



Nature is in crisis
Together we can save it

Guildford and District Local Group

Website: rspbguildford.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024

Celebrating 50 years of our local group

Margo Scott

Guildford and District RSPB is 50 years old on **31st January** – something to celebrate! It would be nice to mark the occasion in some way, so we are planning to have a social event after the AGM on 22nd May, with cake, perhaps a glass of bubbly. I am hoping that we may have a summer picnic or outing as well – if you have any ideas then please let me know.

We won't be having a new photo competition this year, but we will show the 'Best of the Century' winning photos from previous years at the social. We very much hope to come back to photo competitions in subsequent years if we have someone prepared to organise it.

I joined the group in 2017, shortly before retiring, and have benefited from learning so much from group members who have been generous with their knowledge. In particular, I have had the pleasure of getting to know five of the previous leaders, to whom the group owes a debt of thanks:

Peter Grundy (leader from 1992), Alan Bowen (2000), Roger Beck (2007), Mike Grimshaw (2011), and Paul Graber (2016). Jean Nobbs served before Peter, and although now in Kent, she and her husband have come back as speakers several times.

We should also be hugely grateful to all committee members past and present, and to all walk leaders and volunteers, who have given so much to the group.

Please do put the date in your diary, and come along on **May 22nd** so we can celebrate together.

Looking to the Future

I took on the role of Leader at the May AGM in 2019. Coming in as a relative newcomer, it has subsequently proved to have been a great pleasure and a privilege to have been accepted so warmly by the group. When I started I didn't really know what to expect, and my first concern was that I was still only a novice birder. That turned out not to be a problem, although it probably did push me into upping my game! I have learned so much about birds over the last five years, but I have also enjoyed working with a really good committee, all with their own skills. I've met some other local group leaders, some nice RSPB staff, and I certainly didn't expect to become a Zoom specialist!

A particular pleasure has been getting to know so many group members, and learning about their experiences and contributions, often stretching over many years.

It has been good fun, and I don't regret taking on the role. Some weeks are busier than others, and on occasions there are deadlines to meet. There are quieter times in between, and it's a matter of choice about how much to take on.

However, although some serve for longer, the RSPB's recommended tenure for a leader is five years, and as I have said, 2023-24 will be my last year. My circumstances have changed, and I need to devote more time to my family. I am aware that many people reading this will have given up a lot of their time for the group already, but we do need someone new to step up as leader if we are to continue to enjoy the group as we do. I will be very happy to provide support and back-up for an incoming leader if wanted, and would also be prepared to continue to host on-line winter evenings for a while longer.

If more than one person was able to give some time, we could have a leader and deputy, which would reduce the commitments on one person. A brief job description summarising the role is attached to this newsletter, and I would be very happy to discuss it further with anyone who is interested. Please do consider if you are able to help in any way.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: in England and Wales no 207076, in Scotland no SC037654

Spring fundraising 'pub' quiz

Margo Scott

It's that time of year again! Time to launch the 2024 quiz – our biggest annual group fund raising event.

The event will be held on **Friday 8th March at Onslow Village Hall**, and once again Ian and Jan Honeysett have kindly offered to host for us. As always, entries can be for full teams of up to 8, or enter as a single pair or small group and we will put full teams together.

Bring your own food and drink from **7pm for a 7.30 start**, Onslow Village Hall, Wilderness Rd, Guildford, GU2 7QR

£10.00 per person. Book a team of up to 8, or come as a single or small group and we will make up teams for the night. To enter please email info@rspbguildford.org.uk to book a place **and either:** Pay on line using the 'Just Giving' site: [M A Scott is fundraising for RSPB \(justgiving.com\)](https://www.justgiving.com/MAScott). Please remember to put your name as a reference so I can track payments. Remember – if you are able to add gift aid the RSPB benefits more or send a cheque payable to RSPB Guildford Local Group and post to M Scott, 41 Thornash Rd, Woking, Surrey GU21 4UL

Bohemian rhapsody

Clare Harrington

I don't consider myself to be a twitcher at all. I am very happy watching my garden birds and just waiting to see what pops up on my local patch around Newlands Corner. BUT! Having seen a tweet over the Christmas period that Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*)- a bird that has always eluded me and felt beyond reach without extensive travelling - were present 10 minutes down the road for me, then there was absolutely no way I wasn't going to go and see them!

