

Sussex Ornithological Society



Newsletter *Winter 2018*



Photograph credits -

Front cover: Semipalmated Sandpiper, Cuckmere, 4th September 2018 (Tim Squire)

This page: Curlew, Pagham, 1st October 2018 (Gareth Hughes)

Inside Back cover: Wryneck, Newhaven Tide Mills, 1st September 2018 (Tim Squire) and Sand Martin, Pagham, 9th September (Andrew House)

Back cover: Wheatear, Pagham, 24th August 2018 (Andrew House) and Short-eared Owl, 28th October 2018 (Dorian Mason)

From the editor

A recent walk on the downs made me realise again that some species we take almost for granted in Sussex now, such as Buzzard and Red Kite were, in the long-gone days of my youth, at a very low ebb indeed. Kites were confined to a small population in Wales, and these birds have been bought back from the brink. It was almost unthinkable then that it would be possible to see Kites on a regular basis here in Sussex - you will know by now that for me they are a sign of hope!

I wonder if the same might be true in years to come of Turtle Dove (see article on page 8), or Curlew (photo opposite), another species seemingly on a downward trend towards extinction? Or other once common farmland species? Hopefully we will learn more about the possibilities for the latter at our January conference. If it is possible to maintain crop yields and run a farm in a way that will increase bio-diversity, that is, to increase the number of species of all living things, animals, plants and insects, why isn't it being done more widely? Maybe we shall find out. And we can all do our bit to increase bio-diversity - see the contribution from Peter Lovett on page 15!

In the meantime, here is all the news from SOS, and my grateful thanks go as always to those who make this newsletter possible by writing articles, sending in information for inclusion, or allowing their photos to be used.

Just to say, I still need someone to take turns with Elliot Dowding in writing up the regular Recent Sightings reports, using the SOS website and other sources to write the articles. It has fallen to me to do it this time round. Please contact newsletter@sos.org.uk if you can help.

Have a great Christmas and I look forward to seeing everyone at the conference in January!

Anthony Holden

MEMBERS' ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Saturday 26th January 2019

If you haven't already booked your seat for the Conference, please contact Val Bentley on chetsford@talk21.com for a booking form or ring 01273 494723.



Our varied programme of presentations this time includes Mark Mallalieu on Hawfinches in Sussex, Rachel White on her "Bird Buddies" project, Georgina Bray from the RSPB Hope Farm project, and Peter Holden, MBE, speaking on nesting strategies. A buffet lunch is provided and there are numerous stands including the ever-popular natural history second-hand book stall.

In an endeavour to cut down on single use non-recyclables, those attending may wish to bring "keep cups" to avoid the use of too many disposable coffee cups.

If you are planning to travel to Clair Hall by car, please be aware that there is very limited parking at the venue, made even more so by scheduled runs in the park every Saturday at 9am. There should be ample parking at the Station Car Park which is just across the road (fee applicable, currently in the region of £5). If you prefer to come by train, do check about the ongoing Brighton mainline engineering project, which can cause disruption to weekend schedules – and certainly did in 2018.

NEW YEAR BIRD RACE 2019

2018 was a double record year for the Race! The Splash Pointers total of 123 species beat the target of 121 set by the Bald Eagles in 2008 and the £3464 (inclusive of gift aid) raised was the highest so far.

However the aim is not just to beat records, though this is always a bonus, but also to have a good day out in the field and to raise some funds for the Society – all of which go towards different conservation projects. In 2018 SOS grants supported enhancement works at Burton

& Chingford Ponds and Graffham Common, and we have given £20,000 towards the newly built – and much needed - hide overlooking the Ferry Pool at Pagham Harbour.

Christmas and New Year are a good time to get your teams sorted and persuade others to sponsor – though some prefer to just give a personal donation. And of course, you can organise your routes – several regular teams now prefer to restrict themselves to a geographical area and set themselves the challenge to beat the total for the same area the next time.

A reminder of the main rules for the Race:

1. It must be carried out on a single day in the first two weeks of January
2. You must confine yourself to within county boundary
3. Teams should consist of at least 2 people
4. All members of the team should see or hear the species claimed, unless the team consists of 4 or more, in which case 3 must record the species.

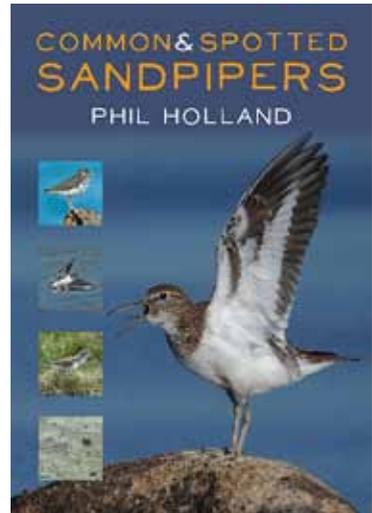
Good luck to everyone who takes up the challenge – look forward to hearing from you!

The Race Pack for 2019 is available from Val Bentley on chetsford@talk21.com or ring 01273 494723.

Common & Spotted Sandpipers by Phil Holland

Review by Chris Barfield

The river Ouse south of Lewes is one of the most reliable sites in Sussex for Common Sandpipers, both on migration and in winter, and it's here that you might also come across SOS member Phil Holland. Phil studied this little wader in its breeding areas in northern England for over 40 years before eventually migrating south himself, but this account also takes in the global and historical perspective. It also includes Spotted Sandpiper, a very close relative resident in North America and a rare visitor to the UK, with only four Sussex records so far.



I was expecting to have to plough through a thick hardback monograph, so I was very pleasantly surprised to receive an attractive softback book, set in a decent-sized type, divided into bite-sized sections and liberally illustrated with colour photos, graphs, tables, diagrams, drawings, sketches and maps. The graphics are refreshingly original, adding greatly to the personal feel of this book, and I particularly liked the text boxes with accounts of Phil's observations of individual birds, obviously taken straight from field notes. But readable doesn't mean unscientific, and the information here is solidly based on field research, the bibliography taking up eight pages. Just the right amount of information, presented in an interesting and engaging way.

It's always fascinating to learn more about a bird you see so often. The birds we see on autumn passage in Sussex have been shown to originate mostly from Norway rather than from the UK breeding population, and the reservoir sites where we so often see them turn

out to be not really the best feeding places, they are just being used as brief stopovers. These two species, almost indistinguishable in the field in non-breeding plumage, have completely different breeding strategies, and so I also now know much more about serial polyandry than I did before!

