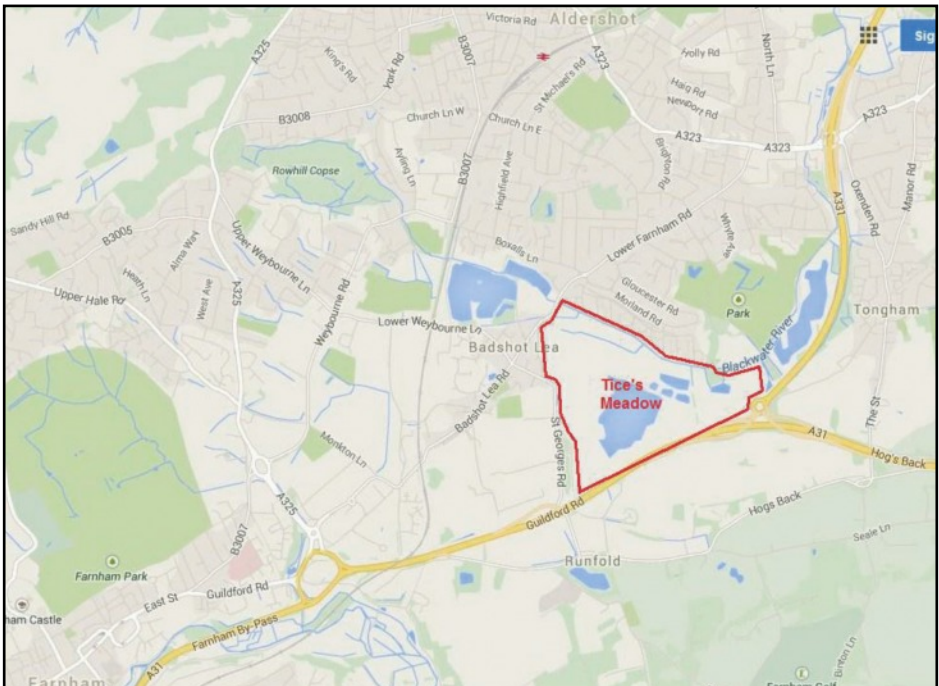
Our 2016 Annual Report will soon be available to download for free from our website. Full-colour, glossy A4 hard-copies will also be for sale. Proceeds from sales of last year's

report allowed us to donate copies to a number of local schools as well as invest in some much needed tools and materials for use on site.

2017 promises to be another fantastic year at Tice's Meadow, so why not pay us a visit?

How to Visit Us

Tice's Meadow is a developing nature reserve and Site of Nature Conservation Interest, covering approximately 150 acres, on the site of the former Farnham Quarry. The habitats on site consist of a mosaic of open water, gravel islands and scrapes, reedbeds, scrub, woodland, ephemeral ponds and wet and dry



Tice's Meadow Location Plan

© Google/Mark Elsoffer

grassland.

The site is located between Badshot Lea and Tongham, on the southern outskirts of Aldershot, at the southern end of the Blackwater Valley, on the boundary between Surrey and Hampshire.

The best place to park is on the Lower Farnham Road (B3208) near the Pea Bridge (at SU 86759 49018). The nearest railway station is Aldershot. Stagecoach Bus run regular services from Aldershot, Guildford and Farnham with stops near the site (routes 15 & 46).

There is free open access to the site with permissive footpaths running across the northern perimeter. Public access to the Meadow, Workings and Works is strictly prohibited on health

& safety and wildlife protection grounds. The Meadow and the Workings are best viewed from Horton's Mound. The footpaths and Horton's Mound can become very muddy in the winter and following wet weather so wellies are recommended.