Fretting that they would have moved on in a few days, I was heartened to receive Tony's email on the 28th December that they were still present somewhere around the East Horsley Medical Centre. Off I popped, bobbled-hatted with camera and binoculars in hand. As I approached the Medical Centre to try to park, I saw a gaggle of camouflage-trousered individuals training their binoculars and long lenses on a slightly wind-battered tree.

In the tree - BINGO - was the flock of six Waxwings!

Weather conditions were not ideal - grey skies, light rain & gusty winds. Nor the backdrop - a hotch potch of terraced houses all, sensibly, with their curtains firmly closed.



Waxwing – photo by Clare Harrington

The Waxwings were not at all bothered by any of this and flitted happily between their perching tree, from where their gentle, trilling calls could be heard, and the berries. Every time they moved there was a rustle of waterproof jackets and a frenzied clicking of shutters.

If you have seen any of the photos that subsequently went around the chat email or more widely on X (Twitter), then you will know just how photogenic these birds

are. They don't have a bad angle and every photo reveals a new feature - the crest, black mask, yellow-tipped tail, and sealing-wax-red wing feathers that give them their name.

Encountering any bird for the very first time is always magical, no matter where it occurs, but I honestly don't think I would ever tire of watching these enigmatic birds.

We have two exciting options for birding breaks this year. However, please remember these are holidays with friends, not organised by the RSPB, and you are responsible for your own insurance.

The full itinerary is attached with this newsletter

SLOVENIA Tuesday 4th – Tuesday 11th June 2024

This holiday has been specifically organised and lead for us by Naturetrek. The tour can accommodate up to fourteen including eight singles. As Naturetrek explains:

'Situated midway between the better known areas of the Alps and the Adriatic, the region of Notranjska (or Inner Carniola in English) has largely escaped the attention of foreign tourists, and remains wonderfully unspoilt and rich in wildlife. Much of the region's natural history revolves around the phenomena associated with Karst (limestone) topography and the dissolution of limestone by rainwater. This area is the eastern limb of the original Karst and many of the features, flora and fauna were originally described here in the 18th century by famous Austro-Hungarian naturalists and polymaths such as Giovanni Scopoli and Johann von Valvasor.

During this single centre holiday we will be based in a hotel on the edge next to the traditional town of Postojna, close to the vast turlough of Lake Cerknica. This is one of the largest 'intermittent lakes' in Europe, rising and falling by up to 7 metres each year, fed by underground springs and snow melt.

From our base we will explore the area's diverse habitats, from the damp, seasonally-flooded grasslands around the lake, to the subalpine meadows and cool Beech woodlands of the Dinaric Alps, and cold spring-fed peatlands of the Bloke plateau. This rich biodiversity extends across the board to its birds, butterflies, plant life and other wildlife and, once the region's interesting traditional architecture and agriculture are added to the mix, it becomes evident that Inner Carniola offers the perfect blend of natural history, landscapes, culture and tradition as material for a fascinating and enjoyable week.'

To book your place please contact Naturetrek on 01962 733051 quoting Guildford RSPB Wild Slovenia, and please keep the group up to date with numbers by emailing info@guildfordrspb.org.uk when you have booked.

NORFOLK 27-31 October 2024

Once again we plan to return to Norfolk and the Le Strange Arms Hotel at Old Hunstanton for the autumn migration. At this time of year North Norfolk should be alive with our winter visitors flooding into this area, so making trips to Titchwell, Snettisham and other nearby reserves a real treat. Also while travelling to Norfolk we can drop into Welney with a chance of seeing Cranes plus other birds. Visiting Norfolk at this time of year in the past has always been most rewarding and should be again when we visit this year. To book your place please contact the hotel on 01485 534411 and mention that you will be joining the Guildford RSPB group. The cost is £95 per person per day for dinner, bed and breakfast. Again, please keep the group up to date with numbers by emailing info@guildfordrspb.org.uk when you have booked.