Common and Spotted Sandpipers, P.K. Holland, Whittles Publishing 2018. ISBN 978-184995-361-0.

Conservation update

By Richard Cowser (SOS Conservation Officer)

You will be aware that we have been opposing two housing developments close to Pagham Harbour. The larger one of them has now been approved, but, working with Natural England and RSPB, we have succeeded in getting an important mitigation condition attached to it. This says that there must be no net loss of foraging areas for Brent Geese as a result of this development being built on fields that are regularly used by geese in winter. In other words new land has to be brought into use which will be planted up with suitable foraging crops. Over the coming months we have to ensure that this condition gets properly fulfilled. SOS member and recently retired WeBS counter, Jim Weston, has been particularly helpful working with me to get this result, which is probably a lot better for birds than it is for the residents of South Pagham.

Several District Councils are putting their Local Plans out for consultation, and it's important that we comment on them because once a development site is "in" the Local Plan it is much harder to stop it getting planning approval. We have responded to the Wealden Local Plan and expressed concern about whether enough is being done to prevent further declines in habitat quality at Ashdown Forest, and we have also expressed concern about the potential impact on Pevensey Levels of the large amount of development being planned

around south east Hailsham. Part 2 of the Lewes Local Plan has been published and we have objected to plans for a small development adjacent to the Chailey Common SSSI, as well as a much larger proposal to develop land east of the recently approved Brett Aggregates Plant at Newhaven, which would destroy yet more of the Tide Mills Local Wildlife Site - we will be working with SWT and Community Action Newhaven to oppose this. Our next task will then be to look at the Worthing Local Plan.

I am delighted to welcome past SOS chairman and Bird Report Editor, Nick Paul, to the Conservation Team. Initially Nick will be looking at sites that could be candidates to become new Local Wildlife Sites (LWS's - formerly called SNCI's) because of their importance for birds. One of the three criteria for this is that we need to have records showing that red and amber listed species regularly nest at a candidate site. Scoring 2 points for a red-listed species and one for an amber one, we need a score of 10 points over at least 4 of the last 10 years in order to consider a site becoming eligible to be a candidate LWS site because of its importance for nesting birds of conservation concern.

It is amazing how few sites meet this breeding evidence criteria, and this is probably because we get so many records in the March to July period which have no breeding codes attached to them. So now we are coming to the end of the year it would be good if you could review your 2018 records and see whether there are any of them to which you could add probable or confirmed breeding evidence. Such evidence is critical not only when we are opposing individual planning applications, but also when we are trying to do something to get a few more sites in Sussex protected with a conservation designation such as a Local Wildlife Site.

And if you cannot upgrade any of your 2018 records please make a New Year's resolution to add breeding evidence to your 2019 records! It really would help protect Sussex's birds.

Marshes by Dick Senior

Across the wind
and blackening harbour
clouds in flood
crack themselves
along the darkening downs
and gulls sky-dance between the mounting waters.

A Peregrine
strong as air
shoulders the sky
above the islands,
black-branding
the charcoal heights
of cumulus,
exploding a confusion
of dark screams
from massed Dunlin
for which
the black and rolling night
was ill enough.

Saving Turtle Doves in Sussex

The iconic Turtle Dove is the UK's fastest declining breeding bird, with the population having plummeted by 94% since 1995. A recent collation of records relating to Kent - where the most dense populations are found - from RSPB, British Trust for Ornithology and Kent Ornithological Society indicate that the drastic decline is continuing. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 breeding pairs between 2008-13 (Kent Breeding Bird Atlas) to has slumped to just 200 to 400 breeding pairs. This is in line with the UK trend which shows the breeding population to be halving every six years.

Turtle Doves are also facing stark declines throughout their range in Europe, Asia and Africa and the species is at risk of global extinction (International Union for the Conservation of Nature 2018). South Eastern England is on the northern limit of the Turtle Doves' breeding range and contains some of their summer strongholds, so the breeding success of the UK population is globally significant.

Overseas, Turtle Doves face pressure from disease, hunting and habitat destruction, whereas in the UK, research indicates that a loss of suitable habitat and associated food shortages are the most important factors driving declines. Changes in UK farming practices since the 1940s have resulted in the loss of important habitat. It is evident that Turtle Doves can no longer find the food, fresh water and nesting places in our countryside that they need. A lack of available seed and grain as food is resulting in much shorter breeding seasons, with fewer nesting attempts. In the 1960s, it was found that birds would typically have three and sometimes up to four broods a season. However, in a 2003 study, this number had dropped considerably, to just one to two nesting attempts. This demonstrates that the birds are raising fewer young to the point that the population is unable to sustain itself.

What can be done in Sussex to save Turtle Doves? In 2012, the RSPB teamed up with Natural England, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust and Conservation Grade to form Operation Turtle Dove, a project

dedicated to saving this species both on and off our shores. To address the issues in the UK, the RSPB has developed a bespoke conservation management package, which delivers suitable foraging and nesting habitat in close proximity. Its work focuses on core Turtle Dove areas, identified as the highest priority for the species. These areas are known as “Turtle Dove Friendly Zones” or TDFZ’s. The Adur Valley in Sussex contains some of the UK’s last remaining prime habitat and is a Turtle Dove breeding stronghold.

By focusing conservation efforts in the Adur Valley TDFZ, it is hoped to attempt to create the right conditions for the birds to thrive, produce more chicks and ultimately, sustain their populations in Sussex. Habitat restoration can be achieved through proven methods and by working with farmers and other land owners to deliver the Turtle Dove package conservation management on their land.

The RSPB’s Turtle Dove advisor for Sussex, Caroline French, has begun work in the Adur Valley, providing advice on foraging habitat, nesting habitat and freshwater sources. So far she has visited four farmers who have started implementing positive changes for Turtle Doves on their land. However, to safeguard and expand the remnant Sussex population will require more financial input.

Therefore, SOS is contributing just under £5,000 towards this project to enable more farms to be included, and to increase the number of sites in the Sussex TDFZ to eight; to engage with land owners more frequently; to provide land owners with seed mix for supplementary feeding and planting and to allow monitoring of the measures being taken which will contribute towards our understanding of this species in crisis.

This text is an edited version of a paper from RSPB submitted to SOS Council - Ed

Semipalmated Sandpiper at Cuckmere Haven

The 5th record for Sussex - 4th September 2018 by Matt Eade

It had been a frustrating day birding around the patch and a couple of other local sites with little to show for my efforts. As I so often do, the late afternoon period of the day saw me heading back out onto the patch to Cuckmere Haven. I try and aim to visit this site at least three to four times during the week as the Cuckmere has a fairly decent rarities list (not to mention the last transatlantic vagrant being the Baird's Sandpiper found one year and one day ago here by another birder), but despite plenty of time devoted to this site in all seasons, my reward has been rather lean in terms of heart-racing moments for a couple of years now.