Further Information

Our website: www.ticesmeadow.org

Please follow us on Twitter:

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

Our Flickr Group:

www.flickr.com/groups/tices

To contact us via email:

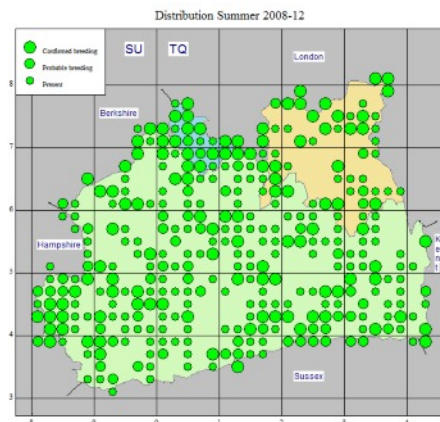
ticesmeadow@hotmail.co.uk

Mark Elsoffer, Tice's Meadow Bird Group

BTO Matters

Here is the House Martin map created for the Surrey Bird Atlas for 2007-2012. You will see there are

a large number of 2 kilometre squares where there was possible or probable breeding of House Martins. This makes the 2016 survey in Surrey really disappointing for me.



To recap what the 2016 House Martin involved. It meant visiting a site where the surveyor knew House Martins had nested, preferably in mid-April, before the start of the nesting season. Then recording what nests were there and then visiting the site regularly (preferably once a week) and recording what was happening at the nests e.g. no activity, visible young, adult feeding young. The

results could be entered online or on paper. If the nests were on private property, and access was needed to view the nests, then there were leaflets available to give to the owner of the property to help obtain the necessary consent (this resulted in me being able to visit a house in my road where I did not know the owners). If some weeks were missed by the surveyor, it was not a problem. However, if practical, monitoring the nests right into September was the aim.

Either House Martin numbers have gone down substantially in Surrey since 2012 or very few people got involved in the survey. Only 6 sites were covered (and I covered one of them) and these are the results:

*For these two sites it looks as though the surveyors did not understand what was involved. I have failed to obtain any further information about the sites and nest success from the surveyors other than what is shown.

Now I know of another couple of nests (in Chobham High Street) which were also successful (the person I

encouraged to get involved and record the nests failed to do so) so I am sure there were more sites in the county which could have been covered.

Due to the poor weather in spring 2016 the BTO have decided to repeat the survey in 2017. It is thought that the House Martins may have nested later than usual due to the fact that they were not in a good condition to breed earlier (due to lack of food). It is also thought that this might have led to less broods than usual. Therefore I am really hoping to get more people involved in 2017. Could you be one of those getting involved? See more below.

Please look at the sightings on the next page, of House Martins in Surrey in 2016 reported through BirdTrack (thank you to the County Recorder, Eric Soden for providing me with these).

You will see there are quite a few sightings. I have removed the observer's name from this table and I will be contacting the observers who saw nests in order to ask them to

Site Location	No of nests	No of successful nests	Last date seen at nests	Other comments
Chobham	13	12	23/08/2016	My site
Merstham	1	0	Before 23/6/16	Abandoned after nest destroyed
Godalming	3	1	01/09/2016	2 never completed
Chilworth	2	Not known	Not known	Surveyor only seems to have recorded that there were nests and nothing else*
Guildford	4	3	19/09/2016	2 broods in each successful nest
Redhill	2	Not known	06/05/2016	No later entries*

Table of House Martin sighting locations in Surrey in 2016

Site	Grid Ref
Bay Pond Godstone	TQ353516
Bell Weir Lock, River Thames	TQ017720
Bookham Common	TQ130565
Boundless Farm	SU904367
Bournbrook, Chobham	SU9861
Brockham	TQ195496
BWC, Newchapel	TQ365434
Caterham town centre	TQ341555
Chertsey Meads	TQ061662
Chobham Common North	SU973648
Chobham SU96Q	SU96Q
Chobham Village	SU9761
Clandon Park	TQ032517
Claypit Wood & Middle OP, Farnham	SU8247
Common Meadow, R Mole L'head	TQ157567
Coxes Lock, Addlestone	TQ061641
Denbies Hillside	TQ140500
Downside	TQ110580
E Horsley (Bishopsmead Parade)	TQ095529
Egham Hythe Lake	TQ026702
Elstead	SU907437
Englefield Green (SU97V)	SU97V
Epsom Common	TQ190605
Esher and West End commons	TQ1262
Fairoaks Airfield area	TQ0062
Foxburrow Hill Road, Unstead	SU996453
Frensham Great Pond	SU845402
Frensham Little Pond	SU845402
Frensham Little Pond	SU858416
G'ing C'house E/PHR/Westbrook	SU9644
G'ing Lammas Lands/F'combe S	SU9744
Godalming (Fox Dene)	SU964426
Godalming (G'ing)	SU9744
Godalming (Shackstead lane)	SU965431
Godalming Charterhouse W	SU9544
Godstone Green	TQ348515
Green Lane, Bletchingley	TQ331522
Heather Farm, Horsell Common	SU995607

