

# Birding Surrey



No. 129



Autumn 2020

# Photograph Gallery



*Fig 1. Peregrines, Woking,  
21 Jun 2020 (James Sellen)*



*Fig 2. Juvenile Peregrine, Woking ,  
28 Jun 2020 (James Sellen)*



*Fig 3. Garganey, 7 May 2020*

*(Dave Harris)*

# Birding Surrey

The Newsletter of the Surrey Bird Club

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Front Cover: White Stork, Shalford Water Meadows by James Sellen

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## Annual General Meeting

The Committee has decided that it is not practical to hold the AGM at East Horsley Village Hall on Friday 25th September 2020. The Committee has decided to hold the AGM by way of online voting (or paper forms for those members without an email address) with members being asked to raise any issues by 12 pm on Friday 9th September 2020 with the Membership Secretary (via [membership@surreybirdclub.org.uk](mailto:membership@surreybirdclub.org.uk) or by post).

If any member has not received a link to an online voting form or a postal voting form by 20th August 2020, please contact the Membership Secretary. The voting form is reproduced in this issue just in case.

The Committee will meet (virtually) on 25th September 2020 to confirm the results of the online and paper voting. The results will be supplied to the membership in the next newsletter published after 25th September 2020.

If you have a problem voting please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary, Penny Williams.

## From the Chairman

### **Review of 2019/2020**

As members will be aware, we usually hold the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in East Horsley village hall, but that hasn't proved possible this year and we are holding the AGM by a combination of e-mail, letter and on-line voting. It's usual for the Chairman to give a verbal report to the AGM and since this won't be possible I'm providing it in this newsletter instead. Since the AGM has been delayed, and to keep this report reasonably topical, it will cover the period up to the copy date for this newsletter, which is the end of July.

It was, if you will pardon the expression, a year of two halves. The first half was fairly unremarkable. The new website was bedding down nicely; we managed to keep the field meetings programme going despite the lack of a field meetings officer; we embarked on a review of membership subscriptions; and following an approach by Forestry England (aka the Forestry Commission) we were well advanced with the planning for a survey of Chiddingfold Forest jointly with the Sussex Ornithological Society. All seemed set fair for 2020. Then came COVID and the lock-





## Voting Paper for the 2020 (Electronic) AGM of the Surrey Bird Club.

1. Please enter your Name and Postcode \*

Enter your answer

2. To approve the minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting (Published in Birding Surrey No 125) \*

- ☐ For  
☐ Against  
☐ Abstain

3. To approve Treasurer's report and financial statements for year ended 31 March 2020 (Published in Birding Surrey No 128) \*

- ☐ For  
☐ Against  
☐ Abstain

4. To ratify that Subscription rates remain unaltered \*

- ☐ For  
☐ Against  
☐ Abstain

5. To elect officers and members of the General Committee:

The General Committee should consist of Stella Bignold (Report Editor), Sarah Bunce (Conservation Officer), Steve Chastell (County Recorder and Database Manager), Tim Chinn (Newsletter Editor), Richard Denyer (Ringing Secretary), Julie Drewett (Webmaster and Social Media), David Griffin, Dave Harris (Records Committee Chairman), Ed Hilton (Field Meetings Officer), Ray Phillips (Treasurer) and Penny Williams (Membership Secretary and BTO Regional Rep). There are currently no nominations for the posts of Chairman, General Secretary and Publicity Officer. \*

- ☐ For  
☐ Against  
☐ Abstain

6. Ratification of the composition of the Records Committee:

The Records Committee should consist of Dave Harris (Chairman), David Campbell, Steve Chastell, John Clark, Jeremy Gates, and Shaun Peters. \*

- ☐ For  
☐ Against  
☐ Abstain

7. Members are asked to agree that the LNHS Surrey in London Recorder, when appointed, will become a member of the Records Committee. \*

- ☐ For  
☐ Against  
☐ Abstain

down. Like every other organisation the Club had to review all of its activities in the light of the restrictions imposed by the Government to slow the spread of the virus.

One victim was the field meetings programme, which we had to suspend. As I write this review in early August we are about to resume the programme with restricted numbers on a 'first come first served' basis. We will have to proceed with caution, adapting the format of field meetings in the light of the restrictions in force at the time. Recent experience suggests that it may be a case of two steps forward, one step back, so please bear with us and keep an eye on the website.

The review of membership subscriptions was well advanced at lock-down. We carried out a survey of members (thanks again to those who completed the survey form) and we were in the final stages of drafting a paper to the AGM with proposals for new rates. Then a member of the Committee questioned whether we should be increasing subscription rates when a lot of people were experiencing financial hardship, and we quickly agreed that it was not the right time for an increase.

This decision was made easier because we had succeeded in substantially reducing the gap between income and expenditure, for example through reduced printing costs and new income from advertising. The General Committee is therefore able to recommend to the 2020 AGM that subscription rates

should be unchanged, in the knowledge that the Club's finances remain healthy. Having said that, and although I may no longer be involved, I suspect that the 2021 AGM will see a recommendation for new subscription rates.

We thought long and hard before deciding that the survey of Chiddingfold Forest could not go ahead this year: the Sussex Ornithological Society came to the same conclusion. Hopefully, the time spent planning the survey and designing the documentation will not be wasted because we hope to carry out the survey next year, and most of those who volunteered to participate in the survey this year have indicated their willingness to participate in 2021. Meanwhile, news of the survey seems to have encouraged some members to make casual visits to the Forest and it is beginning to look as if it still contains a small population of Turtle Doves. We should have a clearer picture if the survey goes ahead in 2021.

It is good to be able to report a very positive development since the last AGM. Our Report Editor, Stella Bignold, and her team of compilers have produced two Surrey Bird Reports within a short space of time; the 2017 report should have reached you by the time you receive this newsletter. Stella and her team deserve our thanks for their hard work. It has also placed a considerable extra burden on our hard working Recorder, Steve Chastell. For a number of technical reasons,

including the need to exchange a large amount of data with the LNHS, the scope for further reducing the time needed to produce Surrey Bird Reports is now limited.

Turning to committee matters, like most organisations that rely on volunteer effort the Club always struggles to fill officer posts and many members of the General Committee have performed given years of sterling service. So for me one of the highlights of the last year has been that three new Committee members have quickly made their mark. They are Julie Drewett as Webmaster and Social Media Officer, Ray Phillips as Treasurer and Ed Hilton as Field Meetings Officer. Away from the

Committee, I should also acknowledge the outstanding work that Ed Stubbs is doing in running the ever popular recent sightings page on the website and the SurreyBirdNews Twitter feed. Thanks, Ed.

Despite this, we are still looking for a new Chairman, a Minuting Secretary and a Publicity Officer to help generate advertising and sponsorship income. Are there any volunteers out there? Please contact me if you think you might be interested (ericsoden@aol.co.uk).

Let's hope that in 2020/21 life returns to something approaching normality. I wish you all good birding.

*Eric Soden*

## Bird News - Winter 2019/20 - part 2: early 2020

*Shaun Peters*

### ♦ Highlights of the quarter

These included two **Great Northern Divers**, a **Great White Egret**, an **Iceland Gull**, eight **Waxwings**, two **Yellow-browed Warblers** and two **Twites**.

**Brent Goose** Single birds were at the London Wetland Centre on Jan 13th, Dormansland on Jan 20th and Walton Res on Feb 16th. A flock of six flew over Island Barn Res on Jan 23rd and a party of three flew over South Norwood CP on Mar 8th.

**Shelduck** Birds were seen at Beddington SF, Berrylands, Epsom Common Stew Ponds, Holmethorpe SP, Island Barn Res, the London Wetland Centre, Lonsdale Road Res, QE2 Res, Walton Res and Wandsworth Common, with the largest number being 12 at

Beddington SF on Mar 18th.

**Wigeon** The largest reported numbers were 60 at Tice's Meadow (Badshot Lea) on Jan 5th, 111 at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th, 87 at Walton Res on Jan 19th, 116 at Wrecclesham Floods on Feb 15th and 119 at Burpham Court Farm on Mar 8th.

**Gadwall** The largest reported numbers were 59 at Walton Res on Jan 1st, 52 at Tice's Meadow (Badshot Lea) on Jan 5th, 75 at Beddington SF on Jan 9th, 133 at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th and 108 at Holmethorpe SP on Jan 12th.