Coach trips 2024

Trish Watts

There are still spaces available for our two coach trips in 2024.

The first is to the world-famous WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre on Sunday 21 January, and the second trip is to the renowned Keyhaven Marshes on 17 March.

Booking slips and full details for both trips are attached to the electronic version of this newsletter or enclosed with the printed version.

The RSPB is the UK's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so that our towns, coast and countryside will team with life once again. We also play a leading role in a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.

Group walks - Autumn 2023

Tony Cummins

There was a packed programme of walks in the autumn, the main feature of which was variable weather. Fortunately only one walk was effectively cancelled but attendance at others was reduced while wind and rain somewhat affected the enjoyment of a couple. Nonetheless excellent birding was enjoyed aided by some quality sightings.

Sunny weather greeted the eleven members assembled at **RSBP Pagham Harbour**. On the path to the Ferry Pool the sight of a Sparrowhawk passing overhead was a treat. The Pool itself held good numbers of Teal, Shovelers, Lapwings and Black-tailed Godwits. Scanning of the fields beyond disclosed a handful of Rooks and a perched Buzzard. The muddy banks at the head of the Long Pool produced an early highlight; on the left bank was a Whimbrel while perched on the right was a Kingfisher that was diving into the stream. During the walk down the Long Pool two pairs of Stonechats were encountered, a small flock of Linnets appeared over the ploughed meadow and a couple of Yellowhammers came up the channel. At the end of the Long Pool the sole Wigeon of the day flew inland while a few new waders could be viewed. They included Oystercatchers, Grey Plovers, Curlews and the first of many Redshanks.



Curlew – photo by Roger Beck

Around the bend a noisy Raven appeared while three more Buzzards circled and a Kestrel was glimpsed. Toward Church Norton further scanning disclosed a Shelduck and three Pintails while in close attendance were some Dunlin, a flock of over 150 Golden Plovers and seven Curlew Sandpipers. The meadow behind the Church Norton hide produced a few warblers, Chiffchaffs and a Willow Warbler. The harbour mud at low tide hosted

a smallish number of waders. Besides species already seen there were a couple of Ringed Plovers, a Bar-tailed Godwit and a Greenshank. An excellent day's birding concluded with a sightings list of 67.

Thirteen met at **Moor Green Lakes** on the first chilly morning of the autumn. Soon mixed flocks of Blue Tit, Great Tit and Long Tailed Tit were found busily feeding in the trees. Approaching the lakes there was a mixture of Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Teal, numerous Coots and a single Moorhen out on the water. Two Mute swans with six cygnets could be seen. Beside the Blackwater River the various pools contained a Common Sandpiper and a mixture of Black-headed Gulls, Canada Geese, Egyptian Geese and Lapwing. There were four Little Grebes while a Snipe and a group of Pochard were eventually picked out. More small birds were observed moving through the trees including a Chiffchaff and a Goldcrest while a Nuthatch could be heard. Further along Barnacle Geese were grazing in the grass. A single Stonechat was observed and there was a Kestrel perched in a dead tree joined suddenly by a Red Kite that offered splendid views. A group of Skylarks were seen flying over. A grey Wagtail was then spotted in a puddle by the path. By the end the sunshine was providing welcome warmth. A total of 43 species was identified.