Site	Grid Ref
Hedgécourt Lake	TQ355403
Holmethorpe SP	TQ292515
Horsell Common	TQ010610
Horton .ry Park	TQ190627
Leith Hill	TQ139431
Lingfield (Weir Lodge)	TQ389421
Meadowlands, Addlestone	TQ0664
Mickleham	TQ1753
ND Way Watts Gallery to R Wey	SU9547
New Addington Rowdown	TQ390628
Newark Lane, Pyrford	TQ0357
Painshill Park	TQ095600
Painshill Park	TQ096603
Papercourt	TQ0356
Papercourt (TQ05I)	TQ05I
Parkgate nr Newdigate	TQ2044
Peper Harow	SU9344
Pewley Down & Warren Farm	TQ0149
Queen Mary Reservoir	TQ0569
Runnymede	SU996730
Runnymede	TQ0072
Send village	TQ025559
South Park Farm, Godstone	TQ342488
Staines & Stanwell Moor	TQ0372
Staines Moor	TQ033734
Staines Reservoir - North Basin	TQ051736
Staines Reservoirs	TQ051730
Stoke Water Meadows/R Park	TQ004516
The Paddocks, Normandy	SU932502
Thursley Common	SU910414
Tice's Meadow, Badshot Lea	SU870489
Triggs Lock	TQ013549
Unstead SF	SU995455
Virginia Water	SU9667
Weatherhill Common	TQ306435
Wey canal to Papercourt Meadow	TQ0356
Wire Mill Lake	TQ367417
Wisley RHS Gardens	TQ063580

contribute towards the 2017 survey. However, if you think you could cover any of those reported nests please do let me know.

Here are details of some other nests. This is because in the 2015 House Martin survey certain 1 kilometre squares were covered and nests were found in the following squares.

Grid Ref.....	No of colonies
SU8346.....	1
SU8849.....	10
SU9357.....	5
TQ0435.....	4
TQ0648.....	1
TQ0652.....	1

Would you be able to go and check these squares again and report on the nests? If you can let me know and I will try and find out from the surveyor exactly where the nests were.

Also, if you know of nests from this year, then why not cover them in 2017? Although completing the information online looks a bit daunting, when you first go in to enter information, it really is quite straightforward. There is an online video on the BTO website showing you how to do so.

As I said above, you will be able to enter your results online but, if you are not happy with using the online system set up by the BTO or do not have access to a computer, you can do it on paper. If you would prefer to do

the survey on paper then please contact me and I will ensure that you are sent the necessary paperwork.

If you have not got involved in doing a survey in the past, then this is an ideal survey with which to start. There is only one species which you have to identify (and if you need any help you can go to the BTO's ID video recording which explains how you differentiate between House Martins and Swallows at <http://www.bto.org/about-birds/bird-id/bto-bird-id-hirundines-and-swift>.) This recording not only helps with what they look like but also their calls.

If you know of a public or office building where there are nests and you would like to encourage the occupants to get involved e.g. school children at a school then just let me know and we can get a BTO leaflet about the survey dropped off/sent to the site.

There is lots more information about House Martins on the BTO website. Here is the link <http://app.bto.org/birdfacts/results/bob10010.htm>

By the way thank you very much to everyone who has contributed to the data set out above.