**Teal** The largest reported numbers were 325 at Beddington SF on Jan 9th, 195 on the Thames from Putney to Barnes on Feb 7th and 105 at the London Wetland Centre on Mar 8th.

**Pintail** A male was at Frensham Great Pond on Jan 4th, a female flew over Morden Hall Park on Jan 17th and one was at Tice's Meadow (Badshot Lea) on Jan 28th. The feral flock at the London Wetland Centre peaked at six on an number of dates.

**Shoveler** The largest reported numbers were 40 at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th, 68 at the London Wetland Centre on Jan 12th, 84 at Beddington SF on Jan 25th and 42 at Pen Ponds on Jan 29th.

**Pochard** The largest reported numbers were 46 at Frensham Ponds on Jan 1st, 50 at Boldermere on Jan

10th, 160 at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th and 54 at Walton Res on Jan 26th.

**Tufted Duck** The largest reported numbers were 183 at Walton Res on Jan 7th, 696 at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th, 143 at Walton Res on Jan 19th, 141 at Holmethorpe SP on Feb 9th, 169 at the London Wetland Centre on Mar 8th and 110 at Frensham Ponds on Mar 8th.

**Scaup** The female remained at Walton Res until Mar 22nd at least.

**Goldeneye** Numbers were similar to those in late 2019, with the largest numbers seven at Walton Res on Mar 2nd and three at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th. Elsewhere, ones or twos were seen at Burgess Park Lake, Holmethorpe SP, Island Barn Res and the London Wetland Centre.

**Goosander** Numbers reached double-figures at just two sites, with peaks of 14 at Cutt Mill on Jan 1st and 13 at QE2 Res on Jan 10th. Smaller numbers were reported from nine sites, with the last of the winter one over Shalford Water Meadows on Apr 11th.



*Great Northern Divers, 17 Mar 2020  
(Dave Harris)*



**Great Northern Diver** The two juveniles remained at Island Barn Res until Mar 22nd at least.

**Bittern** Up to three were at the London Wetland Centre until Mar 21st and up to two were at Walton Res until Feb 21st.

**Little Egret** Around 60 were reported from a total of 20 sites, with the largest counts eight at Chilworth on Jan 14th, 17 at Westhumble on Feb 11th and six at Unstead SF on Feb 22nd.

**Great White Egret** One was at Berrylands SWks on Feb 8th.

**Hen Harrier** The ringtail was seen again at Thursley Common on seven dates up to Jan 25th. It or another was present there on nine dates between Mar 11th and Apr 12th. Other ringtails were at Ash Ranges on Jan 1st and 20th, and Mar 12th and Papercourt Water Meadows on Feb 23rd and Mar 3rd.

**Merlin** One was at Tice's Meadows on Jan 16th and Feb 5th, 16th, 18th and 28th. A female flew low west at Banstead on Mar 28th.

**Water Rail** Birds were reported from the Beddington SF (up to 4), Fetcham Mill Pond (1), Frensham Great Pond (up to 3), Frensham Little Pond (up to 4), Holmethorpe SP (1), London Wetland Centre (up to 12), Molesey Heath (1), Morden Hall Park (up to 3), Papercourt GP (1), Pen

Ponds (up to 3), South Norwood CP (up to 5), Stoke Water Meadows (1), Thorpe Water Park (1), Tice's Meadow, Badshot Lea (1), Unstead SF (1) and Walton Res (2).

**Moorhen** There were 163 at the London Wetland Centre on Jan 12th.

**Coot** The largest reported numbers were 110 at Beddington SF on Jan 9th, 171 at Papercourt GP on Jan 10th, 209 at Thorpe Water Park on Jan 11th, 121 at Tice's Meadow (Badshot Lea) on Jan 11th and 207 at the London Wetland Centre on Jan 12th.

**Dunlin** One was at Island Barn Res on Jan 22nd.

**Jack Snipe** Birds were reported from Beddington SF (max of 16 on Feb 26th), Berrylands SWks (1), Holmethorpe SP (up to 3), Lammas Lands, Godalming (1), the London Wetland Centre (up to 3), Morden Hall Park (1) and South Norwood CP (1). The last was at Morden Hall Park on Apr 2nd.

**Snipe** High numbers were at Beddington SF with monthly maxima of 120 on Jan 18th and 117 on Feb 26th.

**Curlew** Single birds were at Island Barn Res and the London Wetland Centre on Feb 25th.

**Green Sandpiper** Monthly maxima at Beddington SF were 11 on Jan 11th, ten on Feb 16th and six on Mar



*Green Sandpiper, 24 Jul 2020, BWC  
Newchapel (Ken Noble)*

18th. Birds were also reported from the Berrylands SWks (2), River Ember at Esher (1), Holmethorpe SP (1), Island Barn Res (up to 3), the London Wetland Centre (1), Thorpe Water Park (1), Tice's Meadow, Badshot Lea (1) and Walton Res (up to 5).

**Mediterranean Gull** Adults were at Walton Res on Jan 5th and 23rd and Mar 1st and 2nd, Island Barn Res on Jan 24th and 30th, and Feb 12th, QE2 Res on Jan 30th and Feb 23rd, Clapham Common on Jan 6th, the London Wetland Centre on Feb 9th and Mar 10th, Purley Way (Croydon) on Feb 13th, Wandsworth Common on Feb 17th, West Byfleet on Feb 17th and 18th, Tooting Common on Feb 18th, Holmethorpe SP on Feb 21st and 22nd and West Putney on Mar 17th. Second-winters were at Carshalton Ponds on Jan 12th and Tooting Common on Mar 6th, whilst first-winters were at Wandsworth Common on Jan 24th and QE2 Res on Feb 1st. There were two at Tice's

Meadow (Badshot Lea) on Feb 22nd and 29th and one flew over Frensham Little Pond on Mar 8th.

**Iceland Gull** An adult was at the London Wetland Centre on 13 dates between Jan 26th and Mar 18th. It was in the roost at QE2 Res on Feb 22nd.

**Short-eared Owl** Single birds were at Mitcham Common on Feb 12th and 13th and Thursley Common on Mar 18th.

**Water Pipit** At Beddington SF the monthly maxima were nine on Jan 11th, nine on Feb 2nd and five on Mar 15th. At the London Wetland Centre the monthly maxima were four on Jan 12th, two on Feb 1st and three on Mar 4th. Elsewhere, one was at Papercourt Water Meadows on Jan 1st, with two there on Mar 10th, single birds were at Morden Hall Park on Jan 4th and 17th, and Mar 20th, and two were at Lammas Lands (Godalming) on Mar 7th, with one there on Mar 29th.

**Waxwing** There were up to seven at Shirley from Mar 12th-14th and one at Sanderstead on Mar 15th.

**Black Redstart** A male was at QE2 Res on Jan 7th and one was at Lightwater on Jan 26th.

**Fieldfare** The latest reported were at Holmethorpe SP on Apr 10th and Unstead Water Meadows on Apr 16th.

**Redwing** The latest reported were at Beddington SF on Apr 11th, Richmond on Apr 17th and Farthing Downs on Apr 19th.

**Dartford Warbler** One was in Richmond Park from Jan 30th to Feb 7th.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** The bird remained at Stave Hill (Rotherhithe) until Jan 18th and another was by the River Wandle at Poulter Park from Jan 27th to Mar 28th.

**Chiff-chaff** Up to three showing characteristics of the subspecies tristis (Siberian Chiff-chaff) were along the River Wandle at Poulter Park from Feb 5th to Mar 22nd.

**Firecrest** Single birds were at Frensham Outlet Pond from Jan 1st-Mar 7th, Dungeon Hill (Woodmansterne) on Jan 4th, Stave Hill (Rotherhithe) from Jan 4th-Feb 8th, Effingham Forest on Feb 2nd, Mickleham on Mar 8th, Morden Hall Park on Mar 18th and Selsdon on Mar 30th. There were three at Redhill Common on Jan 5th, three at Sydenham Hill Wood on Jan 13th, two at Putney Heath on Jan 19th, three by the River Wandle at Poulter Park on Feb 8th, two at Banstead Woods on Feb 23rd, two at Headley Heath on Mar 10th, three at Rowhill Nature Reserve on Mar 22nd and two along Moor Park Lane (Farnham) on Mar 23rd.

