

SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn/Winter 1995

From the editor

Hopefully you should by now have received your copy of the Shoreham Bird Report and I would like to repeat my thanks to Brian Clay for his many hours of help and computer assistance. From the appeal in the summer newsletter, offers of help have been received, this newsletter being the first thus produced. Thanks to Pat Mulcock for her services.

During the summer I was fortunate to be able to read a copy of the Dorset Bird Club's newsletter which runs to sixteen pages full of newsy items, topical birding articles and numerous illustrations. I do not envisage expanding our own newsletter, but the thought occurred to me that it is the contributions and content that make a successful publication - so please keep them coming!

Peter Whitcomb

Wintering Birds

Wintering birds like Purple Sandpiper and Black Redstart have been well documented over the years, with favoured sites scattered along the coast from Brighton Marina to Goring being well known. Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs turn up regularly in gardens, churchyards and woodland. A brief survey of Shoreham Bird Reports over the last five years has resulted in three 'target' species to look for during the oncoming winter period.

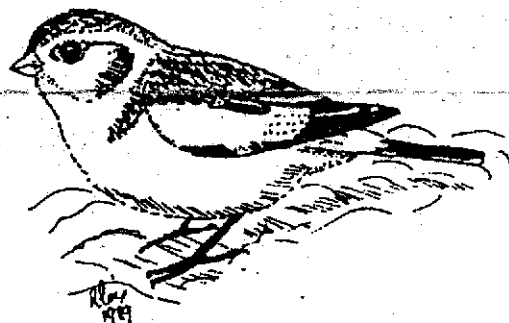
Firstly, a bird now becoming quite rare in Sussex generally, the Twite. They feed on shore tideline, saltmarshes, and typically, small flocks have been reported in Lower Adur and Widewater in recent years, though none were found in 1994. Darker above, with other minor differences to its cousin the Linnets, at close quarters the yellow bill of a Twite is distinctive.

The Snow Bunting is more easily recognised than the previous species, and tends to stay for longer periods. The beach/tideline areas west of Shoreham Fort to Goring are favoured, with 8 at Sompting in 1991 being the largest flock in recent years. Flocks of 2-3 are more usual, with October birds generally moving on, but December birds often staying until February. Again none were found in 1994.

Lastly, the Dartford Warbler is becoming a more regular wintering bird, helped by the dispersal of the steadily increasing Sussex breeding population during the last five years. Records in our area come from gorse patches in the main, though not exclusively. At Hollingbury Camp there have been 4 records in the last 6 years in Oct/Nov with one bird staying 3 months in winter 94/5. Best months are often Oct/Nov with other sightings from Brooklands (1992), Goring Gap (1993) and Sheepcote Valley (1992/3/4). In December 1994, 2-3 birds were in the Sheepcote/Brighton Racehill area. The alarm call is a give-away if the bird cannot be seen, though birds tend to be fairly mobile within a restricted area and are often heard singing.

And what of other wintering birds? Both Willow Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat have stayed over elsewhere in England, on one occasion a Wheatear wintered at Shoreham Harbour from Nov 1982 through to February 1983! In Dec 1990, a Turtle Dove survived at Rye Harbour until March 1991, and last year a Whinchat stayed well into November at Sheepcote. Watch this space!

Peter Whitcomb



Snow Bunting

Subscriptions

Council have agreed that subscriptions will remain at last year's level - individual members £7, juniors £2.50, and family membership £10. Subscriptions are due on January 1st and can be paid at indoor meetings or by cheque to the Hon. Treasurer: Mr A. D. Bullock, 65 Roman Road, Steyning, BN44 3FN.

Garden Bird Feeding Survey

Members wishing to participate in this annual Survey are asked to contact Clive Hope, Hillcrest, Byre Close, Storrington, RH20 4BS or phone 01903 244849. Clive will be happy to supply details and survey form to fill out over the winter period.

Forthcoming Attractions

Field Outings

The next few field trips are detailed below. Full details can be obtained from your programme card.