Remember, even if not recording nests, do put your sightings into BirdTrack. You will see from the 2016 table of sightings just how many records the club now gets from BirdTrack. I have just got myself a modern phone which allows me to put

Table of vacant Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) sites

10km	BBS Name	BBS Grid Ref	10km	BBS Name	BBS Grid Ref
SU84	Tongham	SU8949	TQ04	East Guildford	TQ0249
SU93	SE of Haslemere	SU9231	TQ04	Fowls Copse (N of Cranleigh)	TQ0641
SU93	SE of Haslemere	SU9430	TQ05	SE of Woking	TQ0258
SU94	Elstead	SU9143	TQ05	E of West Horsley	TQ0952
TQ03	Oxocroft Copse (on Sussex Border footpath)	TQ0232	TQ14	E of Ewhurst	TQ1040
TQ03	Cranleigh	TQ0539	TQ15	West of Great Bookham	TQ1353
TQ03	Massers Wood (S of Cranleigh)	TQ0735	TQ24	W of Reigate	TQ2449
TQ03	SE of Cranleigh	TQ0837	TQ25	Betchworth	TQ2150
TQ03	The Windbreak (S of Ewhurst)	TQ0937	TQ25	South Merstham	TQ2952
TQ04	Palmers Cross (S of Wonersh)	TQ0240	TQ25	M23 SE of Chaldon	TQ2954
TQ04	Rooks Hill (SW of Shamley Green)	TQ0242	TQ34	South of Godstone	TQ3647
			TQ35	North west of Oxted	TQ3752
			TQ35	S of Woldingham	TQ3755

my sightings in through the app (which is free). It really is very easy (and there is again a video recording on the website talking you through how to do so).

The Breeding Bird Survey

Yet again it is the time of year when I am appealing for surveyors to help with this survey. Some sites have now become vacant, and some have been vacant for a few years now. Time commitment is not great as it is two visits (once you know the site) early in the morning to record the birds that you see and hear whilst walking along two 1 km transects (which can be shorter if it is not possible to access the whole of the square. You also record the habitat (this is why I say once you know the site because you really need to visit the site before the first bird survey in

order to record the habitat). Once you know the habitat it is easy to notice if anything has changed from an earlier survey. You also go out at the best time of year namely one visit between 1st April and 15th May and the second between 16th May and 30th June. One or two lucky surveyors in 2016 saw Firecrest, Little Egret (me!), Raven, Tawny Owl, Little Owl, Wheatear, Whinchat, Hobby, and Spotted Flycatcher.

If you know your birds by both sight and call please do get involved.

Here is a list of the vacant sites. There are some new squares showing here as the BTO has allocated some more 1 km squares to Surrey

Penny Williams

Woking Peregrines - Year 2

The Woking Peregrine Project is about to start its second year and the indication of another breeding attempt looks very promising. Watching the activities of the Woking Peregrines will be greatly enhanced by the recent installation of two external cameras sited near the nest box

(<http://www.wokingperegrines.com/>).

The 'Ledge Cam' looks south along the west side of Export House - one of the favoured ledges of the two



Ledge Cam view, 31 Jan 2017



North End Cam view, 31 Jan 2017



Installation of external cameras, 20 Jan 2017
(James Sellen)

juvenile Peregrines last year. The second 'North End' camera looks in a north easterly direction towards Woking railway station. This camera shows the flat ledge above the north end stairwell where Peregrines tried to breed in 2005/2006. This is another favoured perching / plucking area for the adult Peregrines. Both cameras will give extended views of the adults and, hopefully, juvenile Peregrines which wasn't possible by viewing the website last year.

The process of planning, installing and funding of the new cameras has been achieved with the help of Woking Borough Council's Tracey Haskins - Green Infrastructure Manager. Late last year a meeting was held with Tracey and the Project team which included; Richard Denyer, John Bannister, Craig Denford and myself. We decided on the new camera locations and suggested Jason Fathers (Wildlife Windows) carried

out the installation work. Jason did an excellent job installing the Peregrine nest box and nest cam last year and on the 20th January the new cameras were put in place. Thanks to Craig Denford (Project's web master) all three cameras started showing live images on the 7th February and the benefits were immediate. The adult tiercel was seen entering the nest box and making a depression in the pea shingle substrate - a very good sign of possible breeding.