**Great Grey Shrike** One on Ash Ranges on Jan 4th and 5th and again on Mar 12th and 13th was presumably present throughout the period. Another was at Frensham Common from Feb 15th to Mar 15th.

**Brambling** The low numbers of late 2019 continued into early 2020, with reports from just five sites during January and February and all involving just one or two birds. There was little improvement during March and April with birds reported from seven sites and the largest number a mere eight at Crooksbury Common on Mar 24th. The last was at Hindhead Common on Apr 16th.

**Siskin** This species remained scarce in the county with reports from just eight sites and the largest flocks 60 at Frensham Little Pond on Jan 5th and 30 at Buckland SP on Feb 7th.

**Linnet** There were 500 at Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Feb 27th and Mar 2nd and 200 at Milton Court Farm (Westcott) on Mar 1st.

**Twite** There were two at Beddington SF from Mar 18th-22nd.

**Lesser Redpoll** Numbers remained extremely low in the early year with reports from just six sites, all involving ones or twos except for eight at Frensham Great Pond on Jan 4th and six at Frensham Outlet Pond on Feb 7th.

**Crossbill** Numbers remained low in the county in the early year. Reports came from just two sites in January, with two at Crooksbury Common on the 1st and two at Witley Common on the 18th. A very slight improvement came in February with reports from three sites, involving five at Coldharbour Cricket Pitch on the 3rd, one at Effingham Forest on the 7th and one over West Clandon on the 11th. March was little better with reports from four sites, There were single birds at Winterfold on the 3rd and Hankley Common on the 17th, five at Effingham Forest on the 27th and eight at Hindhead on the 29th.

**Hawfinch** Up to seven were at Dick Focks Common from Jan 1st to Mar 23rd. Elsewhere, single birds were at the Claremont Estate (Esher) on Jan 11th, Capel on Jan 15th, Mar 20th and Mar 26th, Leith Hill on Jan 27th and Mar 16th, Loxhill on Feb 21st, Box Hill on Mar 14th and Ranmore Common on Mar 14th.

**Yellowhammer** There were 60 at Canon's Farm (Banstead) on Mar 3rd.

• *Some records are subject to final check by the county or national records committees.*

#### ◆ Contributors

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**Note: April to June 2020 news to Shaun Peters ASAP please at:  
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Tel. 01252 793887 Email: [recbirds@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:recbirds@yahoo.co.uk)**

## Cuckoo Conundrum

### BEHAVIOUR AND ASSOCIATIONS OF JUVENILE COMMON CUCKOOS

Much is written about the Common Cuckoo, its arrival in the UK each Spring, its unmistakeable call, and its parasitic egg laying habits. Also, how a newly hatched cuckoo will dispose

of every other egg or chick in its nest before imposing exhausting demands for food on its foster parents. Recent research has discovered even more about the incredible migratory journey of cuckoos from mid-summer onwards as they move to Central Africa where they reside for the

greater part of the year, but far less is written about the habits and social behaviour of juvenile cuckoos from the time that they become independent to their first unaccompanied migration.

It is known that all cuckoos feed up, particularly on caterpillars, before migrating and it has therefore been interesting to witness cuckoo behaviour in Richmond Park last year and this.

After a juvenile cuckoo was seen in the Park on the 2nd August 2019, what was presumed to be the same bird was seen a week later in woodland less than half a mile away. It was then observed regularly for several weeks in three adjoining clusters of oak trees which clearly constituted its territory. Here it was seen perching in the lower canopies of the oaks in which it was probably feeding as well as regularly dropping to the ground for caterpillars, worms and other insects. It is suspected, albeit without evidence, that the cuckoo had been born in the Park and had remained to enjoy the good habitat and abundance of food until it was last recorded in early September - probably just prior to undertaking its long migration.

On 26th June 2020 a male adult cuckoo was spotted in a large semi-isolated oak tree in the Park, and shortly afterwards a juvenile cuckoo was seen in the same location. Both birds were separately photographed. Their close presence together was a very rare coincidence as adults are

totally uninvolved in the brooding and rearing of their biological offspring; but the unusual proximity of the two birds was nothing compared to the remarkable sighting that afternoon of both birds dropping from the same tree to feed.

The adult cuckoo was not seen again, but there were further sightings of the juvenile over the next week, following the behavioural pattern of the 2019 bird in residing and feeding similarly in a defined but smaller territory. Eight days after the first sighting the juvenile was still seen, but later that day there was the even more unlikely sighting of two juvenile cuckoos in brief flight together. Independently another observer witnessed one of the juveniles flying at the other which was perched.

There was just one further sighting - a single juvenile, on the 6th July (day eleven), after which it was presumed to have moved. Like the 2019 bird it was assumed but not proven to have originated in the Park, especially as it was first observed so much earlier. The 2019 and 2020 territories were approximately 400 to 600 metres apart.

Other than reinforcing the pattern of behaviour of juvenile cuckoos in the early weeks of independence, the brief sightings of adult with juvenile and juvenile with juvenile raise the intriguing question of what associations, random or otherwise, individual cuckoos may have with one another in the post-breeding season.

*Nigel Jackman*



## Bonaparte's Gull - a County first?

### **Bonaparte's Gull at Queen Elizabeth II Res, 16 June 2020 - a County first?**

Ever since the establishment of a Black-headed Gull colony at Chelsea Res, Walton, Bonaparte's Gull has been on my radar. With an upsurge in late spring records nationally, which have included six from East London, as well as other inland sites such as Farmoor Res, Oxfordshire. There was also a near miss just over the border at Staines Res in May 2014. Clearly one was long over-due south of the river!

Arriving at QEII for my afternoon visit on June 16th at 1525, I reached the top of the steps and took a quick look over the road at Walton Res (Knight & Bessborough) which is set at a lower level. A small group of Black-headed Gulls were approaching low over the water heading my way. For some reason one didn't look right, smaller perhaps. I assumed it was going to be a juvenile Black-headed Gull as it seemed to have shorter more rounded wings. Juveniles from the colony on Chelsea Res were in the process of fledging, and some had been flying for a couple of weeks. It still didn't look right however and lacked any of the ginger-brown tones, appearing basically grey, black and white.

Instinctively raising my camera I 'machine-gunned' the group as they



*Bonaparte's Gull, QEII Res.,  
16 Jun 2020, (Dave Harris)*

appeared over the reservoir crest and then continued out onto the reservoir (I wasn't even sure I was on 'the' bird). They were quite distant, perhaps 100m. I soon lost them so took a quick look at my camera. Certainly looked interesting, so I quickly set up my scope and attempted to relocate the bird.

I hadn't intended on hanging around as there was some nasty weather approaching from the south west (I'd just driven through it on the A3). I thought I could see the bird on the water but it was a long way off and the heavens then opened and the wind

picked up so I legged it back down to my van and took refuge.

It poured down for perhaps 20 minutes which gave my ample time to review my photos. They weren't great so a second opinion was required. I took a couple of BOC shots and fired them off to my brother in Weymouth to see what he thought. Luckily I had managed to capture the underwing pattern. All systems go!

Once the deluge had subsided I made my way back up top and surprisingly soon re-found the Bonaparte's now roosting on the floating solar panel island! It was now 1607 and I had all the main features in the bag. I sent a short video clip to my brother just for good measure and then began ringing a few locals with the caveat to keep the news quiet for the time being. These reservoir are strictly private, so I had to be careful that the news didn't leak. Sadly my phone then ran out of juice (it was only on 25% when I arrived).

Nine quick off the mark birders made it in time before the bird suddenly got up and flew off alone north-east towards the Thames at 1810. It had spent most of its time preening or sleeping (in typical Yankee fashion) on the solar panels, occasionally getting spooked by one of the numerous Grey Herons which also feed out here.

The bird was aged as a first-summer (2nd/CY), which had moulted one or two inner primaries. Luckily I obtained numerous photos and some phone-scoped video, although it was never closer than perhaps 75m.

