

SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Autumn
2009

NEWSLETTER

Winter Outings 2009/2010

November 15th Sunday all day. Shellness, Kent. Meet 09:30hrs at the start of bumpy road to NNR car park. O.S. Sheet 178 map reference TR046693 distance 6K(2) Leader Paul Stevens. 01273 858381.

December 5th Saturday afternoon. Adur Valley. Meet 13:00 Park in lay-by just north-west of the old Cement Works. O.S. Sheet 198 map reference TQ197094 - distance 5K(2). Leader Chris Wright. 01903 814859.

December 29th Tuesday morning only, Seasonal Gathering. Meet 09:30 in Fort Haven car park. O.S. Sheet 198 map reference TQ233046 - distance 2K(1). Leaders: SDOS Committee.

January 10th Sunday morning only. Henfield farmland and river walk. Meet at 09:30hrs in Downs Link car park near Cat and Canary Pub, Henfield. O.S. Sheet 197 map reference TQ206161 - distance 5K(2). Leaders Val Bentley and Nigel Parsons. 01273 494723.

January 17th Sunday afternoon. Beeding Brooks Outside Noordwijk, Pound Lane, Upper Beeding just before RDA stables. Meet 1400hrs. O.S. Sheet 197 map reference TQ 197111 - 2K. Wet underfoot. Leader Terry Goble. 01903 813698.

February 14th Sunday all day, Dungeness RSPB area and reserve (bring membership card). Meet at 09:30hrs at Old Light House Car Park. All day. O.S. Sheet 189 map reference TR088168 - distance 7K(2). Leader Dave Smith. 01903 247231.

February 28th Sunday Rackham Woods and Waltham Brooks. Meet 09:00 in quarry car park next to old school. O.S. Sheet 197 Ref TQ050144 distance 3K(1) Leader Bernie Forbes 01903 753876.

2010 SDOS Subscription Rates

I am pleased to report that SDOS subscriptions will remain unchanged for 2010. Subscriptions are for a calendar year and can be paid anytime between now and 31st January. Early payment is always much appreciated and helps to save time and postage on issuing reminders.

Ordinary: £12

Family (at same address): £18

Junior: £5

Life Membership rates are available on application.

Subscriptions will be gratefully received at any indoor meeting or sent to me at:

41 St. Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, BN14 7JJ.

Alternatively Standing Order forms are available.

John Maskell
Hon. Treasurer

Summer Sightings July - September

It has been a steady if unspectacular autumn so far with a good passage of most common migrants but few unusual species to give it a sparkle. A surprise in mid June was a Golden Plover discovered resting on the roof of a house in Henfield! At this time Woods Mill hosted one of the few Turtle Doves in the area. The best bird in July was the fine male Red-backed Shrike which was found near the Cissbury car-park on 14th and stayed for a couple of days. Most Swifts had left by the end of the month but stragglers were seen into September. Wheatears have been widespread mostly on the downs and beaches and smaller numbers of Whinchats and Redstarts have turned up in the expected places. Rather fewer Flycatchers have been noted with only St Anne's Well Gardens in Hove recording one or two Pied. Larger numbers though for some years though have been the flocks of Yellow Wagtails with again c. 100 at Botolphs, 50 at Blackpatch Hill and others at Cissbury and coasting parties on several occasions logged at Worthing and Goring.

Very large numbers of hirundines with, encouragingly, more House Martins than expected have been a feature of September. Sheepcote Valley in east Brighton has had the pick of scarce birds with two Wrynecks and a Rose-coloured Starling (see below). The Mumbles ringing site at Steyning, in addition to catching large numbers of Blackcaps (along with Cissbury and Ladywells), extracted a Yellow-browed Warbler from the nets on 23rd. Firecrests were found at Wild Park and Cissbury next day. Honey-buzzards have been seen over Hollingdean (June 7th), Durrington and Ferring and a Marsh Harrier over the latter.

Sea-birds other than Gannets have been in very short supply. A record 55 Sandwich Terns were noted on the Goring Gap fields in late August and more recently up to five Mediterranean Gulls were there.

The following notes from Peter Whitcomb list some sighting from first, Brighton's Wild Park:

Two Nuthatches on 27 Jul, a rarity here. Ten Crossbills over 30/7.

Honey Buzzard over 4/8. 3 Spotted Flycatchers 23/8. Very low numbers of Tree Pipit and Whinchat during Aug, and not much better in Sept.

Hardly any Garden Warblers noted.