Twelve soon to be bedraggled souls met at **Titchfield Haven** in defiance of the dire forecast. Despite the optimism engendered by a few all too brief dry periods the theme of the day was heavy downpour alleviated from time to time by steady rain. The plan for the day was mainly shelter in the hides starting on the west side of the river. Along the road a few waders were spotted sheltering behind groynes on the shingle, three each of Redshank, Turnstone and Sanderling. From the Meon Shore hide an excellent array of waterfowl and waders was in view. Sixteen Snipe were the highlight showing their elegant plumage to advantage. Oystercatchers were roosting in abundance in the company of Lapwings and a handful of Redshanks. Teal too were numerous with a scattering of Mallards, Shovelers, Moorhens and a Shelduck. The next port of call was the Spurgin hide. En route a pause in the precipitation encouraged a number of songbirds including Robins, a Blue Tit and a Chiffchaff to vocalise. From the hide two Cetti's Warblers made their presence felt while a large flock of Starlings perched atop a large tree. A female-type Marsh Harrier soon appeared flushing ducks and waders over a large area. A Grey Heron and some Canada Geese were spotted distantly. The return to the car park was marked by the discovery of a young slow worm on the path. Back at the beach a tightly packed flock of over forty Sanderlings mimicked a patch of snow. Immediately, the local Merlin streaked from the visitors' centre across the river and perched for distant viewing. Meanwhile a male Marsh Harrier decided to put on a show, roaming over the reeds. Reality soon reasserted itself as the group was then imprisoned in their cars by drenching rain with just lunch for comfort. After that the Knights Bank hide became the destination. There was much to see on an area more heavily flooded than usual. Large

numbers of Gadwall and Teal circulated with a few Wigeon. Around a hundred Black-tailed Godwits were feeding on the banks in the company of a good number of Lapwings. Despite the group's travails the day was a success with a list of 47 species.

The annual fungi walk at **Sheapleas** initially looked as though it would be continuing the autumn trend of rain-reduced events. However a two hour reprieve from the precipitation unexpectedly greeted the nine members who ventured into the woodlands. There no less than 35 species of fungus were waiting to be found though as a result of the prolonged period of wet weather their colouration was not as bright as hoped. Old favourites such as fly agaric, turkey tail, saffrondrop bonnet and magpie inkcap were present. Other species caught the imagination for their appealing names, including blushing bracket, burgundydrop, jelly ear, bleeding broadleaf, wrinkled crust, deceiving bolete and fiery milkcap. Others gave a clue to their edibility with appellations such as poison pie and funeral bell. The return to the car park coincided with the resumption of the rain.

After recent turbulent weather a bright morning and surprisingly good underfoot conditions greeted the five members who gathered at **Horsell Common**. The first stop at the pig farm produced a Grey Heron and six Egyptian Geese. On the fence were both a Grey and a Pied Wagtail. From there birds were initially few with just the calls of Robins, glimpses of Goldfinches, a nicely perched Wren and a flypast of several Canada Geese providing interest. Towards the bridge to the Island activity increased. Three Song Thrushes showed devotion to one bush as they devoured sloes. Blue Tits and Long-tailed Tits were gleaning in the trees while a couple of Chaffinches muttered out of sight and a Great Spotted Woodpecker perched atop a tree. Just over the bridge a few Common Gulls were picked out while twenty five Lapwings were also present. The next port of call was the western end of the heath but the visit yielded just a few calls from an invisible Dartford Warbler and a passing Green Woodpecker. McLarens meadow was more productive. There six Redwings and a single Skylark settled into the grass where they were soon joined by two Meadow Pipits. A Stock Dove also flew around. Then it was back to the heath where the main point of interest was a pair of Roe Deer. Near the car park the absence of raptors was rectified by a gliding Common Buzzard and two dashing falcons, a Peregrine and a Kestrel. The woodlands delivered some final treats, the buzzing call of a Treecreeper, a bouncy Goldcrest and the repeated call of a nearby Tawny Owl. An enjoyable walk in unexpectedly fine weather concluded with a sightings list of 43.

The autumn theme of weather-affected walks continued with a vengeance for the ten members who assembled at **West Wittering**. The morning was bright but gales were howling in from the south-west. On the salt marsh small groups of Brent Geese were assembled with Lapwings dotted among them plus the odd Curlew and Redshank. Small birds were few and far between but eventually a small flock of Meadow Pipits was seen foraging among the grass, a Reed Bunting perched and a pair of Stonechats landed on the path. At the inner harbour birds appeared in much greater numbers, the most obvious species being Oystercatchers.