### **Main features.**

Smaller than Black-headed Gull with shorter more rounded wings. Mantle grey, upper-wing pattern much more contrasting than Black-headed Gull and with distinct black trailing edge. Head white with large black ear spot (much more prominent than in BHG). Underwing white with fine black trailing edge. Bill fine and pointed, all black, legs and feet pasty-pink.

There was no further sign of the bird that evening so I went home for a celebratory pint! I kept a look-out over the following days with no joy, and assumed it had gone. Surprisingly however it reappeared on Jun 21st, five days after the initial sighting! This time it was present for just four minutes, again on the solar panels (0728-0732), before departing off south towards Hersham with a couple of Black-headed Gulls.

There is a record of Bonaparte's Gull from Barn Elms Res (now The London Wetland Centre) from January 1983. This record has been discredited by the LNHS rare bird committee, although as far as I'm aware it still stands with the BBRC.

*Dave Harris*

## Swifts in Guildford

### **The situation as at 14th June**

A Resident who lives in a property in Epsom Road Guildford was concerned for a population of Swifts that was nesting in the large property where he lived, as scaffolding was erected, preventing the Swifts from getting to their nests.

Mark Thomas of RSPB investigations unit in Bedfordshire, contacted Hampshire Swifts, because sadly when he looked for a contact in Guildford, nothing came up.

Mark Thomas was given my number, as I have attended conferences by Swift Network, and tried to network as best I can. Mark asked if I would at first just go and see if it was the case that Swifts could not enter their nests. I went to view and was happy to help. It was indeed the case that the scaffolding was blocking and disturbing these birds.

To cut a long story short I then got involved in trying to resolve this situation. This is a large Victorian mansion type house, and it's falling apart. A perfect nesting sites for the Swifts. I understand the Swifts have been nesting there for a very long time. The contractor and some residents were keen to get the building work done, the contractor claimed he was told there were no Swifts and when his men had looked they could not see any, hence why he proceeded. Other residents knew the Swifts were there and one resident who was very concerned started trying to get support

on Twitter. Twitter got very busy, and thank you to those of you who posted and tried to support. They did not want to take the scaffolding down and so Surrey Police became involved.

Together with Police, Residents and contractors, I mediated on 3 occasions. Surrey police were not clear on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and said that, because the Swifts were not on Schedule 1 list, where the law is very clear about any disturbance being a criminal offence, they did not believe a crime was being committed.

Mark Thomas and I kept explaining that, if the access to the nests was blocked and they knew the nesting birds were there and nest fails, that is a criminal offence! But it fell on deaf ears with Surrey Police. At the last mediation meeting I asked the police to contact Alan Roberts, head of National Wildlife Crime Unit. After that the Police were willing to tell them to take the scaffolding to a lower level on the house with the proviso that I would monitor the Swifts and, if at any time the building work on the lower part of the building which was now being allowed to continue through the summer, did disturb the Swifts they would then have to take it all down. This was agreed by the residents and contractors.

I quickly drew up a team of volunteers from GEF and local Birders. Many people stepped forward for the experience to monitor these birds over

the summer, and I took the opportunity to teach what I know about Swifts to the beginners. I set up a rota of the volunteers and we monitored the Swifts 3 evenings a week, and will continue until they migrate back.

My aim is to find out exactly how many breeders there are here, how many active nests, where they are, and where unused potential nests are. When the birds have gone and the scaffolding goes back up again for the roof work, it has been agreed we will be advising on where the nests are, so new nest sites can be put back in exactly the same place and more nesting sites will be added, either Swift bricks, or under the roof eaves, or both and some boxes. I have now managed to get a good working relationship with the contractor, so it's looking hopeful.

We have just completed the first week of monitoring. We will never know if we have lost some Swifts while the problem was in its early days, but certainly I witnessed Swifts unable to get to their nests and I saw one collide with the grid of scaffolding. But since monitoring we have discovered 5 active nests, and there are at least 4 other potential nests which were quiet this week. At the end of this week it was reported that a group of new Swifts were flying around the west side of the house and investigation empty nests on that side and going in and out of one nest.

We have also discovered in a bank of old oak trees next to the house and a school, there are two Owls, and a

Cuckoo can be heard in the mornings nearby.

### **As at 14th July**

We now know there are 7 active Swift nests on this building now. We are still there monitoring, now once a week, volunteers on a rota, we split into two groups.

My Volunteers mostly members of GEF, are very keen and have been amazing and very dedicated, and I really want to thank and applaud their efforts.

### **Help for the future**

1. How can we make ourselves known to people who may need our help both the general public and more professional and voluntary groups?
2. How do we find Volunteers to help us put up Swift Boxes and make Swift Boxes?
3. How do we get help with financing?
4. Can we create a similar organisation to Hampshire Swifts?

Anyone can ring me if they want to:  
Land line 01483 571594, Mobile 07753306068. Or e-mail sarahandgary@ntlworld.com

N.B. I recently signed the petition "Save our Swifts" and wanted to ask if you could add your name too. This campaign means a lot to me and the more support we can get behind it, the better chance we have of succeeding. You can read more and sign the petition here:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-our-swifts?share=24400f81-7092-4>  
Sarah Davis

# Swift Movements

Some interesting email correspondence that I was copied into. If you have any other information to add to this topic or feel that any of the comments are not right please do let me know.

"Some very large Swift movements

were reported on BirdGuides this morning. What do you think is behind this?"

"It is an annual event that at about this time large numbers of 1 year old Swifts head south. We can only guess what they are up to, but as they are not

Sun 28 Jun 2020				
Rarity ↓	Date ↓	Species ↓	Location ↓	Site ↓
11:41	28/06	Common Swift	North Yorkshire	Scarborough
9,258 flew south at South Cliff between 04:05 and 10:25				
5				
11:07	28/06	Common Swift	North Yorkshire	Hunmanby Gap
16,500 moved south this morning				
5				
09:49	28/06	Common Swift	Northumberland	Boulmer
2,740 moved south by 09:35				
2				
07:54	28/06	Common Swift	Lincolnshire	Gibraltar Point NNR
5,700 flew south by 07:50				
07:42	28/06	Common Swift	East Yorkshire	Wilsthorpe
3560 flew south between 05:30 and 07:30				
5				
07:25	28/06	Common Swift	East Yorkshire	Spurn YWT
4,000 flew south by 07:15				
2				
07:19	28/06	Common Swift	Northumberland	Boulmer
1,098 flew south 06:05-07:05				
2				
1	07:18 28/06	Common Swift	North Yorkshire	Hunmanby
14,000 south by 07:14				
5				
07:00	28/06	Common Swift	East Yorkshire	Beacon Ponds
1900 south by 06:05				
2				
07:00	28/06	Common Swift	North Yorkshire	Hunmanby Gap
10,000 flew south by 06:30				
5				



old enough to breed, they may have decided they have done enough preliminary exploration of potential nest sites, so they may as well get back to Africa. Some people have mooted the idea that it is a weather movement and that they will come back - but no one has ever seen them do this. My feeling is that these birds are now well south - probably in Spain. According to BirdTrack reporting rates, right now is about the highest Swifts get - from now on the reporting rate decreases."

"Another reason for such a high concentration of swifts must be that there was plentiful food available in those areas. Insects, spiders might have bred in large numbers because all the conditions were just right. In my garden, for example, flying ants are about to emerge, which will produce a sudden burgeoning in food supply. At this time of year I suspect that a lot of different insects are entering their flying stage so making them available to feed a whole range of animals including swifts".

This is a lovely and very informative live Video recording by Nick Baker, RSPB, on Swifts:

<https://www.facebook.com/RSPBEngland/videos/1814890908653179/>"

This year has seen an increase in Swift towers in Surrey. We now have 3 - one in Woking, one in Shalford and one at Tice's Meadow. If you know of any others do let me know.



*Shalford Swift Tower*

BirdTrack, hosted by the BTO told me via their email update that this year a large passage of swifts was noted between 27-29 June, especially at sites in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. At least 16,000 Swifts were counted moving south on 28 June, but it was the following day that broke all records with over 46,000 noted at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire. The latter count represents a new British record, and video footage from the site gives an impression of the incredible numbers involved.