This all changed on the 4th September and in an unexpected way. With winds that had recently been from the East and then the North, the last thing on my mind was finding a transatlantic Wader. Whilst walking along the river, I always scan upriver and to my delight there was a small party of Dunlin, and with them what I initially thought was a Little Stint (why wouldn't it be?). Little Stints are fairly scarce here with only one or two records a year, and so I felt fairly pleased with this. However, upon walking closer I again had another look, and rather excitedly I noticed no obvious white braces on the upperbody.

It also appeared different in structure and general plumage showing mainly dark-centred feathers with pale edges lacking any rufous tones, a distinct half collar, a thick set bill from base to the tip, and a distinct unbroken white supercilium. With these features combined my mind instantly switched to this bird in fact being a Semipalmated Sandpiper, and a cracking juvenile at that. There was one more feature that needed to be clinched, and the hint is in the name. The most defining feature are the inner webs between the toes, although with the quick feeding action and bouts of sprinting, this is not always the easiest feature to see. This is where the camera came into action and after a fair bit of

time and patience, the image was obtained to confirm that this bird was indeed a juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper, although by now there was little doubt anyway as the bird was showing very well.

I hadn't even enjoyed watching the bird and now it was time to let everyone know via Twitter, Whatsapp and a long list of people to phone, with most not answering their phones much to my annoyance, especially as my phone battery was on its last legs. Slowly but surely observers came along to see this lost waif, however just as I'd finished my last call, and on my way back to hopefully observe and enjoy the bird, it took flight along with the accompanying Dunlin, and was almost lost to view as it flew high south. A quick look elsewhere failed to find it, but it was then seen again along the river briefly before it again took flight, and frustratingly this was the last sighting, with sadly only eight other birders setting eyes on this fifth record for Sussex, and the first for seventeen years.

Semipalmated Sandpipers are regarded as a vagrant to the UK, with on average less than ten records per annum, the majority being in the west of the country. This species is a migratory shorebird across the Americas, breeding on the Canadian Tundra and wintering on the coasts of South America. Despite their regular occurrence in the UK, there have only been four previous records in Sussex, the last being in 2001.



Some days in the life of a Bird Report Editor

by Peter Plant

Every year, sometime before Christmas, a copy of the Sussex Bird Report plops through members' letterboxes and lands on the mat. That is if it is not intercepted by the family dog and savaged (yes, it has happened)! However, behind this minor miracle there lies an intricate story worthy of a John Le Carre novel. This article exposes the inner machinations of the Bird Report process. Read on...

It all starts with records. People who have seen exciting rarities, listers methodically submitting complete lists after every outing, contributions from visitors to the County (who may not be familiar with Sussex sites and place names), interests shared on websites and blogs, all spawn records that are sent into cyberspace via Birdtrack, Garden Birdwatch, eBird and a dozen or more other routes. Thousands of records, no, hundreds of thousands of records. After much prompting, delays and reminders the custodians of the record soup then provide files relating to the County that are seized upon by the data management team and by a mysterious process are transferred onto the SOS C2 database.

Meanwhile the Editor, fresh from making New Year resolutions, endeavours to recruit a team of species account writers. Hardened veterans, keen birders, new volunteers emerge. Unfortunately a few of last year's team decide to leave Sussex for places far away (Why? Do they have a job to do or something?). Others change their e-mail address and seemingly vanish. However we are so lucky in the SOS to have so many helpful and talented volunteers.

Finally, in around May, when birding is getting to the spring peak, the Wizard of Worthing releases the data for access by the writers - provided their computer works, the software is compatible and they can download it. Immediately there are questions. (NB - all these examples actually happened).

Three hundred Kestrels, 200 on the sea, must be a mistake? (they were Greater Black-backed Gulls with a mistaken species code). A buzzard with young in the nest in November? (More subtle this one; the date was given in American style eg 11/6/17 not 6/11/17). "Drat, I must have keyed in 110 Spotted Redshank when I meant Common".

Draft species accounts arrive like buses in a mad rush and usually contain a good few examples of the old bugbear – the intelligent birding site – as in "Beachy Head reported" or "Rye Bay ringed". The accounts sometimes bear traces of having been exposed to Spell Check. Mr. Microsoft is not very good on scientific names or Sussex places. Hence Common Redshank mutates from *Tringa totanus* to *Tringa tetanus*; Fishbourne is suggested as Fishbone; Tilgate as Tailgate and so on.

Then the proof readers go to work. This is not just a matter of tracking down spelling mistakes, but the numbers are checked; not a trivial task since new late arriving records may have been added and oddities deleted. Fine judgement is needed. If a Wryneck was seen at point A on day one, and point B five miles away on day three, were they the same bird? How many times must a Water Rail squeal before it is deemed to have bred? The number of files and e-mails multiplies, some mysteriously disappear, computer problems arise, the calm equanimity of the Editor's household is shattered.

About this time the Editor's wife protests that "It's all ***# birds! When are you going to do the Income Tax Return?" This is answered by the diversionary "Did you know that a Barn Owl pellet was found containing entirely frog bones?"

Then there are the photographs. We are endowed with very many really talented photographers but the placement of images should become a competitive Olympic sport. The poor Editor is really ignorant about the finer points of this art and is very much dependent on more expert advice. This also applies to typesetting, choice of fonts and quality of paper. Rumours that bribery will get your photo on the front cover are

unfounded!

Finally it all gets put together and with final checks it's off to the printers (if there is no last minute "vital" correction to squeeze in). We just need the updated list of members (are their membership subscriptions all fully paid up? Are we observing data protection legislation?), a final check of the proofs at the printers, and it is time to prepare for Christmas. Somewhere a family dog is sharpening his teeth...

If you enjoy the Bird Report and want to help in any way please contact the Editor (breditor@sos.org.uk). If you don't enjoy the Report constructive criticism please to the same address.

SOS funding for Jupps View

The society has agreed to contribute £4,000 to the RSPB to facilitate urgent renewal work on the popular Jupps View viewpoint at Pulborough Brooks. The current viewing platform, built in the 1990's, is now in poor condition, and it is planned to replace it over the winter with a new one constructed on a compacted stone base.

Some limited tree work will also be undertaken to improve the views available at this spot.

A perfect Lawn?