November 25th - a visit to Thorney Island, perhaps one of the best winter birding areas of Sussex. Meet at the junction of Thornham Lane/Thorney Road at 09.00. Leader Clive Hope.

December 27th - Stanley Allen's annual morning walk along the Adur, canal and Shoreham Fort. Species should include: Med. Gull, Black Redstart and Purple Sandpiper. Meet south of footbridge near Waterside Inn at 09.00.

January 13th - a repeat of the successful outing last year to Dell Quay and Fishbourne Creek. Morning only. Meet at Apuldram Church at 09.00. Leader: Tony Fenton.

Indoor Meetings

November 6th - a talk on Barn Owls by Mike Read, a wildlife photographer and author.

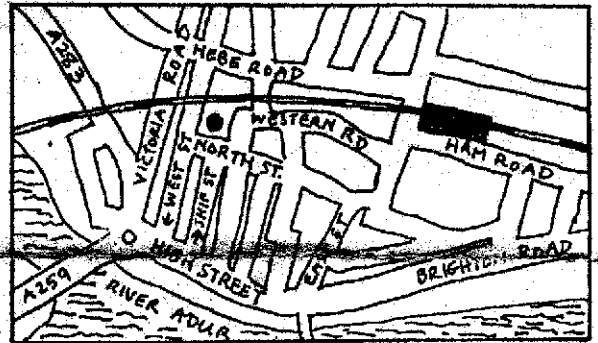
December 4th - our annual social Christmas evening with quiz, filmshow and raffle with suitable refreshments

The above two meetings are at the old venue, St Giles' Church Hall, Upper Shoreham Road at 7.30 pm as usual.

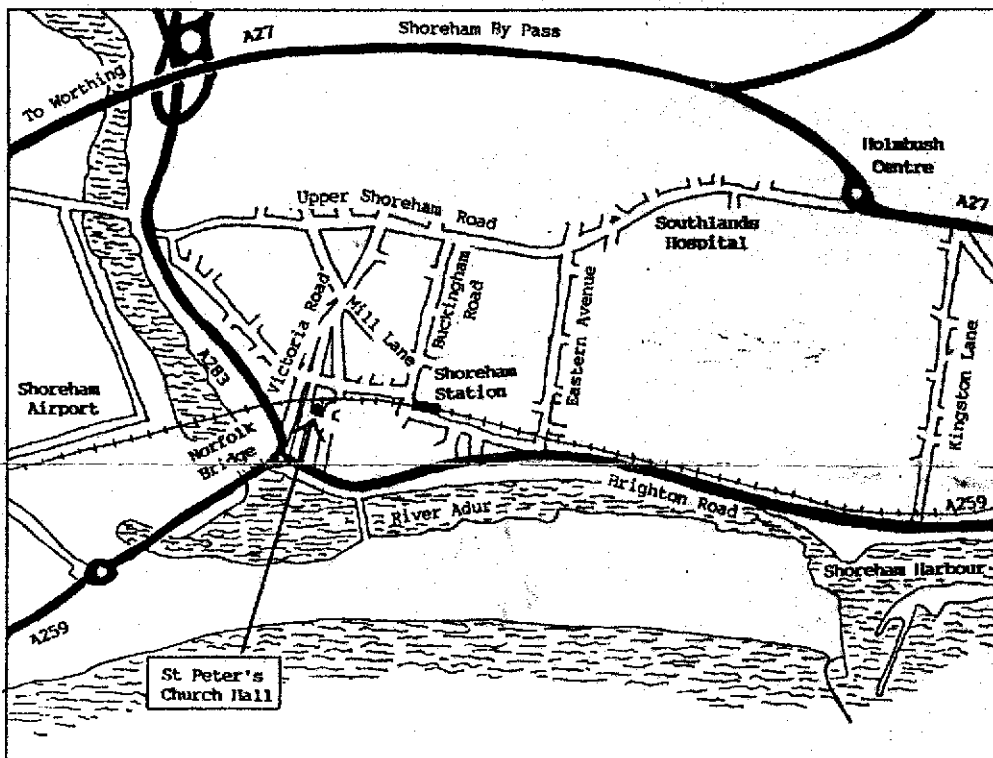
CHANGE OF VENUE *Important!*
Owing to the popularity of the Society's Indoor Meetings, a larger venue has been found with greater seating capacity and an ample car park. All meetings from January will be held at St. Peter's Church Hall, West Street, Shoreham.