[https://www.birdguides.com/articles/general-birding/a-british-record-day-for-common-swift-passage/?dm\\_i=NXN,6ZKGW,175SPX,S5CUC,1](https://www.birdguides.com/articles/general-birding/a-british-record-day-for-common-swift-passage/?dm_i=NXN,6ZKGW,175SPX,S5CUC,1)

*Penny Williams*

## Woking Peregrine Project - 2020 update

Since the nest box on Export House / Woking was first used by our local peregrine pair in 2016, each year has been different for the loyal adults, their juveniles and those involved with the Woking Peregrine Project. The 2020 breeding season would be no exception.

During January I regularly saw both of the resident adults near or going into the nest box and it wasn't unusual to see either adult perched in the nest box entrance. Good views can be had from the top floor of the Peacocks car park or from Jubilee Square and nearby streets in the centre of Woking. The [www.wokingperegrines.com](http://www.wokingperegrines.com) webcams were due to be showing live images mid February but Craig Denford (WPP webmaster) Tweeted a screen grab of the tiercel making a depression in the nest box substrate on the 3rd February - promising sign of events to come. Another good sign was had during a regular lunch time visit to the car park on the 6th February when I was lucky to see the pair mating on the north west corner of Export House, near the nest box entrance. Mating was again reported on the 13th and 14th February - more detailed views were needed from the webcams....

The webcams started live streaming of images from the 20th February and on the 3rd March, the adult falcon was seen (via the nest cam) sleeping in the nest box entrance at 23:00. The infra red images come in very useful.

Further mating was seen / reported on 10th March and I even saw similar behaviour on the 11th March from platform 5 / Woking station at 17:20! Last year, the first egg was laid on the 11th March - tension was mounting on Twitter.

Exact timings of this year's egg laying and other key events can be seen on the website TimeLine; [www.wokingperegrines.com/timeline/](http://www.wokingperegrines.com/timeline/) The first egg was slightly later than 2019 - reported via Twitter at 20:28 on 14th March. There was to be another batch of five eggs and the others were laid on; 17th, 19th, 21st and 23rd March. During this egg laying period, the full effects of the pandemic took hold and any opportunities for me to watch the local peregrines in Woking stopped from the 18th when I started a prolonged period working from home in Guildford.

The severe lock down regulations meant travel / birding opportunities could only be local and for very limited periods if leaving home. We've received much feedback from visitors to the WPP website during this period and one Tweet I received on the 7th July sums it up; 'It's brilliant and it was great to tune in during early lockdown as it was a good distraction! I also got to see the chicks being replaced after they'd been ringed'. Both Craig and myself were now reliant on the 4 excellent webcams to enable regular updates to be made via Twitter. The North End webcam came

into its own on the 17th April when an unusual carcass was seen on the north end stairwell ledge. Following an email to Craig, the webcam was zoomed in to reveal a freshly killed Sandwich Tern - not usual prey for our Peregrines! It was soon removed by one of the adults and probably eaten out of camera view.

I find the audio relayed via the Nest cam to be excellent. On a few occasions I've seen an adult preening, pulling individual feathers through it's beak accompanied by a sound not dissimilar to a cork being pulled from a wine bottle - most bizarre! On the 23rd April I heard very faint calls from an egg bound chick at 23:58 (wine hadn't been consumed...) and it was again heard at various times during the 24th. Nest cam views showed the falcon to be very reluctant to share incubation duties with the tiercel and a clear view of the five intact eggs was had at 18:00. All was revealed at 21:45 when Craig reported the first chick had hatched. The remaining chicks hatched on the 25th (2 eggs), 26th and 28th.

During mid May, I received an email from Surrey Bird Club's Jeremy Gates concerning a British Trust for Ornithology Ringing Recovery Report of a Woking juvenile male he had rung, at Export House, on the 15/05/2019. The young tiercel had been rescued by the RSPCA on the 10/05/2020 in Leigh / Wiltshire but had a serious eye infection. We were later advised it had to be put to sleep due to the severity of it's injury. Despite the sad news, this is the first

recovery report of a Woking juvenile we've had since the Project started in 2016 - useful dispersal data and an indication of the high mortality rate found in first year juvenile Peregrines. Due to a slight easing of the current lock down regulations, Jeremy was able to carry on this valuable research work when he rung all five of this year's juveniles on the 20/05/2020 and reported we had three males and two females.



*Nest box 13 May 2020,  
(Woking Peregrine Project)*

The growth rate of juveniles is rapid and it wasn't long before two were seen, via the North End webcam, on the north end stairwell ledge (02/06/2020). Three youngsters were all seen enjoying the view later on and then all five juveniles could be seen, via the South End webcam, on the ledge near the nest box. This is always a tense time watching their manoeuvres but they have no fear of heights and a good grip with their sharp talons! It's also been a frustrating time not being able to watch the nest site from the Peacocks car park and having the opportunity to see when the first juvenile has

fledged. This was soon confirmed when Craig received a phone call from the neighbouring building company, Sir Robert McAlpine, reporting a possible injured juvenile found in one of their new towers. It was decided to call Wildlife Aid (who are based in Leatherhead) and their Chief Executive, Simon Cowell, soon arrived to help the inquisitive one... Fortunately, it hadn't sustained any injuries and Simon was able to put it back into the nest box. Further proof of fledging was proven on the 9th June when another (or was it the same youngster??) was found on the 23rd floor of the new build at the south end of Export House. No rescue mission needed this time - it flew out unaided. Since the beginning of 2020, I've been helping Craig with the WPP book - a new publication which will document the first five years of the Project. I've taken many photos since June 2015 which include the various planning stages and installation of the nest box. Between us, we have a good collection of images up to 2019 but were now starting to get concerned with the lack of photos taken this year. Fortunately, further relaxation of the lock down rules meant we could now loiter on the top floor of the Peacocks car park in the hope of a close / eye level food pass. It takes patience and a bit of luck - Craig managed it this time and it will look great in the new book. I managed three photo sessions in June - a few images should be appearing in the 2020 section. We've again been very fortunate with

interest shown in the WPP and were contacted by Nick Harding - a freelance journalist who writes for the Daily Telegraph newspaper. Following a chat with myself, Craig and Nick Dixon ([www.urbanperegrines.co.uk](http://www.urbanperegrines.co.uk)) a well written & researched article was published in the 28th June edition of the Sunday Telegraph. A copy can be seen in; [www.wokingperegrines.com/in-the-press/](http://www.wokingperegrines.com/in-the-press/) and there's a well deserved mention of Surrey Bird Club's involvement with the WPP. The following week I was asked to do an interview on BBC Radio Surrey - I hope their listeners found it interesting. Craig has again supplied interesting website viewing data for the 2020 breeding season - 01/03/2020 to 29/06/2020 ;  
Total number of users = 32,411 / 201,108 viewing sessions / 384,961 pages views. Viewing activity spiked on the 28th April when the fifth egg hatched.  
Website hits include; UK 30,934 / USA 439 / New Zealand 14 / Antigua & Barbuda 2 (!)  
New website visitors = 74.3% / returning visitors = 25.7%  
Unfortunately, due to the on going pandemic restrictions, Surrey Bird Club wasn't able to run the Club's stand in Jubilee Square during May / June. This is always a rewarding experience but hopefully the new Woking Peregrine Project book will bring back some good memories.

*James Sellen*

## Surrey Sites No.6 Loxwood

Bird watching walk in the Surrey BTO Region as in TQ03!: Starts in the Canal Trust car park behind the Onslow Arms pub, Loxwood, West Sussex, RH14 0RD. Turn into the pub car park and continue through to the Canal Trust car park behind. Grid ref TQ043311. An easy 5 miles with gentle undulations. There are a few stiles.

We did this walk in early July and list most but not all of the birds species we saw and heard. Also seen were a number of species of Dragonfly and Damselfly plus a Roe Deer.

From the Canal Centre car park, turn left (going west) along the towpath passing the Onslow Arms on your left. Go under the road and continue past Loxwood Lock for about half a mile to Devil's Hole Lock.

*(Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Blackcap, Woodpigeon, Wren, Chiffchaff, House Martin, Song Thrush, Kingfisher)*

At the lock, cross the bridge, up the footpath through a kissing gate into woodland. Emerging out into a field, walk along its edge and pass between houses on until you reach a wide track. Turn left here. After about 250 yards, turn right onto a footpath, then immediately left, (ignore the stile in front of you), follow the path around the field and then between high fences until you reach the road. Cross straight over the road on to a track on the other side, and follow this through until you get to Spy Lane. The rest of

the walk is very rural.