SOS member Peter Lovett has observed and photographed his garden in its evolution from formality to a nature reserve over thirty years. It is the subject of an illustrated talk ⁽¹⁾. Gardeners differ in their approach to lawn perfection -

1. The monoculturalist

Stripe loving monoculturalists use toxic chemicals to kill weeds and moss while lawn damaging insect larvae may be killed with parasitic nematode worms and ants' nests poisoned. Adding lawn feed speeds up growth of bright green grass giving opportunity for more frequent mowing with additional pollution from petrol mowers.

This perfect lawn, containing only grass, may be free from birds, foxes or badgers digging for food.

2. Benign neglect

Doing nothing except scattering seed collected from the wild and with no weekly mowing, feeding or weeding produces a very different perfect lawn – a wild flower meadow. After some years this lawn is glorious with diverse species including Cowslips, Wild Strawberries, Oxeye Daisies, Cat's-ear, Devil's-bit Scabious, Common Spotted Orchid, Ragged Robin, thistle species and grass seed heads.

The resulting wildlife is extraordinary – rich with solitary bees and bumblebees, butterflies, moths, beetles, ants and birds.

For bird lovers, it is a joy to watch Goldfinches and Greenfinches feasting on the seeds and leaves of Cat's-ear in the lawn or Long-tailed Tits, Great Tits and Blue Tits removing insects from unsprayed fruit trees. Dog violets left to grow in flower beds under a pergola for Silver-washed Fritillary butterfly caterpillars coincidentally attract Bullfinches, which eat the seed heads. Fieldfares eating fallen apples, Green Woodpeckers digging for ants and Blackcaps eating honeysuckle berries are other examples of the benefits of benign neglect.

⁽¹⁾ See <http://www.peterlovetttalks.co.uk/page19.html>

Recent sightings

When you submit a sighting of a species shown in bold type it needs to be accompanied by a description for consideration by the SOS Rarities Committee. The inclusion of a sighting here does not mean that the record has been accepted. Description forms can be downloaded from the SOS website.

August

August began very hot, as the long summer drought continued, and it was not until the 7th that localised thunderstorms brought rain. Thereafter, the month was not totally settled, although anti-cyclonic weather predominated. While there was rain on the 9th/10th, 16th, 26th and 28th, the predominance of slowly evolving high pressure restricted the number of uncommon species on view.

Already, on the 1st however, southward migration was well under way, with sightings of **Wood Warbler** and Pied Flycatcher at Seaford Head as well as Osprey and Marsh Harrier at Thorney Island. Another Pied Flycatcher was seen at Pagham North Wall on the following day, and more were on view on the 4th, with reports from Sheepcote (Brighton), Brooklands (Worthing), Seaford Head, and Saltdean, some of the birds remaining for several days. Stragglers continued through the month, with birds at Sheepcote on the 29th and Chanctonbury Ring on the 30th.

Both Osprey and Marsh Harrier were seen in ones and twos through the month. Ospreys were reported from Lewes Brooks (8th), Pagham Harbour (26th), Rye Harbour (29th) and Thorney again on the 30th, while Marsh Harriers frequented Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 2nd, Pulborough Brooks on the 8th and Thorney on 30th. Most of the Marsh Harrier sightings related to dispersing juveniles.

On the 2nd, one birder had an encounter with His Grace the Duke of Norfolk and the head of DEFRA at The Burgh, and became involved in a discussion regarding conservation priorities after Brexit!

Juvenile and female **Goshawks** were seen in the far north west of the county on several occasions in August and September. Early in the month, counts

of migrating passerines started to build, with 45 Willow Warblers and 50 Whitethroats at Sheepcote (Brighton) on the 4th, and on the following day, heavy migration was reported from Hope Gap. The 4th also saw a good count of 13 Grey Partridges on the downs between Lancing Ring and Steep Down.

On 5th, a **Hooded Crow** appeared at Medmerry, remaining until at least the 13th, although there were occasional sightings of it in the Pagham/Medmerry area through the following two months. The 8th saw another **Wood Warbler** trapped for ringing and well photographed at Ladywell (Shoreham) – see the last issue. A male Crossbill, accompanied by 9 juveniles, graced a garden in Dallington on the 11th, and a quiet period then followed until the 19th when a Spoonbill was seen at Rye Harbour and two Curlew Sandpiper were reported by the River Adur at Upper Beeding old cement works, a regular site for Common Sandpiper.

Migration slowed during this period and several observers reported only light passage of passerines. On the 21st an **Ortolan Bunting** showed up at Goring Gap, and a high count of 76 Curlew came from the Lower Cuckmere. There was an unusual sighting of two Whimbrel flying south over Blackdown on the 22nd.

Over the remainder of the month, things picked up and heavy migration was reported from both Pulborough Brooks and Seaford Head on the 24th and from Sheepcote on the 25th. Also on the 24th the first of a number of **Cattle Egrets** to appear in the county arrived at Pagham Harbour, followed next day (25th) by a Spoonbill. On the wader front, Wood Sandpipers were seen at Rye Harbour on 25th, in the Cuckmere on the 29th (where there was also a Little Stint) and heard over a West Worthing garden just after midnight on the 30th.

The 25th and 26th were also notable for the arrival of a number of Black Terns, with birds being seen at Pagham Harbour, Ivy Lake (Chichester), Weir Wood, Arlington and Shoreham Harbour. On the 27th a possible Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen at Bedelands (Burgess Hill).

To end a generally quiet month, Wrynecks began to move through, with birds seen at Singleton (29th) and Newhaven Tide Mills on the 31st.

September

This was an almost totally dry month, with a return of the anti-cyclonic drought conditions. Apart from light rain on the 12th, it was not until the 22nd and 23rd that there was heavy rainfall, associated with the tail end of hurricane Florence. During the previous week, tropical storm Helene and storms Ali and Bronagh passed Sussex by.

Bird-wise September began as August had ended, with sightings of Wrynecks – there were reports from Normans Bay and Newhaven Tide Mills (1st), Church Norton (3rd), Chantry Hill (8th) and Nutbourne (11th) after which they tailed off. The first of the month also saw an exceptional number of 23 Common Buzzards soaring at Seaford Head.

Staying with raptors, September continued the Marsh Harrier theme, with birds, including many juveniles, appearing across the county at sites such as Pagham Harbour, Chantry Hill (Storrington), The Burgh, and Beachy Head. Merlins also were seen dashing through with examples at Beachy Head (2nd), Chantry Hill and Nutbourne (11th), Pagham Harbour (20th and 26th) and Pevensey Levels (29th). Ospreys continued to be reported from coastal and some inland sites and dispersing Hobbies were reported in the county on most days.