January 8th - Popular Bird Photographer, David Cotteridge, makes a welcome return with slides 'Autumn in the Forest'

February 12th - 'Bird Song', an interesting evening with Richard Ranft, the curator of the British Library of Wildlife Sounds.



St Peter's Church Hall



St Peter's Church Hall is situated immediately south of railway, in West Street, which is one way southwards from the junction with North Street. Ship Street is one-way northwards

Birds on our Patch - spring/summer 1995

A pretty uninspiring spring with few reports during May, although a good local find was a Hawfinch at Woodvale Cemetery (29th). The occasional rarity did turn up with a Rose-coloured Starling that proved rather elusive at Coldean Estate, Brighton (11th-14th June) and a singing Golden Oriole was at Withdean park early on 2nd July, but quickly moved on. A few summering Med Gulls were reported, mainly from the Shoreham area, and Quails were also heard but no details received.

August started with a Nightingale at Lancing Ring (2nd) and an Osprey over Sompting Brooks (11th). Two Wood Warblers were in Woodvale Cemetery (14th) and another Nightingale was at Sheepcote (17th). Buzzards were noted from the west of the area and a female Marsh Harrier frequented the Lancing area (21st). The only Little Egrets reported were 2 near Shoreham Airport (21st). From Sheepcote, a Grasshopper Warbler was seen well (22nd) and a Yellow-legged Gull (14th - 17th), whilst peak counts included 50 Whitethroats (23rd) and 36 Yellow Wagtails (24th). Other high counts included 22 Tree Pipits and 66 Willow Warblers at Lancing Ring (22nd) and 30 Wheatears at Sompting Brooks (24th).

In September, Little Stints and a Curlew Sandpiper were noted from the River Adur, whilst seawatching included a number of Black Terns and the occasional Arctic Skua. Interesting counts were 55 Sandwich Terns at roost near the Power Station (1st) and 9 Turtle Doves from Lancing Ring (9th). A huge Yellow Wagtail count of 79 from Sompting Brooks (10th). Sheepcote produced Peregrine (17th), Short-eared Owl (18th) and Hobby (19th). Lancing Ring had a good fall on 13th, with 14 Redstarts, 22 Tree Pipits, 91 Whitethroats, 96 Chiffchaffs and 46 Blackcaps. Best bird of the period was a Red-backed Shrike at Sompting (3rd). A large hirundine movement occurred over Brighton on 23rd, with approx. 12,000 House Martins in 4 hours. The only Ring Ousel so far of the autumn was at Goring early in October and a Firecrest was also reported there.

Thanks to Paul Brayshaw and Andrew Whitcomb

Sussex Highlights

In early May, there was a Serin at Beachy Head and a Black Kite over East Dean. A Red-rumped Swallow was briefly at Beachy Head (9th) and a long-stayer, but disappearing for long periods, was at Arlington Reservoir (12-15th) Also well watched, were 3 Dotterel at Denton, Newhaven from 12th, increasing to 5 on 19th and 6 on 21st. One of our members was lucky enough to spot an arriving Honey Buzzard on the last day. The month ended with a Kentish Plover at Newhaven and two Gull-billed Terns roosted at Rye on 28th.