I'm lucky in that I have distant views of the west side of Export House from the WWF Living Planet Centre and I'm able to watch the Peregrines most days from the Peacock's car park (Level 4, Yellow Zone). The Peregrines can also be seen from Jubilee Square and from the east side of Export House particularly when there's a cold north westerly wind. It would be very helpful to know if anyone notices any Peregrine breeding activities (i.e.; display flights, mating) with dates / times of observations. This can be reported via the Woking Peregrine Project website; <http://www.wokingperegrines.com/contact/>

In the last issue of the Surrey Bird Club newsletter, Charlotte Gray mentioned a stand Surrey Bird Club will be running in May / June this year. This will be located in Woking's Jubilee Square so local people / shoppers can be shown the Peregrines. I found this very rewarding last year



Peregrine North West end, Export House, 6 Mar 2016 (James Sellen)

and with the help of a lap top showing the Peregrines nest cam, many people were keen to know more about our iconic falcons. This year, Woking Borough Council want to screen live images in the Peacock's shopping centre and there will be a live feed in the foyer of Export House. This will make the Surrey Bird Club stand even more popular with the chance of introducing more people to the invaluable work undertaken by the Club. Please let Charlotte know if you would like to help.

James Sellen

Surrey Wildlife Trust Response

We publish here in full the SWT response dated 7 Feb 2017, to our letter referred to in the Chairman's introduction:

Dear Steve,

Thanks for your letter. Sorry for the slight delay, I have been out of the office talking to as many members and volunteers as possible.

This is a very difficult time for the Trust and its staff but our mission will always be to care for Surrey's beautiful landscape for the benefit of wildlife and people. We will not abandon the countryside in spite of the current challenges. We have needed to announce this reorganisation of our staff, on the grounds of cost saving and efficiency, which is predominantly due to the considerable reduction in SCC funding for the management their Land.

The restructuring of our countryside management team, follows budget cuts by Surrey County Council. Of the land managed by our rangers, 77% is owned by SCC and this is managed under a Contract and a set of Service Delivery Specifications set by SCC. We took on some 37 staff from SCC at the start of the contract - and thus the payments from SCC cover this staff cost.

We have been discussing the reduction in funding with SCC for some time but the amount of saving being requested by SCC has increased from the original figure due to their financial situation. I listened to the SCC web cast of their Cabinet meeting last Tuesday. Government austerity has resulted in a very different funding base for Surrey County Council, which means they are only able to fund statutory services such as social care and education and the SCC Countryside Estate is not a statutory service. They are short of over £90M and even a rise in Council Tax, as being discussed via a Referendum, will be directed at Statutory Services and not to the countryside.

As a point of principle, we have been able to direct SWT charitable income to vital programmes such as funding the management of our own Nature Reserves and children's outdoor education (15,000 children a year). This is because our other land management partnerships and contracts such as SCC, Mole Valley DC and MoD, are funded either by:

- The land owner, or by
- EU grant money being claimed on that land, or
- A combination of the two.

Thus a reduction in funding by a

major land owner, in this case SCC, has immediate consequences. At the AGM we spoke about SCC's intention to reduce its funding, (that used to be in the order of £1M annually), to £0 by 2021. We have spent the last 3 years in discussion with SCC and have taken extensive (London based) legal advice but the result has led to SWT being faced with two choices to:

- Work constructively with SCC to ensure the best outcome for wildlife whilst reducing costs and generating new income to support the estate or
- Face the very real risk that SCC would break the contract for financial reasons and stop protecting and investing in habitat management to the detriment of wildlife - and redundancies of the workforce. SCC may have had to pay damages but this would in no way compensate for the future lack of effective management and large scale removal of staff. Note also, that damages might be paid in 'commercial terms' and on the loss of future business. In this case the contract is run on a 'not for profit' basis, there is no direct financial benefit to SWT from the SCC contract, as might be the case with a contract taken on by a commercial business and this makes the recovery of damages even harder to calculate.