September 2nd saw another high count of Curlew with 57 past Tidemills; on the following day there was another encouragingly good count, this time of Corn Bunting with 50 at Chantry Hill. The 4th saw the arrival of a real rarity with a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** in the Lower Cuckmere – see the report by Matt Eade elsewhere in this newsletter. The number of **Cattle Egrets** in Pagham Harbour had risen to five on the 5th, and rose further to 12 on the 8th and 20th. Meanwhile, in the east of the county, Combe Haven had 19 on the 4th, decreasing to 11 on the 8th.

Turning to waders, there was a Curlew Sandpiper in Pagham Harbour on the 4th, and on the 8th a juvenile Little Stint was on Sidlesham Ferry Pool. Also on the 8th there was another high count of Curlew – 450 in the Nutbourne/Cobnor area. Another Curlew Sandpiper was seen by Exceat Bridge on the 13th, on which day Seaford Head birders reported the first returning Ring Ouzel, 22 Pied Flycatchers and a flyover **Ortolan Bunting**. This was a busy

day for Sussex observers, as late examples of Turtle Dove and Swift were seen at Goring Gap. Further Ring Ouzel sightings came from Blackdown (one on 22nd and two on 26th) and Old Lodge (three on 26th).

Short-eared Owls began to arrive mid-month with one at Medmerry on the 14th; two were seen there on the 26th, and one was at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) on the 27th. The only **Honey-buzzard** report in this period shared on the SOS website was one at Beachy Head on the 17th, where a **Tawny Pipit** was also seen. The 18th saw another Curlew Sandpiper on the Adur by Shoreham Airport, and there was a juvenile **Caspian Gull** at Newhaven West Beach. A **Grey Phalarope** was at Normans Bay on the 22nd, and yet another Curlew Sandpiper at Widewater (Lancing) on the 24th, when 19 Spoonbills were seen to fly over Church Norton.

The 23rd was a rare wet day, with very intense migration; 500 Chiffchaffs and 400 Blackcaps were counted at Beachy Head, and 780 Meadow Pipits were seen to fly west at Goring Gap. There were several reports of big numbers of hirundines moving through, and at dusk, several hundred House Martins were concentrated in one street in Steyning in heavy drizzle, roosting under eaves and on wires before departing as darkness fell. Three days later 4,000 Swallows and huge numbers of House Martins were seen on passage at Medmerry. Where have these birds **been**? Why so many now when they were so few in spring?

The 23rd also featured a Great Skua seen flying inland at Lidsey (Bognor). A **Rose-coloured Starling** turned up in a Patcham garden on the 24th, and a **Richard's Pipit** was seen at Beachy Head on the 25th. The following day, a **Stone-curlew** was at Heathy Brow (north of Brighton). The 28th saw 66 Sandwich Terns counted at Medmerry, while on the following day a juvenile Cuckoo lingered at Old Lodge and the first Redwing of the winter arrived at Church Norton. The month ended with a Red-backed Shrike first seen at Thorney Deeps on the 30th, which stayed until 3rd October.

October

For how long can summer last? On average the wettest month in Sussex, this year October continued the incredible run of dry and very settled conditions, with warmth persisting late into the month, although the temperatures did drop from the 27th onwards. There was heavy rain on the afternoon of the 6th,

but mid-month storm Callum and some very unsettled weather further north gave Sussex a miss, with only a showery interlude between the 10th and the 14th. Again, this very static weather pattern meant that very little in the way of unusual migrants showed up, a fact bemoaned by many observers.

The month began with further sightings of Marsh Harriers, and, as in September, there were almost daily records of this species. Short-eared Owls too were seen through the month, with one or more birds being present in Pagham and Chichester Harbours. Another was seen at Goring Gap on the 20th and late in the month there were also sightings from Ferring Beach and Pulborough Brooks. Ospreys continued to go through during the first few days, with most reports being from the western harbours; the last sighting was on the 7th at Thorney Island. The Pagham **Cattle Egrets** remained at the start of the month – there were four present on the 7th, and seven on the 10th, but they seem to have departed thereafter.

The first returning Brent Geese were in Pagham Harbour on the 1st, and by the 3rd, 200 were at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Harbour). The 3rd brought a “raptor fest” for one observer on the downs above Storrington, with 50 plus Common Buzzards, 15 Red Kites, 19 Ravens, four Marsh Harriers, a Peregrine, two or three Kestrels and a Hobby all seen within a single 1 km square. Merlins and Hobbies were seen with some frequency through October, mostly in the heavily-watched Pagham/Medmerry area, although there were also reports of Merlins at Cadborough Cliff (Winchelsea) on the 13th, the lower Arun Valley and Seaford Head (19th), The Burgh (21st) and at Rodmell and Climping Gap (27th).

Winter thrushes were trickling into the county, with Redwings being heard over Seaford on the 4th, and on the 8th, 470 were counted flying west over Weir Wood Reservoir, together with 50 Fieldfares and other species including Siskins, Chaffinches, Stock Doves, Song Thrushes and Meadow Pipits. On the 21st, large numbers of Redwings and Fieldfares were seen over Blackdown, and on the 24th, 100 Fieldfares were at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest). The 28th again saw high numbers (226 Fieldfares and 310 Redwings) flying west over Weir Wood.

On the 5th, a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were seen at Chantry Hill (Storrington), and nine Cetti’s Warblers were in full song at Coombe Valley (Bexhill). On the 6th 185 Lapwing were counted at Pulborough Brooks, and

the following day duck numbers were reported to be “creeping up” at Rye Harbour, with 150 Wigeon, 50 Teal and 30 Shoveler being present. A Red-throated Diver was also seen.

The 7th also saw another female **Goshawk** reported, once again from the north-west of the county; another **Goshawk**, this time a first winter male, was seen at the same location on the 29th and again two days later. Also on the 7th, there was an interesting capture of a Tree Sparrow in a ringing net at Hardham, well away from known breeding areas for this species. Southbound Swallows and House Martins were still being seen, and there were 40-50 Swallows at Steyning on the 8th.