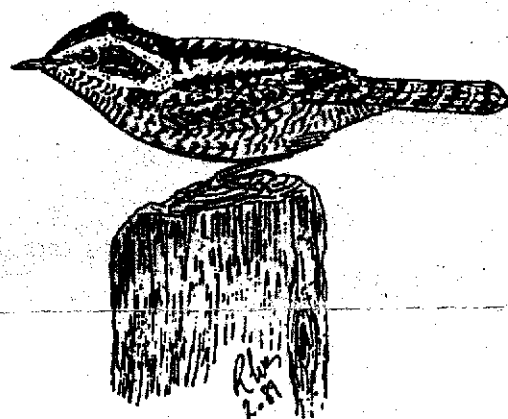
In June, a Red-footed Falcon was seen at Beachy Head (3rd), then a young male Rosefinch sang at Litlington (4th) and nearby in the Cuckmere a Great Spotted Cuckoo was seen only briefly (6th). A good period continued with a Lesser Crested Tern at the Rye roost (7th), a Long-tailed Skua passed Bexhill and a Citrine Wagtail was at Sidlesham Ferry (8th). A Grey-headed Wagtail was at Chat Vale, Beachy (10th); then a flight only view of a Squacco Heron at Sidlesham (19th). At Thorney Island, there was an unconfirmed report of a Kentish Plover, whilst later in the summer the roost of Little Egrets smashed the 100 barrier for the first time!

Sussex continued its long purple patch into July with perhaps the best bird being a Least Sandpiper which stayed at Sidlesham Ferry (19-25th). A Honey Buzzard was semi-resident at Weir Wood, whilst to the east a Pectoral Sandpiper was at Rye for a week and a Marsh Sandpiper briefly at Pett Pool (31st).

August started with a Stone Curlew at Pett Level, a Rosefinch at Sidlesham, then an adult White-winged Black Tern was at Chichester G.P. (3-6th) A White-rumped Sandpiper stayed at Sidlesham Ferry (5-8th) and another long stayer was a Spotted Crake which showed well at Weir Wood Reservoir (8-14th), whilst a second bird was at Icklesham (17th). A Flamingo of uncertain origin, was a surprise in Pagham Harbour (12th). Another Pectoral Sandpiper was at Pett at the end of the month when a juvenile White-winged Black Tern was at Chichester G.P.

Wrynecks featured well in September with one at Rye, 1-2 at Chat Vale, Beachy and another at Lower Cuckmere (16th). On a rainy 10th, Sussex's 2nd only Greenish Warbler was found at Beachy Head behind the hotel and nearby a Quail was flushed and a Stone Curlew stayed all day in Lower Cuckmere. Lawn Pipits were found at a number of sites and an Oortolan Bunting showed well at Rye. A Red-breasted Flycatcher was reported from Hastings and yet more juvenile White-winged Black Terns with 1-2 over a period of days at Ivy Lake, Chichester.

Peter Whitcomb (Thanks also to Tony Wilson for information)



Stop Press

Latest News concerns a returning Purple Sandpiper on Brighton Marina arm on Oct 10th; 8 Firecrests in Sheepcote Valley on 12th, with 5 there on 13th, and a Yellow-browed Warbler on Whitehawk Hill. On Oct 14th a Dartford Warbler was on Hollingbury Camp, whilst a Razorbill was in Shoreham Harbour. Also of note were 2 Monarch Butterflies seen in Pagham Harbour, part of an influx from America.

Day Birdwatch within SDOS area

The only update so far received, was from Paul Brayshaw who recorded 87 species on 21st August (without particularly trying). Highlights were Little Egret, Marsh Harrier, Peregrine, Hobby, Little Gull and Pied Flycatcher. Paul visited his more familiar sites to the west of the area, and whilst missing a few woodland and shorebirds, agreed that a much higher total ought to be possible.

The Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO)

I joined the SEO in 1987, soon after I started learning Spanish, mainly to obtain their thrice-yearly journal, *La Garcilla*, for reading practice. Although still small by British standards, with about 5,000 members, it is long-established having celebrated its 40th anniversary in 1994. It is the Birdlife partner for Spain, runs seven nature reserves and the National Rarities Committee which was established in 1984. There are now fourteen local members groups and several study groups on subjects such as seabirds, raptors and migration.