Meadow Pipit – photo Margo Scott

A flock of Dunlin flew to new feeding grounds and a Little Egret followed them. Out on the water a Great Crested Grebe and a Cormorant were diving while on the shore two Sanderlings shone in the sun and a Sandwich Tern was spotted. After lunch the walk continued along the east side of the marsh towards the wetlands. Early sightings included two Ravens, some Rooks, two Shelducks, a Little Grebe and, as the channels filled on the rising tide, some Black-tailed Godwits and a Turnstone. A large flock of over one hundred Golden Plovers settled on the sand for a

while. The more distant ponds held a substantial number of Wigeon accompanied by several dozen Teal plus some Common Gulls and one Mediterranean Gull but the star attractions were twenty Avocets sweeping the water. Species seen totalled 38.

The run of dismal weather came to a welcome end with a bright, still but very cold morning that enticed no less than eighteen members to attend the WWT reserve at **Barn Elms**. The south path produced a perched Kestrel and a female Reed Bunting. First stop at the Dulverton hide quickly brought views of a Bittern sunning itself in the reeds at the far side. On the water were plenty of Gadwall, Shovelers and Tufted Ducks. Among them were spotted a female Goldeneye, a couple of Pochard and a Great Crested Grebe. The

woodlands seemed underpopulated with none of the usual finch flocks but the explanation came clear when a female Sparrowhawk streaked past. The scrape hide offered two Grey Herons posing beautifully in the clear light while a small flock of Teal snoozed on the water. A Wren bounced around the reeds in front of the hide while an eagle-eyed member focused on a bird that was identified as a Water Pipit. From the Peacock Tower a second Bittern was glimpsed in a brief flight. Small numbers of Wigeon grazed on the marsh while a Snipe played hide-and-seek among the reeds. After lunch the Wildside proved to be productive. The usual array of gulls was supplemented by singles of Common and Lesser Black-backed Gull. Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Stonechat and Greenfinch were found. A Cetti's Warbler was also seen while the cast was completed by a Stock Dove and a Green Woodpecker. The final sighting list totalled 48.

Three hardy souls braved the elements for the walk on the **Isle of Sheppey**. At the meeting point a Green Woodpecker and assorted Lapwings, Turnstones, Sanderlings and Oystercatchers were seen. Each post on the groynes seemed to have an obligatory Redshank or Grey Plover sitting on top. Further out at sea were Cormorants, Shelducks and some Great Crested Grebes, as well as a lone Great Black-backed Gull. Nearer to the Swale Nature Reserve the splendid sight of around 350 Brent Geese and 24 Curlew was waiting in a nearby field. Large groups of Starling swirled around while on the sea a large number of Common Gull bobbed on the water. A Short-eared Owl hunting over some grassland was glimpsed followed by a flypast from a couple of Little Egret. A pair of Stonechat could be seen in the roadside foliage and Meadow Pipits could be heard. Towards Shellness beach a male Kestrel was surveying for prey. A single Ringed Plover was spotted amongst the Turnstones here while at the concrete bunker large numbers of Dunlin, Grey Plovers and Oystercatchers were assembled on the shoreline. A distant Marsh Harrier drifted low over the land whereupon a Peregrine raced through chasing huge clouds of waders that had suddenly taken to the air. En route to the RSPB Capel Fleet Raptor viewpoint for lunch, the opportunity was taken to stop off along the road at a small lake full of ducks including Teal, Wigeon, and Mallards. Two Corn Buntings alighted on some telegraph wires while good views were had of around six Marsh Harriers at the viewpoint. At that point the rain started in earnest. A total of 37 species were identified.

Nine members met for the **Hayling Oysterbeds** walk under overcast skies. With the harbour mud fully exposed many waders (Dunlin, Redshank, Grey Plover, Curlew, Greenshank, Lapwing and Oystercatcher) and several gaggles of Brent Geese were taking full advantage.