We are also threatened by the real

spectre of a reduction in grant funding from the EU from next year - that is the Basic Payment Scheme (was called Single Farm Payment) and Higher Level Stewardship income and the first few of our 10 year HLS schemes end this year and will not be renewed as the Treasury/DEFRA are unclear about the future funding situation. This income is claimed on the SCC Estate, the MoD Land we manage and our own Reserves.

SCC feel they must prioritise their statutory responsibilities and have asked us to generate new income from commercial development - car parking, income from filming and other initiatives such as weddings on SCC land, as well as maximising the income from woodland management - so that their Countryside Estate can become self-funding. We are doing this and have set up a small commercial team but this new income will not be fully on stream until 2021 and in the short term is insufficient to cover the savings required by SCC for the next financial year.

At the AGM we said we were working on plans for the future and we have been considering options for the management of the SCC Estate for some months. The 16 rangers affected are predominantly tasked to cover the SCC estate. We are not making all 16 staff redundant. The new structure of 10 staff reflects a more centralised approach to the management of the land within the

limits of the resources available. Other land management staff, such as our important grazing team (who manage the MoD estate - now with over 380 cattle and 160 red deer. (The MoD estate is 47% of the whole)) and other specialists that include woodland and other project officers as well as the Living Landscape and education land management teams, will continue and we will extend the effective use external contractors to deal with large areas. The latter, using specialist equipment, has proven to be an effective form of management, particularly on heathland and downland areas which are often beyond the scope of ranger and volunteer teams themselves.

We particularly value the support we have from our many volunteers, and acknowledge that this includes them needing a point of contact and sufficient staff with a knowledge of the sites. We plan to retain all our regular work parties and are working on how this can be achieved within the resources now available. The one task we are planning to do centrally is all the recording and paperwork. This currently takes up many hours for a ranger and considerably reduces their effectiveness. Things will be done differently and in a more efficient and focused way and we fully intend to fulfil our responsibilities for the land we manage.

Thank you for your support. Despite the funding cuts, we still believe that

SWT is the best organisation to be caring for the land.

I hope this helps to clarify the situation.

Nigel [Davenport]

PS. I also copy an email I have received from Keith Witham, the SCC Councillor for Worplesdon, that provides some further background and you may already be aware that SCC is proposing a 15% rise in Council Tax for next year:

"I do recall this issue, from about 5 years ago, when the Government told County Councils that it expected public funding of the county Wildlife Trusts to cease. I understand from my enquiries that SWT have advised their 16 Area Managers and Rangers that their posts are at risk of redundancy, and that the proposed new restructure will allow for 10 posts.

You can blame SCC if you wish to. But this, along with all other Council funded services, has to be against the background, as I have previously explained to the Parish Council, of the Government's main grant to local authorities as a contribution to local services, the "Revenue Support Grant" which is in the process of being reduced from £151 million a year to £zero in 2018. There are also many other "service specific" grants that the Government is either reducing or eliminating. The latest estimate I have seen is that this coming year

SCC will have a funding gap of some £93 million between what it is expecting as income, and its current costs (let alone reductions already agreed and implemented). That's why priority is being given to statutory services, for which the Council has a legal obligation.

I would add, so that you know, that I am personally a supporter of SWT and have for some years made a personal monthly Standing Order donation to the charity, but as a County Councillor I cannot see that this funding issue is going to change.