Crossbills were a feature of the middle and end of October, with birds being seen on Ashdown Forest and elsewhere. Five were at Old Lodge (Ashdown) on the 8th, and there were further sightings from Ambersham Common (15th), Gills Lap (Ashdown, 22nd and 24th), Buchan Country Park (25th) and Widewater (Lancing, 29th). One was seen feeding two recently fledged young in Worthlodge Forest on the 24th. Another species arriving in the county was Brambling, with five seen at Blackdown on the 8th, three at Mt. Harry (Lewes) on the same day, 10 again at Blackdown on the 21st and three on Ashdown Forest on the 24th. Ring Ouzels continued to pass through, with a bird at Mt. Harry on the 8th, and ones or twos thereafter through the month from sites such as Blackdown, Truleigh Hill, The Burgh/Chantry Hill/Kithurst Hill, Ashdown Forest and Beachy Head.

Sea watching at Selsey came up with some good sightings mid month, with three Arctic Skuas and one Great Skua on the 9th; a **Red-necked Grebe** on the 11th, then a Great Northern Diver and another Arctic Skua on the 13th. In the same area, Paghham Harbour hosted a possible **Pallid Swift** on 13th, which was photographed, but not conclusively identified. Also on the 13th, a Black-throated Diver was at Rye Harbour, and another diver was seen off Birling Gap by an SOS Field Outing group on the 20th. Discussion over whether this was a Black or Red-throated Diver finally settled on the latter.

The 14th saw a flyover **Richard’s Pipit** at Birling Gap, and another flyover bird of this species was seen and photographed at Thorney Island on the 21st. There was a flurry of sightings of **Yellow-browed Warblers** on the 15th and 16th, with birds seen at Selsey Bill, Climping Gap, Charleston Reedbed and Beachy Head. Another Tree Sparrow was in a garden at Salehurst on the

16th. There were over 200 Gannets off Goring Gap on the 18th, and on the 22nd, 100 Gannets were fishing off Worthing. There was heavy eastbound migration past Church Norton on the 18th, involving 1,000 Meadow Pipits, 500 Goldfinches and a similar number of Linnets.

A Black Redstart was freed unharmed after being trapped in a building in Petworth on the 20th, the only sighting of this species shared during this period. The first Great Grey Shrike of the winter was back on Ashdown Forest on the 22nd, when it was seen at Gills Lap, together with an impressive 300 Lesser Redpolls. Another Great Grey Shrike was seen in the Isfield/Spithurst area on the 28th.

A couple of Hawfinches were seen at Madehurst on the 23rd, and eight were at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 29th, but there was no sign of another influx of this species on the scale of that seen last winter. The 24th saw a (presumably escaped) Harris Hawk at Hartfield, and the end of the month was notable for a number of Hen Harrier sightings – on the 26th at Horse Eye Level, and on the 28th ringtails on Ashdown Forest, at Goring Gap and at Widewater. Interestingly, the latter two appeared to come in off the sea. On the same date, another Hen Harrier was seen at Wick Bottom (Ovingdean), and on the following two days yet another was seen in the area of The Burgh and Pulborough Brooks.

Four Spoonbills were at Sidlesham Ferry on the 27th, and the following day again saw heavy migration past Selsey Bill, with 510 Brent Geese counted flying west, as well as sizeable numbers of Wigeon up and down the channel. Flocks of Crossbills, Woodlarks, Lesser Redpolls, Siskins and Bramblings were also seen, as was a single Swallow. It was a similar picture on the last day of the month when the birds included a couple of Manx Shearwaters and singles of Great Skua, Red-throated Diver, and Great Northern Diver; also some “auk species”, principally Razorbills.

The 29th saw an interesting sighting of a Black-headed Gull at Arundel WWT which had been ringed at a site just north of Copenhagen (Denmark) in March. The month closed on the 31st with a **Yellow-browed Warbler** in a Seaford garden, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Arundel Park, and as if to emphasise the crazy weather, a swift, believed by the experienced observer to be a Common Swift, at Blackdown.

Recorder's Reflections

By Mark Mallalieu

I've just been writing the Birds section of the next Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre annual review of the county's flora and fauna. It draws on the Review of the Year in the 2017 Sussex Bird Report, though I wanted to give emphasis to records of conservation interest rather than rarities. I noted the flock of 700 Linnets (a Red-listed species) at Medmerry in December 2017 and was prompted to look in the SOS database for other large flocks of ground-feeding finches found in recent years. I was struck by how few there have been this century, with only four flocks of more than 500 Chaffinches, about seven of Linnets and none of any other species.

So there is a challenge for this winter: locate a previously undetected big gathering of winter finches. If you are successful, you may find other species in good numbers, such as Skylarks and Yellowhammers, both also Red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern. Fields that hold flocks of finches and other small birds may attract birds of prey such as Merlins, even away from well-known sites like The Burgh, so you may enjoy an unexpected bonus. Look for Bramblings too, though they may be in woodland or woodland edge – there is plenty of beech mast this winter.

Do enter your sightings on BirdTrack etc and my thanks to everyone who has done so for all their records so far in 2018 – do please remember to include breeding evidence next year where you find it. I would also like to thank everyone who submitted descriptions and photos of rare and scarce birds in 2018 and please send in any that are still outstanding – even for Cattle Egrets!

Finally, I would like to give a special mention to Bob Self, Bill Harvey and Matt Eade who have given sterling service to the SOS Records Committee for a number of years. Bob stood down in the summer and Bill and Matt will do so at the end of the year. We were pleased to welcome David Campbell onto the Committee to replace Bob. I am also delighted to say that Chris Ball and Derek Barber, both highly experienced birdwatchers, will join the Committee from 2019, replacing Bill and Matt.

Mid-week walks December to March

Thursday 13th December – Farlington Marsh

196/SU679044. Meet at 10:00am at the gate entrance to the marsh adjacent to the parking area at the eastern end of the unmade lane. Take the A27 west and take the exit for A2030. At the end of the slip road at the roundabout junction turn sharp left onto the unclassified road that runs parallel to the slip road - note there is only a limited number of car parking spaces in this location but there is ample other off road parking along the lane. There are no toilet facilities on the Marsh.

Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear as the area can be cold and muddy. Return to the parking area circa 2:00pm. Please monitor the SOS website in the event that very adverse weather forces the cancellation of the walk. Leader Kerry Jackson (kerryjackson21@aol.com or 0797 790 7279).

Tuesday 15th January - Horse Eye Level, Pevensey

Meet at 9:30am at the Pevensey Castle Car Park on Church Lane, Pevensey (199/TQ645047). There are toilet facilities adjacent to the pay and display car park. Re-locate to a suitable location on the Level by car pooling to reduce the number of vehicles. Wellingtons / waders are essential as this area will be wet. The walk will be longer than just half a day so please make provision to self refresh. Please monitor the events page on SOS website in event that very adverse weather forces the cancellation of the walk. Leader Chris Barfield (07508 633909).