La Garcilla has improved from a dull, black and white journal in 1987 to an attractive magazine with many excellent colour photographs; however the small staff have difficulty getting it out on time and I have still only received the first issue for 1995. British retailers of binoculars and telescopes have advertised for years, but recently Spanish-based retailers have started to advertise stocks of well-known optics. Another first is an advertisement for a birdwatching trip to Jordan, run by and for Spaniards. "The Flight Identification of European Raptors" has recently been published in Spanish and Jonsson's "Birds of Europe" in both Spanish and Catalan. All this indicates a growing interest in Birdwatching and Conservation.

La Garcilla is aimed at reasonably serious birdwatchers but is not a scientific journal. The latest issue includes articles on a recent study of Little Bustard (doing well in parts of Spain, badly in others), on how to choose binoculars and on identification of Tawny and Richard's Pipits with excellent illustrations. As usual there are interesting short notes about Birds in Spain: -

Ross's Gull and Greater Sand Plover - first records for Spain both awaiting confirmation;

Lammergeier - increase continues to 61 territories and 50 breeding pairs in the Pyrenees;

Egyptian Vulture - re-established in Majorca after ceasing to breed there in the 70's;

White-backed Woodpecker - Spanish population estimated at 60-70 pairs.

The increase in Lammergeiers is especially encouraging in view of the many years of hard work, organised by the SEO, nest-guarding this species to protect the birds from disturbance by climbers, hang-gliders, fighter pilots buzzing nesting-cliffs and over-enthusiastic birders and photographers.

I think it is worthwhile joining foreign birding societies provided that you can read the language well enough to get the general drift of articles. In case anyone is interested the SEO's address is Ctra de Húmera, 63, 1. 28224 Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid and the minimum subscription is 4,000 ptas which nowadays can easily be paid by credit card.

Pat Mulcock

Field Outings

The 1996 programme has been finalised, and amongst a varied selection of sites are long distance venues at Dungeness and the New Forest. Members wishing the chance of a lift on these or other outings, or those willing to offer space in their car, are asked to contact Tony Fenton 2-3 weeks prior to the outing. Those perhaps attending for the first time are urged to wear sensible clothing and foot-

wear. Binoculars are essential, telescopes optional, and bring lunch and refreshments for all day trips. Any general queries or if you need confirmation of the parking arrangements, please contact the field secretary, Tony Fenton on 01273 591291.

Weekend Outings

A suggestion was discussed at a recent council meeting of organising a weekend expedition to Dorset, staying at the Kingcombe Centre at Toller Porcorum. Members will be asked at the autumn indoor meeting to ascertain what support there might be. This particular event would require a minimum of 14 persons. If the idea receives favour, other trips, perhaps into Kent or to Norfolk could be arranged. If you are unable to attend the next indoor meetings, and you are interested, please contact Brianne Reeve on 01273 452497, or write to her at the Old Rectory, Coombes, Lancing BN15 0RS

Grasshopper Warblers

A lost breeding bird in Sussex? The latest SOS newsletter sadly reports no breeding birds for 1995. Please refer to SDOS Spring Newsletter where an appeal was made for all members to report reeling birds in Spring and Summer on territory.

Barbecue

Our thanks to Brianne Reeve for providing the venue and food for yet another successful Society Barbecue in July. The turnout was excellent and although it was a cooler evening, the promised showers held off. Thanks, too, to all the helpers who made the evening one to remember.

Butterflies migrate too!

The hot summer brought the enigmatic Camberwell Beauty to parts of the South East; local sightings were reported from the Shoreham Sanctuary and twice from Shepcote Valley, where one was photographed by the lucky finder. Also seen were a Swallowtail in a Brighton garden and a Bath White elsewhere in Sussex.

Shoreham Bird Report

The editor wishes to apologise for the late publishing of this annual Bird Report. Your sightings and breeding records would be appreciated by the Hon Recorder as soon as you are able, with perhaps a second sending of the last few records in Nov./Dec. during January. Rod Shaw's address is 93 North Road, Portslade, BN41 2HD.

Copy for the regular features and other contributions are also requested during January and February, and it is hoped that with some volunteer assistance in the computer preparation, we will attempt to publish the 1995 Report much earlier next year. The Hon. Editor, Peter Whitcomb, should be contacted at 99 Barnett Road Brighton BN1 7GJ.