Dunlin – photo by Len Walker

Along the water's edge, there were plenty of Shelduck, Teal and Wigeon. Further out, there were Red-breasted Mergansers and Goldeneye. At the Oysterbeds the incoming tide meant that hundreds of Dunlin, Grey Plovers and Oystercatchers were already jostling for space on the dry land-spits. At the first lagoon, a real treat was provided by excellent views of a Long-tailed Duck. Several Rock Pipits posed for

photos, but the show-stealer was a Great Northern Diver out on the open water. During lunch a Marsh Harrier flew over, causing mass panic among the roosting birds which were now realised to contained a solitary Avocet and a few Turnstones. The tally for the walk was 47 species.

Bird-identifying binoculars now available

Len Walker

Swarovski Optik, the world-leading sports optics manufacturer, has launched AX Visio the world's first AI-supported binoculars.

This innovative piece of kit, available from 1 February, combines cutting-edge technology with high-precision optics that the manufacturer claims will automatically identify 9,000 species of birds and other wildlife.

The days of lugging around scopes and bird books could be numbered as the 10 x 32 binoculars with a field of view of 1,000 yards, a 32mm lens and a 13 megapixel camera are all part of a hi-tech object recognition system which connects to an AI smartphone app that incorporates the Merlin bird guide. A built-in GPS helps an onboard processor determine what you have spotted based on your location, and all at the touch of a button.

Swarovski Optik claims the binoculars are the future of nature observation. However, the asking price of \$4,800, around £3,800, is likely to deter a few bird watchers.

A well-deserved OBE

Margo Scott

A few days ago I drove home along the M40 motorway, and lost count of the number of Red Kites to be seen. It made me think about the phenomenal increase in numbers of some bird species in just 30 years.

In September, those of us on holiday in Swanage enjoyed great views of Ospreys, another reintroduction to the South of England starting to show signs of success. And many of us enjoyed the excitement of watching White-tailed Eagles flying and hunting over Pulborough Brooks in the spring of 2023.

I'm sure you will know that one of the people behind the Isle of Wight Sea Eagles' reintroduction was Roy Dennis, of the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation, a specialist in raptor conservation, who has been involved with the Osprey, Red Kite, and Eagle introduction projects. Roy has an impressive birding pedigree; among other things he directed Fair Isle Bird Observatory from 1963 to 1970, and was the senior RSPB officer in Northern Scotland from 1970-1990.

I have had huge enjoyment from watching all these magnificent raptors, and so I was delighted to read that Roy Dennis was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours, for his contribution to wildlife recovery.

I was aware that a pair of the Isle of Wight Eagles had successfully bred this year in the south of England. Reading about the OBE inspired me to follow up on the progress of the young eagle. The location of the nest was undisclosed, to protect the birds and the landowner from disturbance if the birds return in 2024, but chances are it is one of these birds we have been seeing at Pulborough.

I was delighted to discover that the youngster, a young male, is continuing to do well. He was fitted with a satellite tag, and is identified as G625. This gave insights into his movements since fledging. He remained within 1km of the nest site for the first month, with his parents providing food; predominantly fish, supplemented with some rabbits.

He made his first longer flight away on 15th August, following his father south. These exploratory flights became more regular thereafter, and on 6th September G625 flew over 20km north-east and eventually roosted away from the nest for the first time. On 23rd September he followed his father to the coast, and after one more visit in company he made a solo flight to the coast on 3rd October. On 11th December he was seen at the coast catching a fish for the first time.

This is the first time in 240 years a Sea Eagle chick has fledged from a natural nest in southern England. Remarkably, the pair have successfully bred at only 3 years old, when the norm for Sea Eagles is 4-5 years old. Two other pairs have now established territories in the South of England, and hopefully will also breed soon. In time, we may be lucky enough to be able to watch nests as we can with the Ospreys in Poole Harbour and elsewhere.