Thursday 21st February - West Dean Woods

Meet at 10:00am at the Sussex Wildlife Trust car park (197/SU845152). Take the minor road north opposite the 'The Dean Ale and Cider House' (formerly the Selsey Arms), The car park is on the right after the road follows up an incline approx 3 km from the Ale House junction. All day so please make provision to self refresh. Morning - walking the surrounding lanes and by ways. Afternoon - re locate to area north of Staple Ash Farm and walk Monkton footpath. Total walking distance approx. 7 km. Leader Bernie Forbes.

The March walk has been moved to the start of April endeavouring to pick up Spring migrants as they return to the UK. There will be another April walk during the month, which will be published in the Spring Newsletter.

Wednesday 3rd April - Seaford Head/Cuckmere Valley:

Meet at South Hill Barn car park at 9:00am. 199/TV504980. Looking for incoming migrants. Access from the end of Chyngton Road, up a single width track. (nearest toilets along sea-front next to Martello Tower) Half day. Leader Phil Luffingham.

Update from Sussex Wildlife Trust

An update has been received from Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) regarding the progress of work on their reserves which is being funded by SOS -

Waltham Brooks

At Waltham Brooks, the second instalment of scrub removal will be carried out in November, and ditch and culvert works should be also be complete by the end of November.

Graffham Common

Rhododendron spraying and bracken spraying have been successfully completed and volunteers have been out on site using tree poppers to clear invasive scrub. However, further scrub removal and other work is on-going.

Burton & Chingford Ponds

Bracken spraying has been carried out and SWT are in the process of assigning a contractor for dry scrapes on Welch's Common and the Black Hole Bog work, which is phase two of a project to remove dense vegetation. Rhododendron removal is likely to take place next year.

Volunteers have been busy on site clearing overgrown vegetation around the board walk crossing Black Hole Bog, and using the tree poppers to remove birch, although some work on this area has had to be deferred until next autumn.

Field outings reports - August to October

By Mark Wright

15th August - Burton Mill Pond

Michael Blencowe was amazed that eight SOS members (who surely couldn't have seen the forecast) joined him for this walk around the Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve at Burton Mill Pond and declared that "we probably wouldn't have got any wetter if we just leapt into the pond from the outset"! The downpour lasted the entire walk and it seems washed the birds away, leaving a Gadwall as the reported "highlight". Good news: "at least I got to put my Paramo poncho (first prize in this year's SOS conference raffle) to good use". Michael reported some impressive fungi (especially a big Dyer's Mazegill) and that the huge webs of Bridge Spiders *Larinioides sclopetarius* on the dam were suitably terrifying and thanked those brave/foolish souls who joined him for the walk; also to the SOS for their donations to assist the conservation work which has been undertaken on this reserve.

18th August - Pagham Harbour

Twelve members joined Jim Weston on a walk along the east side of Pagham Harbour and round to the Harbour entrance. It was a generally quiet morning and other than Swallows, Sand Martins and Swifts no migrants were seen. A total of 13 wader species were recorded including two Greenshanks, two Spotted Redshanks, two Grey Plovers in breeding plumage and a Bar-tailed Godwit. Close to the Harbour entrance was a group of 15 Great Crested Grebes. A total of 41 species was recorded.

1st September - Whitbread Hollow

Twenty nine members joined David Jode for the walk around Whitbread Hollow and possibly the attendees outnumbered the birds seen. Bob Edgar had pre-warned that the forecast SE wind would keep sightings down and so it proved. At the ringing station Bob showed Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Reed Warbler and Blackcap, and gave details of each species pre-migration feeding habits, migration routes taken and also of the ringing process. On the walk, species seen included Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Woodpigeon, Magpie, Jackdaw, Buzzard,

Stonechat, and Swallow. Along the shore were Herring Gulls, Little Egrets, and rather surprisingly a trio of Common Sandpipers. Butterflies were noted in good numbers and species seen included Common Blue, Small Heath, Small White, Large White, and Gatekeeper. Also, a single Clouded Yellow was noted. Nearing the end of the walk a handful of people saw a Weasel!

9th September - Arlington Reservoir

Although a certain fish-hunting migrating raptor didn't show there were birds aplenty, increasing warmth and sunshine, and pleasant company for the twelve members who joined me for this walk. The list was started with Coal Tit, a fleeting glimpse of Blackcap and, overhead, a Jackdaw. The shoreline was crowded with several hundred geese - predominantly Canada with interloping Greylag, and, towards the end of the walk at the dam end, a Barnacle. Black-headed Gull, Coot, Chiffchaff, two Common Sandpipers and two Cormorants were seen, the latter keeping a Grey Heron company. Great Crested Grebes were out on the water, and there were swirling swarms of hirundines, mainly House Martin and Swallow, but including an occasional Sand Martin.

A distant herd of cattle with corvids kept everyone occupied for a while - there must be Rook not just Jackdaw and Carrion Crow? Eventually there were. At far distance the first raptor, showed up - a Common Buzzard. At the dam end a Pied Wagtail was seen, and then the group spent ages trying to determine whether a distant Sandpiper was Common or Green (the majority view was Common). Leaving the reservoir, a female Redstart, was found, and Kestrel, Robin and Starling added to the list before the excitement of a Sparrowhawk making an ambitious pass at a hirundine. In the end, the species count reached a respectable 35.

15th September - Thorney Island

In glorious sunny weather, Dick Senior led a party of eleven on a circumperambulation of Thorney Island. An Osprey had been seen earlier by those members who had been first to arrive, so there was a focus for much of the morning on finding another! On the extensive mud flats exposed by the low tide, waders were busy feeding: Curlews, Black-tailed Godwits, Oystercatchers, Redshanks and a single Greenshank with coloured leg rings (later reported to BTO).

At least seven Ravens were spotted as they 'cronked' overhead. Two smart Whinchats were busy hopping around a wire fence and two Wheatears flew along the rocky embankment. An Osprey was soon located atop a distant marker post, but was outdone by a second Osprey which gave an unforgettable display overhead. As the tide flowed in, Grey Plovers, Ringed Plovers, Dunlins and a single Bar-tailed Godwit came closer on the mud. Twenty-five Common Seals lounged on a mud bank before the bank was overwhelmed by water, and a distant circling group of Buzzards gave a total of about eight for the day.