*(Buzzard, Linnet, Swallow, House Martin, Wren, Collared Dove, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Blue Tit and Great Tit)*

Cross straight over Spy Lane, over a stile and keep on, soon emerging into an open field. Proceed ahead and at the top of the field keep ahead to walk down alongside the hedge in the next field. Cross the stile into another field and then enter the woodland crossing a plank bridge, bearing left.

*(Carrion Crow, Yellowhammer, Green Woodpecker, Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Bullfinch, Magpie)*

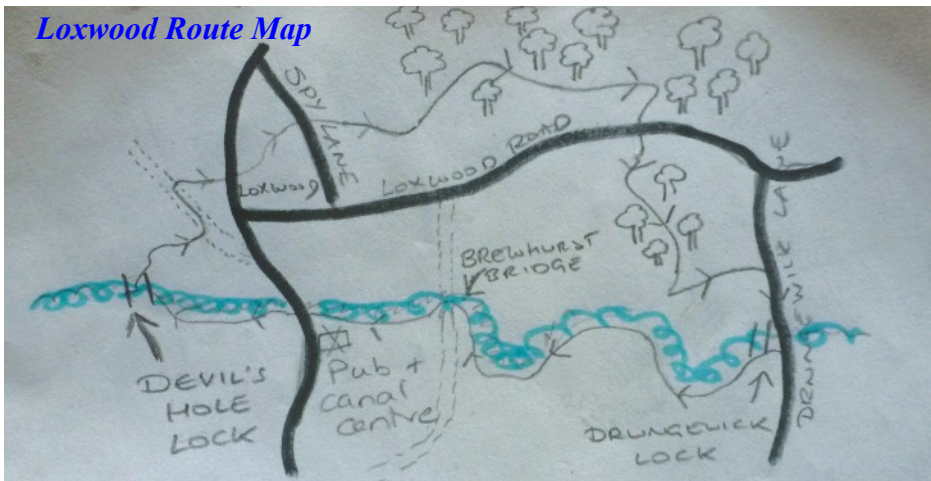
Follow the path through the wood to a stile into a field. Bear slightly left across the field and enter the next wood via another stile. Turn left and within 30 yards, turn right on a track, swinging right over a plank bridge. Continue along this track for a few minutes until another track comes in on the left and there is a metal gate to your right. Go through the gate and soon turn right onto a path. This leads down to a country lane.

*(Marsh Tit (assumed as a brief sighting and Willow Tit is no longer known to be in the area), Song Thrush, Blackbird)*

Turn right onto the lane, then immediately left onto a (quite hidden, but there is a fingerpost on the opposite side of the road) narrow footpath, keeping left between a fence and a hedge at the edge of a field. Keep going until you meet a bigger



### Loxwood Route Map



track crossing your path, and bear slightly left onto this. In about 200 yards, turn right onto a footpath and keep going until you meet a T junction. Turn left here towards a small pond (which may at first be obscured by foliage), then left again. Follow the track and exit the farm driveway onto a narrow lane. Turn right and walk down the hill, crossing first a small stream, then the canal at

Drungewick Lane Bridge. Turn right immediately after the bridge, through the gate on to the towpath. Follow this for about 1.5 miles back to the starting point.

*(Common Tern, Reed Warbler, Yellowhammer).*

Although not seen, it felt like the woodland stretches of the walk could be a good place for Spotted Flycatcher

*Charlotte Gray*

## Lizard Lunch

On 11th July I had just enjoyed watching Dartford Warblers and Stonechats flitting around the gorse and heather on Whitmoor Common when something caught my attention. In the middle of the path was a female Blackbird tussling with something wriggling in its beak. Expecting to see a lively worm I was astonished to discover that it was a common lizard. The lizard kept struggling free, only to be instantly picked up again by the Blackbird each time. At one point the lizard shed its tail which wriggled

separately on the path. Eventually the bird shook the lizard sufficiently to stun it and swallow its body whole. She then turned to the still moving tail and consumed that too. I have never seen or heard of a Blackbird eating a lizard. Is this a known constituent of its diet?

*David Race*

*Lizards do feature in the diet of Blackbirds according to the Birds of the Western Palearctic (BWP), but we welcome any other examples or comments. Ed.*

## BTO Matters

As far as I am aware there are going to be no new surveys this winter. However please do record the birds that you see when either out (through BirdTrack) or in your garden (through GardenBirdwatch). Both ways of recording what you see are now free (see below for more on these two surveys).

Before that here is a survey for the winter where I am still looking for surveyors namely:

### The Wetland Bird Survey

We are already into the start of the survey year 2020/21. The survey year starts in July but the main survey period is from September through to March. A few sites became vacant over the last year. On page 24 below is a list of my vacant sites and I have marked up those sites which have recently become vacant in case you have looked at the list in the past and decided that none of the sites were close enough to you. Remember it is always possible to create a new site, as long as it contains water! Lots of sections of the canals and Rivers Mole and Wey are not yet sites so do contact me if there is a stretch of river or canal you would like to cover. If you go to this link you can see whether or not the site is already set up - <https://app.bto.org/websonline/sites/vacant/vacant-sites.jsp#region=102>

The 20/21 WeBS survey year dates are on the club's website. Here is the link- <https://surreybirdclub.org.uk/surveys/webs-dates/>

I have just been reviewing the results for the 2019/20 survey (some still need to be entered - the surveyors have been reminded about this). Here are some of the statistics. There are:

- Locations: 117
- Number of Species: 74
- Number of Dates: 853  
(i.e. 7.29 visits per surveyor)

The following have been reported over that survey period:

Canada x Greylag Goose	Lapwing
Caspian Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Common Gull	Little Egret
Common Sandpiper	Little Grebe
Common Scoter	Little Ringed Plover
Common Tern	Mallard
Coot	Mandarin Duck
Cormorant	Ringed Plover
Domestic Greylag Goose	Sanderling
Domestic Mallard	Scaup
Dunlin	Shelduck
Egyptian Goose	Shoveler
Ferruginous Duck	Snipe
Gadwall	Teal
Garganey	Tufted Duck
Greylag Goose (British/Irish)	Unidentified duck
Greylag Goose (Re-estab.)	Unidentified gull
Herring Gull	Water Rail
Hybrid duck	White-fronted Goose -
Hybrid goose	(European - albifrons)
Iceland Gull	Wigeon
Jack Snipe	Wood Sandpiper
Kingfisher	Yellow-legged Gull