Subscriptions for 2024

Christine Shawyer

Annual Group subscriptions were due on **1st January**. To cover rising costs, it was agreed at the AGM to increase the subscription to **£12** per person and **£24** per couple. This is the first increase in fourteen years and still represents great value.

If you haven't yet paid, a renewal form is enclosed with the printed newsletter or will be e-mailed to you separately. Electronic payments can be made to: Sort Code **30-90-79** Account No. **3335 8860** or you can send me a cheque made payable to *RSPB Guildford Local Group*. My address appears on the form.

I hope you will want to continue with your membership, but if you don't, please let me know.

If you have any queries, e-mail me at membership@rspbguildford.org.uk (If you need to ring me, my number appears on the back page of the programme.)



Welcome winter visitors

Don Tyzack

Redwing – photo by Don Tyzack

They were very late this year, but are now are feasting on Cotoneaster berries.

A Happy New Year to one and all!

2024 has arrived with the group showing a very healthy pin badge total income of **£2674** (as recorded on ROBINS to date). This consists of £2228 of actual banked cash plus £446 paid in via the QR codes. Well done to all of our dedicated box minders!

However, the new year is likely to be bringing with it changes to the Pin Badge sales system. Due to rising costs, the huge uncontrollable number of pin badges in circulation, and the unpredictability of box sites, the RSPB fund raising executives have decided to rationalise the system. The idea is to improve and maximise efficiency and income. It has been noted that maximum income seems to be achieved at RSPB centres and reserves, and a great deal of income is derived from internet sales where rarer badges are often sold for quite high prices. To this end, they are considering concentrating the sale of pin badges in these 2 areas plus a few other especially successful sites and withdrawing from most others around the regions. This is still under consideration, and we carry on as usual for now. They will possibly be encouraging anyone who becomes ‘redundant’ from the pin badge business to become involved in some other form of fund-raising, but all we can do just now is wait and see!

Thank you everyone for this very pleasing achievement and for providing a very optimistic start to the New Year! Carol Lewis

New Members

Christine Shawyer

A very warm welcome to the following new members:

Caroline Ingram.....(Walton-on-Thames)

Jenny Poulter.....(Hook)

Paul Townsend.....(Woking)

For your diary:

Dates and venues for indoor meetings and walks are listed in the programme attached with this newsletter.

21 January 2024 – Group coach trip to WWT Slimbridge

8 March 2024 – Quiz and social evening Onslow Village Hall

17 March 2024 – Group coach trip to Keyhaven Marshes

31 March 2024 – Garden bird survey results to paulhicks2006@yahoo.co.uk

9 April 2024 – Deadline for items for the next newsletter to Len Walker editor@rspbguildford.org.uk

22 May 2024 - 50th anniversary social event and AGM

4-11 June 2024 Group holiday to Slovenia

27-31 October 2024 Group holiday to Norfolk

Guildford Group garden bird survey

Paul Hicks

Results: Autumn 2023 (September 2023 to November 2023)

Autumn 2023 was warmer and wetter than average - although overall neither quite as warm nor quite as wet as the previous autumn. September was the hottest in records going back 140 years. Good growing weather, therefore, so nothing special about our gardens and this was reflected in the surveys.

From the 20 surveys received we saw 50 species, 3 down on last year and 7 below our autumn high, though 3 above our autumn low of four years ago. The average per garden was 21.9, down 1.1 from last year with several reports of seasonal lows and the range being from 10 to 38.

There were a few gaps in the top birds with blackbirds being absent for long periods but eventually only missing in one garden. Notable changes were:

- Goldcrests down to 10%, as low as we have seen them, and well below the highs of 6-8 years ago of about half.
- Nuthatches down to a normal level of three-quarters versus last year's high of 91%.
- Redwings were only seen in three gardens versus 40% last year and there are still a lot of berries waiting for them!
- Green woodpeckers were double last year's tally at 35%, though well below our high of 50% seven years ago.
- Tawny owls were heard (mainly) in 40% of our gardens, a high for all seasons and twice their normal level.

The Seabrooks had a prolonged visit from only our second ring ouzel, matching my own sighting of ten years ago.