There was a splendid display of colourful autumn berries along much of our route but only a few small birds were obvious in the bushes – just a Blackcap, a Chiffchaff and a few Linnets were identified. Amongst the birds in Thorney Channel, on the top of the tide, were a flotilla of Brent Geese and several diving Sandwich Terns. Two or three Whimbrel and a couple of Lapwings were by the shore. The final stop was by the Great Deep where a cream capped Marsh Harrier held attention as it flew low over a wide area and counts of Kestrels in-view reached seven individuals. A group total of 57 species of birds for the day!

18th September - Chantry Hill

Simon Lington led a circular walk from Chantry Hill to Lee Farm and return for five on this mid-week walk that started without a great deal of promise, given the light rain, dark cloud and breezy conditions. A large shooting party assembling in the distance along part of the intended route was also not encouraging.

However, conditions soon brightened and the shooting party moved on long before the SOS group arrived. Above all, this was a walk for game-bird enthusiasts with bumper numbers of released Red-legged Partridges and Pheasants everywhere. To be honest, the enthusiasm for them was limited so eyes were turned skyward for at least four each of Buzzard, Red Kite and Kestrel, two Ravens plus a single Sparrowhawk briefly sparring with one of the Buzzards. Walking down the hill, two Wheatears gave nice views; a further one was well out into the same field. Meanwhile, small parties of Swallows and House Martins whizzed past headed for the coast. Out over

the maize fields, a dark 'cream-cap' Marsh Harrier put on a good show with another (probably an immature male) seen later on. The grand finale was also in the form of a raptor when, as the party made its way back towards the car park, a smart adult Hobby flew past quite close providing nice views for all. In total 30 species were seen.

7th October - Blackdown

Six hardy members joined Dave Burges on the second highest point in South East England on the coldest morning since... probably April! There was a cold northerly wind but a clear blue sky - a complete contrast to the fog and rain of the day before.

The party headed out of the woods onto the heath, but not before picking up some noisy Nuthatches and Marsh Tits. Sightings started slowly with a few Stonechats, an elusive Dartford Warbler and a sprinkling of Meadow Pipits and Siskins. Redwings and Song Thrushes were spotted whilst a party of nine large thrushes triggered hopes of Ring Ouzel but were in fact Fieldfares - the first of the autumn there. Several messages were received about up to four ouzels to the south so the group headed briskly in that direction initially drawing a complete blank but then two and another Ring Ouzel in flight were glimpsed. Cutting back to the main path and stopping to listen for a few minutes, another ouzel flew high overhead and away to the south west, and was joined by yet another.

A walk through to the east side above the Temple of the Winds produced, within minutes, a first winter female Goshawk providing excellent views and very helpfully showing all the key identification features. The Buzzards were finally up and about and some 12 or so birds were seen. Five Crossbills flew from the north. Nice views of the resident male Kestrel were had and a superb female Peregrine flew high towards the south west. Just before the car park the Marsh Tits were relocated, and great views were had of at least a pair of birds stripping mosses and lichens to feed (and chasing off a Coal Tit!).

17th October - Pett Level

Fourteen members basked in the St Martin's summer on Pett Level led by Chris Barfield and were immediately rewarded with splendid views of as

many as eight Bearded Tits busy in and over the roadside reed beds. A Great White Egret was seen, and at least 40 Little Grebe were on the pools and Cetti's Warblers and a Water Rail were calling. From the sea wall five species of gull were on view including two Mediterranean Gulls on the beach. Oystercatchers, Curlew and Redshank were plentiful on the exposed rocks as the tide ebbed. Out on the sea were a tight group of five Common Scoter and a broad scattering of Great Crested Grebes. The party walked a big circle around the Levels watching small birds: Goldfinch, Linnets, Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and one late Swallow; four species of raptor: Marsh Harrier, Buzzards, Kestrel and at least two Hobbies chasing dragonflies and giving an enjoyable display. A substantial flock of Lapwing was sighted, together with a single, very vocal, Golden Plover and three well camouflaged Snipe. The scrapes in the Pannel Valley Reserve were dry and birdless, just a few distant Woodpigeons and a Green Woodpecker. At least 57 species of birds were recorded.

20th October - Birling Gap to Shooters' Bottom

Seventeen joined me at Birling Gap on a beautiful autumnal morning. As we started we had already seen Rock Pipit, Stonechat (two males), Pied Wagtail, House Sparrow and Jackdaw when a call of "diver" had us rush to peer out to sea and debate: juvenile Great Northern? Black-throated? I would probably settle for Black-throated Diver on the basis of size and shape and the "a crispy clean, almost auk-like black-and-white diver" described by Harris, Tucker and Vinicombe. Eventually disturbed by somebody entering the water it flew east and the group also headed pathwise east toward the Plantation, adding Corn Bunting, Kestrel, Magpie and for some a distant Sparrowhawk, plus Skylark and a sprinkling of distant hirundines (probably juvenile Swallow).

Near the Plantation there was a male Blackcap, together with a Willow Warbler, Robin, and Dunnock. Perhaps the most excitement was trying to spot the actors in the red sports car and trying to get the SOS into the filming. I am not sure this made up for the, dare I say it, absence of *Turdus torquatus* at Shooters' Bottom, where a charm of Goldfinch, Chaffinch, bright Willow Warbler and a lowland Blackbird put in an appearance. Walking back past Hodcombe Farm the group challenged some individuals who claimed to have seen two Golden Plovers; "where are they then?" and so we all added

Golden Plover to our list!

Back in the Plantation things were better than on the outbound walk and Goldcrest, Chiffchaff, and Blue Tit, were seen and heard, despite the noise of overflying Jackdaw. Two Buzzards appeared, so most would have seen 30 species, not all expected, missed a certain migrant, but may have spoken to somebody who had seen one earlier, plus one Clouded Yellow.

And the final verdict on the diver after the study of photographs - Red-throated!

Weekend high tide times

December					
15	04.01	16.25	16	05.02	17.29
22	10.33	22.58	23	11.18	23.45
29	04.12	17.07	30	05.06	17.37
January					
5	10.48	23.14	6	11.27	23.52
12	02.31	14.39	13	03.08	15.21
19	09.17	21.48	20	10.09	22.40
26	02.36	14.52	27	03.24	15.43
February					
2	09.50	22.19	3	10.34	23.00
9	01.29	13.36	10	01.56	14.06
16	07.58	20.35	17	09.00	21.34
23	01.32	13.48	24	02.14	14.31
March					
2	08.38	21.15	3	09.33	22.02
9	00.34	12.43	10	00.59	13.09

Times are for Shoreham Harbour, but are only a few minutes different across the whole county. Copyright and/or database rights apply; reproduced by permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the UK Hydrographic Office (www.ukho.gov.uk).

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