WeBS Sites – Looking For Surveyors				
10K	Unit	Unit Code	Grid Ref	Free from 19/20
SU83	Critchmere Ponds	23043	SU881332	yes
SU83	Shottermill Ponds (W Sussex)	23015	SU881334	yes
SU84	Badshot Lea	17064	SU862490	
SU84	Swamp in Moor Park	23321	SU865465	
SU85	Frimley Gravel Pits	23221	SU877573	yes
SU85	Greatbottom Flash	23016	SU895532	
SU86	RMA Lakes	23008	SU862606	
SU94	Busbridge Lakes	23039	SU973420	
SU94	Winkworth Arboretum	23041	SU995413	yes
SU95	Worplesdon Place Hotel	23019	SU975535	
TQ04	Albury Ponds	23058	TQ055480	
TQ04	Silent Pool & Sherborne Pond	23048	TQ060485	Yes
TQ05	Clandon Park Lakes	23023	TQ039523	yes
TQ06	Basingstoke Canal -Sheerwater to R Wey	23312	TQ034610	yes
TQ06	Charlton GPs	23212	TQ087694	
TQ06	Elmbridge Model Club Gravel Pits	23262	TQ017694	
TQ06	Feltham Piscatorial (not Feltham but nr Chertsey!)	23263	TQ030696	
TQ06	Genets Marine Gravel Pits	23255	TQ038694	
TQ06	Old Charlton Road Gravel Pit	23230	TQ078683	
TQ06	Wey Farm	23028	TQ017627	
TQ07	Brps GP	23268	TQ035745	
TQ07	Egham Hythe Lake	23207	TQ026702	
TQ07	R Thames - Staines Bridge	23304	TQ032715	yes
TQ07	Spout Wood GP	23203	TQ045755	
TQ13	Vann Lake	23065	TQ156395	
TQ14	Milton Court Dorking	23072	TQ155495	
TQ14	Ockley Court Lake	23068	TQ156404	
TQ14	Park Farm Reservoir (Nr Capel)	23069	TQ164414	
TQ16	Hersham Gravel Pit	23200	TQ128661	
TQ16	Longwater, Burwood Park, Hersham	23027	TQ103641	
TQ16	R Thames - Hampton Bridge	24307	TQ150687	
TQ16	R Thames - Hurst Park to Molesey Reservoir	24311	TQ133691	
TQ16	R Thames - Kingston to Hampton Bridge	24306	TQ173676	
TQ16	R Thames - Sunbury Weir to Rivermead Island	23314	TQ107685	
TQ17	R Thames - Barnes to Kew	24302	TQ198769	yes
TQ17	R Thames - Teddington to Kingston	24305	TQ178704	
TQ24	Green Farm Lakes	23035	TQ210404	yes
TQ24	Newdigate	23051	TQ205427	yes
TQ26	Mitcham Common Pond	24008	TQ285681	
TQ26	Rosebery Pond, Epsom	24003	TQ208605	
TQ27	King George's Park Lake (Wandsworth)	24020	TQ254743	
TQ27	R Thames - Battersea Br to Wandsworth Br	24422	TQ266765	
TQ27	R Thames - Wandsworth Br to Putney Br	24423	TQ250752	
TQ27	R Wandle - Mill Close to Beddington Park	24309	TQ283652	
TQ27	R Wandle - Mill Close to Goat Bridge	24318	TQ274663	
TQ27	R Wandle - Morden Hall Tram crossing to Wandsworth	24316	TQ260715	
TQ27	Tooting Common	24047	TQ292721	
TQ34	Wire Mill Lake	23007	TQ367416	yes

To give you a couple of other statistics the total number of birds reported was 132,918 from 7476 sightings.

Of course, due to lockdown, no counts should have taken place in April (fortunately the March count date was just before lockdown) and WeBS allowed the May count to take place one week late, just after the lockdown rules were lifted slightly, allowing surveys to start again. Some surveyors obviously still cannot get out due to shielding or because they did not feel safe at their site. However I am very grateful to all the many Surrey and South-West London surveyors who got back out again straightaway.

In the country overall WeBS is now largely back to normal - counts undertaken and submitted online around the June priority date were 92% of the 2019 equivalent period, and July was 108% of 2019 equivalent, compared with less than 9% during lockdown in April (when the BTO had made clear that the survey should not be carried out!).

### **BirdTrack**

Since lockdown the BTO has been pushing BirdTrack more and over the last few weeks they have increased the number of users entering records into BirdTrack compared to the same period last year. For 2020 there are already more people using BirdTrack than for the total of 2019. In Surrey 34 more people have signed up to BirdTrack since 1 April 2020. This

should mean more records going to the County recorder!

However, the BTO realises that the website and app can be a bit overwhelming for new users so they have put together a 1hr introduction online workshop aimed at not only getting people familiar with the site, but also best practises and guidance on how to create sites and enter their first records. At present they have only made these workshops available to those that have signed up since lockdown so, if you have not had the confidence to sign up for BirdTrack yet, please do so and take advantage of this help and guidance. The BTO does hope to push these workshops out to a wider audience in the future. If it does I will let you know.

### **Garden BirdWatch**

Recruitment for GBW free has remained buoyant with over 8,500 people throughout the country joining since April, meaning that the BTO's Garden BirdWatch scheme now has 20,000 GBW members. In Surrey there are 508 members with 202 having joined since the beginning of April 2020. It is great news that so many people are getting involved in recording the birds that they see in their garden. The BTO has said that they will continue with this free product (without the printed publication Bird Table) for the foreseeable future, so now all BTO surveys are free.

*Penny Williams*

## Publications Of Interest

### NEW PUBLICATION

#### Richard Kearton's SURREY FIELD NOTES 1900-1927

*Transcribed by Gwyneth Fookes*

*Foreword by Brian Thomas*

**RICHARD KEARTON** and his brother, Cherry, were world-famous wildlife photographers during the early years of the 20th century. Richard lived in Caterham for many years, during which time he spent very many hours studying and photographing the birds of the district at a time when there were no workable telephoto or zoom lenses and photographers used heavy glass plates and had no light meters.

Richard and Cherry wrote a number of books which they illustrated with photographs taken in the field — they invented nature photography. They travelled extensively and gave public lectures from Scotland to Cornwall, to Royalty and the President of the United States of America. They influenced a young David Attenborough.

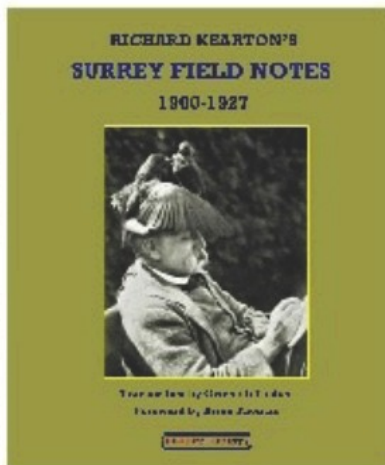
Some years ago Richard Kearton's grand-daughter, Marguerite Bentham (now Marguerite Orton), gave Gwyneth Fookes permission to transcribe and publish his personal field notebooks — here they are — warts and all.

Far more than just wildlife photography this book gives an invaluable insight into social history of the early 20th century.

156pp, 297 x 254 mm, illustrated with colour and monochrome plates, many from Kearton's books, ISBN 978-0-900992-80-3. Published June 2020. The Bourne Society.

Copies are available now from the Society's Publications Manager, Paul Redington, 13 Crewes Avenue, WARLINGHAM, Surrey, CR6 9NZ (Tel: 01883 622964) or from Gwyneth Fookes, 6 Tupwood Lane, CATERHAM, Surrey, CR3 6DA (Tel: 01883 349745) Price £11 + £3 postage and packing.

Initial printing is limited to 100 copies.



**BOURNE SOCIETY**



# Notes

- **Welcome to new members -**

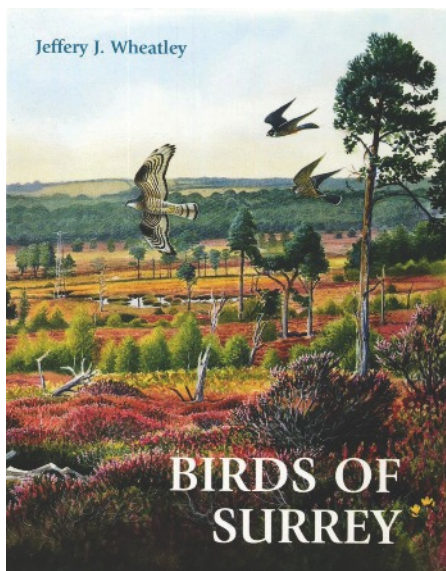
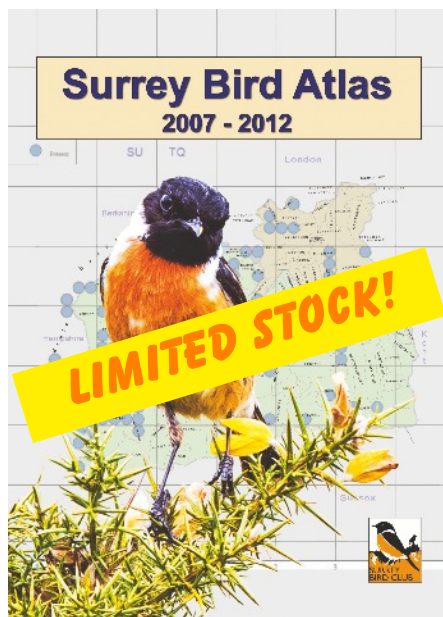
Dave Dack, Croydon  
 Steve Smith, Witley  
 Chris Burchell, Guildford (rejoined)  
 Keith & Carol Porter, Redhill  
 Steve Simnett, Guildford  
 William Taylor, Wimbledon  
 Jill Butt, Teddington  
 Don Cooper, Woodham, and  
 Wes Attridge, Capel.