The next period is Winter 2024, running from December 2023 through February 2024 with submissions due by the end of March. You can contact me on paulhicks2006@yahoo.co.uk or at Hobsons Choice, The Marld, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 1RW.

Species	%	Species	%	Species	%
Blue Tit	100	Chaffinch	60	Kestrel	15
Great Tit	100	Jackdaw	60	Pied Wagtail	15
Robin	100	House Sparrow	50	Redwing	15
Blackbird	95	Song Thrush	45	Stock Dove	15
Dunnock	95	Sparrowhawk	40	Goldcrest	10
Magpie	95	Tawny Owl	40	Grey Wagtail	10
Goldfinch	90	Feral Pigeon	35	House Martin	10
G.S. Woodpecker	90	Green Woodpecker	35	Marsh Tit	10
Woodpigeon	90	Greenfinch	35	Mistle Thrush	10
Long-tailed Tit	85	Buzzard	30	Bullfinch	5
Jay	80	Pheasant	30	Herring gull	5
Nuthatch	75	Ring-necked Parakeet	30	Mallard	5
Carrion Crow	70	Blackcap	25	Moorhen	5
Coal Tit	70	Chiffchaff	25	Red Legged Partridge	5
Collared Dove	70	Red Kite	25	Ring Ouzel	5
Starling	65	Grey Heron	20	Treecreeper	5
Wren	65	Swallow	20		

Bird Themed Crossword Number 60

PETER BRYANT

			1		2		3		4		5			
	6						7						8	
9											10			
11			12				13							
14					15				16		17		18	
19	20								21					
22					23		24				25			
	26								27					

[*] Clue needs to be AI-modified before solving.

Across

6. Could this whitethroat habitat have been found on set of the Good Life? (5)
7. Coach nearly late for showy, if cumbersome, flyer (7)
9. Material for soup kitchen consisting of sticks and moss, perhaps (5,5)
10. [*] Flying bird is lacking in colour (4)
11. Hold on tight - what baby birds may do to parents (or foster parents) (6)
13. [*] A greying dabbling duck (8)
14. White wagtails evenly spaced in sailboat (4)
15. Scotsman with a whiskey chaser sees exotic bird (5)
17. Regularly seeing tristis - they're so common! (4)
19. [*] Mini-golf arranged for long-necked type (8)
21. Alan and Pius not the first ones in family of Shrikes (6)
22. Initially white-tailed eagles kill antipodean rails (4)
23. This onomatopoeic caller is ditonal (10)
26. Fish-eater disturbs plaice at end of season (7)
27. Regret losing head, sort of (5)

Down

1. Magpie devours only some flycatchers (4)
2. Marsh and fen combined in Surrey Common (8)
3. [*] Potential bias towards type of 27 (4)
4. Starting to appreciate slow-moving poisonous snakes. Just so (4)
5. Is this hirundine happiest at the beach? (4,6)
6. [*] Borstal relocated in this Severnside channel (7)
8. Elizabethan adventurer attractive to ducks? (5)
12. Vocalisations signalling danger, or time to catch the worm (5,5)
13. Cold-blooded type that is often upwardly mobile (5)
16. Types of bird that once inspired trust (8)
18. Potentially shut military flyers up to this point (4,3)
20. Alternately prone then skyward, what some birds do during the day (3,2)
23. This bird of the rock is surely a male (4)
24. Where even corncrakes may call out "No AI!?! (4)
25. Animal skin found in bird house (4)

	S	C	A	R	L	E	T	I	B	I	S	
	T		U		O		I		O		K	
H	A	W	K		B	E	E	E	A	T	E	R
	T				E		R				I	
R	U	F	F	E	D		C		S	I	N	G
	S		L				A		C		S	
		G	Y	R	F	A	L	C	O	N		
	R		E		I				U		E	
H	E	A	R		N		T	H	R	U	S	H
	M				F		A				C	
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	N	I	G	H	T	I	N	G	A	L	E	

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