SCC does not have enough for this, along with many many other services. The situation will not change unless there is a big change of heart of the part of the government, or a big Council Tax increase, as those are the only two main sources of income to SCC other than a share of the Business Rates, over which SCC also has no control and gets what it is given by the Government".

regards
Keith

Notes

❖ **Welcome to new members:**

Patrick McGuinness-Smith,
Loxwood,
Clare Harrington, Guildford,
Murray Nurse, Farnham,
Deborah & James Atkinson,
Cranleigh,
Anne Burnage, Dorking,
Alison Mackenzie, London WC1,
Matt Sharp, Camberley,
Victoria Vincent, Chobham,
John & Suzanne Vincent, Fleet,
Sandy Humphrey, Farnham,
John Rees, Chiddingfold,
Marilyn Page, Epsom,
Alex Bayley, Guildford,
Thomas Gibson, Staines, and re-
joining, Andy Harding, Epsom.

❖ **Birds of Surrey** - Our county avifauna. Available from Penny Williams. Great value at £25.

❖ **Notes, Sketches, Articles, Photographs** - Anything that you think may be of interest to the members of the Club would be gratefully received for publication in *Birding Surrey*, the *Surrey Bird Report* or on our website.

❖ **10 Years of *Birding Surrey*** - it was 10 years ago that we rebranded our newsletter with issue number 75 in Spring 2007. Apart from moving to full colour last year it has remained largely unchanged. We would be grateful for any views and suggestions on the newsletter to the Editor (contact details on the back page).

From your Membership Secretary

It is renewal time again. When payments are made directly into the club's bank account by members I do not know whether the payment is being made by standing order or whether the member has just made a payment by using online banking. I make a note in the database when a member tells me that they have set up a standing order but sometimes I am not told.

With this newsletter, if I do not think you have set up a standing order, I am sending a renewal notice. If you have in fact set up a standing order please do let me know because it will save me having to print out renewal notices for you in the future. If you have please do so (and let me know) because it reduces my workload.

Remember these are standing orders not direct debits so the club cannot change the amount that you pay, you would have to authorise any change

and, again, the club's membership rates for 2017/18 remaining the same as they have been. The last increase was back on 1st April 2012.

At the time I am writing this, the club has just received money back from HMRC in relation to the Giftaid claims that it has made. The club gets almost £850 from HMRC. If I do not think we have a giftaid form for you I am enclosing a form with this newsletter. What this means is that, if you do not get a form with this newsletter, the club is making a giftaid claim. Therefore, if you are no longer a taxpayer, you must notify me straightaway. Taxpayer means you pay income tax or capital gains tax. It does not mean council tax.

If you get a giftaid form and you are a taxpayer please do complete the form and send it through to me as it will increase the club's income.

Penny Williams

Field Trip Reports

Holmethorpe Sand Pits, Sunday, 19th February 2017

Nine people gathered by the Aquasports cafe at 9am where we were met by Holmethorpe stalwarts Gordon Hay and Ian Kehl, our leaders for today's trip. While we waited for everyone to arrive we scanned Mercers Lake which held a few Coots and Tufted Ducks and a couple of Great Crested Grebes. There were plenty of Gulls moving overhead

including a single adult Great Black-backed, this the only one we saw all morning.

Once everyone had assembled Gordon and Ian led us out into the fields of Mercers Farm where they told us they'd seen Yellowhammers earlier. A quick scan of the hedge here yielded just a couple of Robins, however. As we walked through the fields a Skylark came up from the ground and started singing, adding

more than a touch of spring to what was a very pleasant and sunny start to the day. Many other birds were singing as we approached Mid-Pit/Mercers West including Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Reed Bunting.

Next up we did a circuit of Spynes Mere, and a little way along the path to the south of Spynes, we came across a singing Yellowhammer, one of at least three in this area - it's good to see this species still doing okay in this part of the county. Singles of Red Kite and Buzzard drifted over, making use of the increasing warmth.