- **Surrey Bird Atlas 2007-12** - The most recent breeding and wintering distribution mapping of birds in Surrey. An A4 size, hardback book with 400 full colour pages! Available from Penny Williams, price £20, or £25 including postage and packing.

- **Birds of Surrey** - Our county avifauna and good background reading to complement the Bird Atlas. Available from Penny Williams. Great value at £25.

- **Special Offer** - Get both books for £25 plus p&p from Penny Williams.

- **Are you interested in helping swifts in the Godalming area?** Keen swift champion Sarah Davis is looking for occasional helpers to put up swift boxes around Godalming. Ideal volunteers would have experience of building and/or roofing, have their own ladder and, even better, their own insurance. If you're interested in helping swifts, please contact Sarah on [sarahandgary@ntlworld.com](mailto:sarahandgary@ntlworld.com).



## Field Trip Reports

### Staines Reservoir - Sunday 9th August 2020

The first field trip since COVID lockdown. The previous field trip had taken place in March so a long gap. Staines reservoir was chosen due to the fact that it has a wide path running over the causeway and it is nearly always windy up there meaning the air around all those attending would not be stationary! Due to the government restrictions only six people were allowed to meet but, fortunately, Andy Harding agreed to act as a co-leader so we were able to have two groups which meant we were not limited to only five people coming along to join me.

Sunday 9th August was during the very hot spell so the heat haze appeared quite quickly. However it was only in the last few minutes of the field trip that the breeze started to drop a little bit so we were kept refreshed by the north-easterly wind. Seven members plus Andy and myself came along and everyone enjoyed themselves. Our latest junior member, William, was one of these. William is extremely keen and everyone enjoyed his enthusiasm. William kindly provided me the list of everything we saw.

Possibly the most numerous bird at the reservoir was the Pied Wagtail. It clearly had been a successful breeding year as there were lots of juveniles around and, as well as flying along the causeway, many of them were down

at the water's edge trying to make us think we might be looking at a wader whereas in fact it was yet another wagtail! However we did manage to find some waders on the water's edge. First of all a few Common Sandpipers were seen in the far distance but, fortunately, as we got towards the other end of the causeway, there were some much closer giving much better views. At that time also we managed to find a Dunlin, which came



*Dunlin* (Cheech Albanese)

extremely close (as can be seen from the accompanying photo) and finally we also managed to find a Little Ringed Plover too. At one point both of them were adjacent which allowed a great comparison of size as well.

I had been hoping that there might be some late Swifts around but none was seen. However the day started off well with two Red Kites flying alongside the edge of the adjoining reservoir and then a Sparrowhawk flying along that edge too. This was whilst we were waiting for everyone to arrive so almost everyone saw these two



*Little Ringed Plover, (Cheech Albanese)*



*Little Ringed Plover & Dunlin,  
9 Aug 20 (Cheech Albanese)*

species. We also had Kestrel hunting round the edge of the reservoir later on too. At the end of the morning one solitary Swallow flew past but we did not have any Martins either. So far as gulls were concerned there were a few Black Headed Gulls plus a Great Black Backed and some Herring Gull. Common Terns were breeding on the rafts so we could see the chicks and we also saw a young Little Grebe with its parents.

A few Starlings and Goldfinch were around but not very large flocks. There were also a few Linnets flying up and down the causeway and some members of the group had really good

views of a male with its lovely redbreast. My view was of them flying past and hearing the nasal twang helping with identification!

An unexpected sighting was a young Shelduck. It looked like it might be a hybrid duck of some sort due to its colouring but its longer neck and bill and elegance helped us identify it. This was a nice surprise.

There were, as expected, quite a lot of Coot on the reservoirs plus Great Crested Grebe and Mallard.

Some members of the group, who had arrived at the reservoir early also managed to see Gadwall and Canada Goose.

Although we looked for Black-Necked Grebe - which have been reported relatively recently - none could be seen. However it is a big reservoir and they were probably present somewhere! 26 species were seen in all - not a huge number but great to get out again in a very safe place!

*Penny Williams*

Species List	
Black headed Gull	Linnet
Canada Goose	Little Grebe
Common Sandpiper	Little Ringed Plover
Common Tern	Magpie
Coot	Mallard
Cormorant	Pied Wagtail
Dunlin	Red Kite
Gadwall	Shelduck
Goldfinch	Sparrowhawk
Great Black-backed Gull	Starling
Great Crested Grebe	Swallow
Herring Gull	Tufted Duck
Kestrel	Woodpigeon

## New Field Meetings Officer - Ed Hilton

Hello, I've always had an interest in nature and particularly birds, and enjoyed nature walks in the woods near my house as a child. As an adult, walking with my binoculars has become the norm, looking for birds and animals, but with a focus on birds.

I lived near Wimbledon for years and took regular trips down the A3 into Surrey to explore footpaths and rivers, as well as some of the more managed



*Long tailed tit, Lino cut print  
(Ed Hilton)*

parks nearby. I have recently moved to Epsom and am lucky enough to have some

outside space to attract birds and other wildlife.

My day job is in healthcare but in my spare time I like to paint and make prints from Lino or woodblock.

Look forward to meeting some of you at future trips.

*Ed Hilton*



*Ed Hilton*

## Future Field Meetings

With the change in the government COVID guidelines, allowing groups of up to 6 to meet outdoors (with two metre social distancing still to apply), the club has resumed field trips at suitable sites from August 2020. However, if the government guidelines change field trips may have to be suspended again at short notice. Attendance on a field trip is only allowed if you have been allocated one of the five available places (unless there is more than one leader for the trip when more places will be available) so please do not just turn up at a field trip without booking.

To apply for a place(s) e-mail Ed Hilton our Field Meetings Officer ([fieldmeetings@surreybirdclub.org.uk](mailto:fieldmeetings@surreybirdclub.org.uk)) stating how many places you want to book and supply an emergency contact number. Alternatively you can phone Ed (07793 025503). Members will get priority with places being allocated on a first come first served basis. Non-Members will initially be placed on the reserve list.

**Sunday 13th September 2020 - Farlington Marshes** Hampshire Wildlife Trust reserve. Meet at the main car park, halfway along the entrance road, at 09.30 (Grid ref SU676043). Leaders Dudley Cox & Penny Williams. If you're coming down the A3(M) take the left hand lane for Southsea just after you join the A27. Keep in the left hand lane down the slip road and turn sharp left immediately after the traffic lights under a height barrier into the entrance road. Finish about 1pm.

**Sunday 11th October 2020. Tices Meadow Nature Reserve** Leader: Mark, Tice's Meadow Bird Group, Tel 07765 368977. Meet at 10am at the reserve entrance at the Pea Bridge on Badshot Lea Road (map ref: SU86759 49018).

**Sunday 15th November 2020 -Papercourt Meadows**

Leader: Carey Lodge Tel 07743 734499.

Starting time is 2pm for the afternoon only.

Meet at: Car park, Tannery Lane, Send, GU23 7EF, Map ref. TQ030563)

**Saturday 12th December 2020, London Wetland Centre**, Queen Elizabeth's Walk, Barnes, London SW13 9WT. Meet in the visitor car park at 9.30 am. This field trip will only take place if the WWT hides are open. Unless you are a WWT member you will have to pay for entry. Main Leader Penny Williams Tel 07771 804357 (only on day) or 01276 857736 beforehand.

All the walks are FREE (except for travel costs, car park or entrance fees). Everybody is welcome, from beginners to experts. However any children aged 16 or under must be accompanied by an adult. Most sites visited are, unfortunately, not suitable for wheelchairs with rough, and often muddy, footpaths.

The latest trip details are on the website [www.surreybirdclub.org.uk](http://www.surreybirdclub.org.uk)

*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.*

*Passengers accept lifts in private cars at their own risk.*

**The copy date for the next issue of Birding Surrey is 31 October 2020**



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# Happy Birding!

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*Fig 4. Cuckoo, Thursley, 18 May 2020*

*(James Sellen)*



*Fig 5. Black-necked Grebe, 14 Apr 2020*

*(Dave Harris)*