We then got our first glimpse of Spynes Mere where we enjoyed nice views of a male Shelduck, several Little Grebes and a few Snipe, Gadwall and Teal. There were good numbers of Gulls, too, including an immature Herring Gull with a coloured leg ring which we eventually managed to read the number on: N7XT. It will be interesting to find out where this bird has come from. The first of two Sparrowhawks of the morning flew over; raptor species number three. By now there were several Buzzards up also. Passing Mercers Farm we heard our first and only House Sparrows of the morning and a scan of Nutfield Marsh produced a few Fieldfares and our fourth raptor species: a male Kestrel. Ian and Gordon suggested we have a brief look in Chilmead Pits as it's been quite good for Siskin recently and, sure enough, no sooner had we gone through the gate they picked out a couple in one of the Alders up ahead,

including a very handsome male which everyone enjoyed good views of. Passing Chilmead Farm we found a few more Fieldfares and another Buzzard, while another Yellowhammer flew overhead. As we approached The Moors Gordon and I briefly thought we heard a Curlew only to realise it was in fact a distant siren - just to prove everyone makes mistakes!

Walking on a little further we saw two Little Egrets fly up towards the Watercolour Lagoons. The Moors were rather quiet aside from a couple of Teal and another perched Buzzard offering very clear views. Sadly despite much scanning we couldn't find the Stonechats or Water Rail that Ian said had been around recently. The Moors Pools provided some more duck interest in the form of several Gadwall, Teal and Shoveler plus our only Wigeon of the day and a Pintail x Mallard which everyone found interesting! A few more Snipe were in the vegetation at the back of the water while our only Treecreeper of the trip called as it ascended a nearby tree. We finished up at the Watercolour Lagoons where we saw more Gadwall, Shoveler etc plus three Little Egrets lined up behind Lagoon 1, presumably two of which were the ones we'd seen a little earlier. A Green Woodpecker flew up from near the water's edge and a Kingfisher was heard but not seen. In total we recorded 65 species; not bad at all for an inland site in February!

Matt Phelps

Future Field Meetings

If you have a local patch you know well and would like to lead a field trip to show others what is there please contact Charlotte Gray at charlotte.gray88@gmail.com

Saturday 22nd April, Papercourt Meadows for spring migrants.

Meet at 9am at Tannery Lane car park (TQ029562).

Morning only. Leader Carey Lodge 07743734499

Tice's Meadow Bioblitz, weekend of Friday 28th to Sunday 30th April

Full details to follow (see page 16).

Sunday 7th May Dawn Chorus at Bookham Common.

Meet 4.30am at Tunnel car park (TQ130557) just east of Bookham Station. Parking is free for NT members; for non-members there is a four pound charge payable by Ring-go, area code 8501 (020 3046 0010). Leader Ruth Iredale (07895 097158) or contact Charlotte Gray with enquiries. Finishing around 8am.

Saturday 17th June. Nightjars at Crooksbury Common.

Meet at 8pm. Situated just north of Elstead. Go north on the Seale Road from the B3001 Farnham Road. Along the Seale Road, take the track on the left just before the paddock. SU895452. Leader Richard Horton 07930 929496

Sunday November 5th, Leith Hill Migration Watch

Meet 7.30am at Starveall Corner car park, Abinger Road, RH5 6LU for the 20 minute walk up to the tower.

Limited space so no telescopes please. Leader Matt Phelps (07809 870034)

All the walks are FREE (except for travel costs, car park or entrance fees). Everybody is welcome, from beginners to experts. Field trip details can be found on the Surrey Bird Club website www.surreybirdclub.org or in the 'Birding Surrey' quarterly magazine.

The Surrey Bird Club hereby gives notice that all arrangements made by the Club for any person taking part in any meeting, visit or other activity are made by the Club as agents for that person and that consequently the Club accepts no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience arising from his or her participation in Club activities.

The copy date for the next issue of Birding Surrey is 30 April 2017

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Fig 5. Bittern, Barnes, 10 Jan 2017

(David Carlsson)



Fig 6. Red-breasted Merganser, Pennymead Lake, 28 Feb 2017

(David Carlsson)



*Fig 7. Cormorant, Stoke Water Meadows, Guildford, 29 Dec 2016
(James Sellen)*



*Fig 8. Hawfinch, East Horsley, 2 Mar 2017
(David Carlsson)*