Raven over 6/9. First movement of Swallows and Martins on 10/9 but still low numbers; also 3 Spot Fly, Whinchat and first Grey Wag of autumn. Meadow Pipit movement on 19/9 was 57 plus 27 Chiffchaff, Grasshopper Warbler, 2 Spotted Flycatchers and 12 Blackcaps. Meadow pipit total on 20/9 was 126 also 6 Wheatear, 2 Yellow Wagtail, 600 mixed hirundines, 2 Buzzard. First Stonechat of autumn on 21/9. Firecrest and 21 Chiffs on 24/9.

And secondly. Sheepcote Valley, where highlights have been:

10/9 - Wryneck, 4 Spot Fly, 10 Whinchat, 30 Blackcap, 2 Redstart

11/9 - juv Rose coloured Starling but elusive after first sighting, Hobby, Ring Ouzel, 30 Blackcap, 50 Willow/chiffs, 8 Spot Fly, 6 Crossbill, 13 Whinchat

12/9 - Rose coloured Starling again briefly but very elusive

13/9 - 5 Redstart, 28 Blackcap. Short eared Owl, 13 Whinchat

24/9 - 2 Wryneck north end and still good numbers of Chiffchaffs and Whinchats, some Grey Wagtails over plus Meadow pipits galore.

A Corncrake was found dead near the Marina.

Clive Hope

CALLING ALL SDOS GARDEN BIRDWATCHERS

And any others who might like to join.

Firstly, many thanks to Martin Ford who has looked after the Garden Birdwatch forms for longer than I can recall! Secondly, can I introduce myself as the new collator of your SDOS GBW records which are dutifully sent in every quarter.

Garden birdwatching is a really good way to begin to get involved with recording birds, and it can easily get you hooked. You also find that there are species visiting your garden that you would otherwise never know about. This year I have been spending an hour a week recording for the Henfield Birdwatch, as part of their third parish survey, and during the winter had regular visits from both male and female Reed Buntings, male and female Blackcaps and also saw my first garden Redpoll. During an RSPB Garden Birdwatch a couple of years back I found my first Henfield garden Blackcaps, a male in the front garden and a female at the back. In fact most winter records of this species do come from gardens – one winter about 25 years ago in my garden near Bristol, I had five sitting in an apple tree at the same time!

I would encourage those who already do the SDOS recording to also join the BTO Garden Birdwatch Project. Details are available on line at www.bto.org or by writing to the BTO at The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU. It costs £15 a year; you will receive a quarterly colour magazine “Bird Table” and new joiners get a free copy of a 128 page Garden BirdWatch book, normally selling for £9.99.

For both the national BTO and local SDOS projects, all you need to do is to spend some time each week recording the maximum number of birds seen at any one time in your garden i.e. if you see 2 Blue Tits on 6 occasions, you would just put down “2” not “12”. You decide how long to spend recording, but try to be reasonably consistent from week to week.

If you would like to join the SDOS scheme, please give me a ring on 01273 494723 or e-mail me on chetsford@talk21.com and I will send forms to you. Please return completed forms to me at Chetsford, London Road, Henfield, BN5 9JJ, or give them to me at indoor meetings.

Incidentally, I live just outside the SDOS recording area, so cannot participate myself!

Val Bentley

Members' evening and Christmas social

Tuesday December 8th

The evening will consist of some short talks and 'slide' shows and quizzes. If you are able to contribute with a short talk (of about 15-20 mins) with or without pictures please contact Clive Hope (on 01903 700498) as soon as possible.

Please, everybody, remember to bring something to write with for the quizzes.

The Birds of Pagham harbour by Owen Mitchell

I'm pleased to inform all members of the recent publication of 'The Birds of Pagham Harbour LNR.' It provides an up-to-date systematic list of all the 319 bird species officially recorded at the Reserve (with a separate quick-reference checklist) and has been compiled in response to various requests from visitors to the site.

Published by the Friends of Pagham Harbour (a registered charity), it is illustrated with colour photographs and is available at just £6 (10% discount for FoPH members). All proceeds go to the Friends, and so ultimately benefit the Nature Reserve.

Copies are available from the Visitor Centre, Sidlesham, or by post to:

O. Mitchell,
Pagham Harbour Visitor Centre,
Selsey Road,
Sidlesham,
Chichester,
West Sussex ,
PO20 7NE.

Cheques should be made payable to 'Friends of Pagham Harbour' and please remember to add £1 for p&p. Alternatively you can always stop me and buy one!

Many thanks.

Owen Mitchell

The John Stafford Prize

As you will know we have offered this prize of £100 in memory of our first President and founder member, using money which he gave to the SDOS.

There were only five entries this year which we intend to send out with the 2008 Report. I should be pleased to hear any comments from members about whether we should continue with the prize or if anyone feels we should put this diminishing money to better use. A decision must be made by the end of November to allow time if the prize is to continue.

Brianne Reeve

Bird Atlas 2007-11

Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds

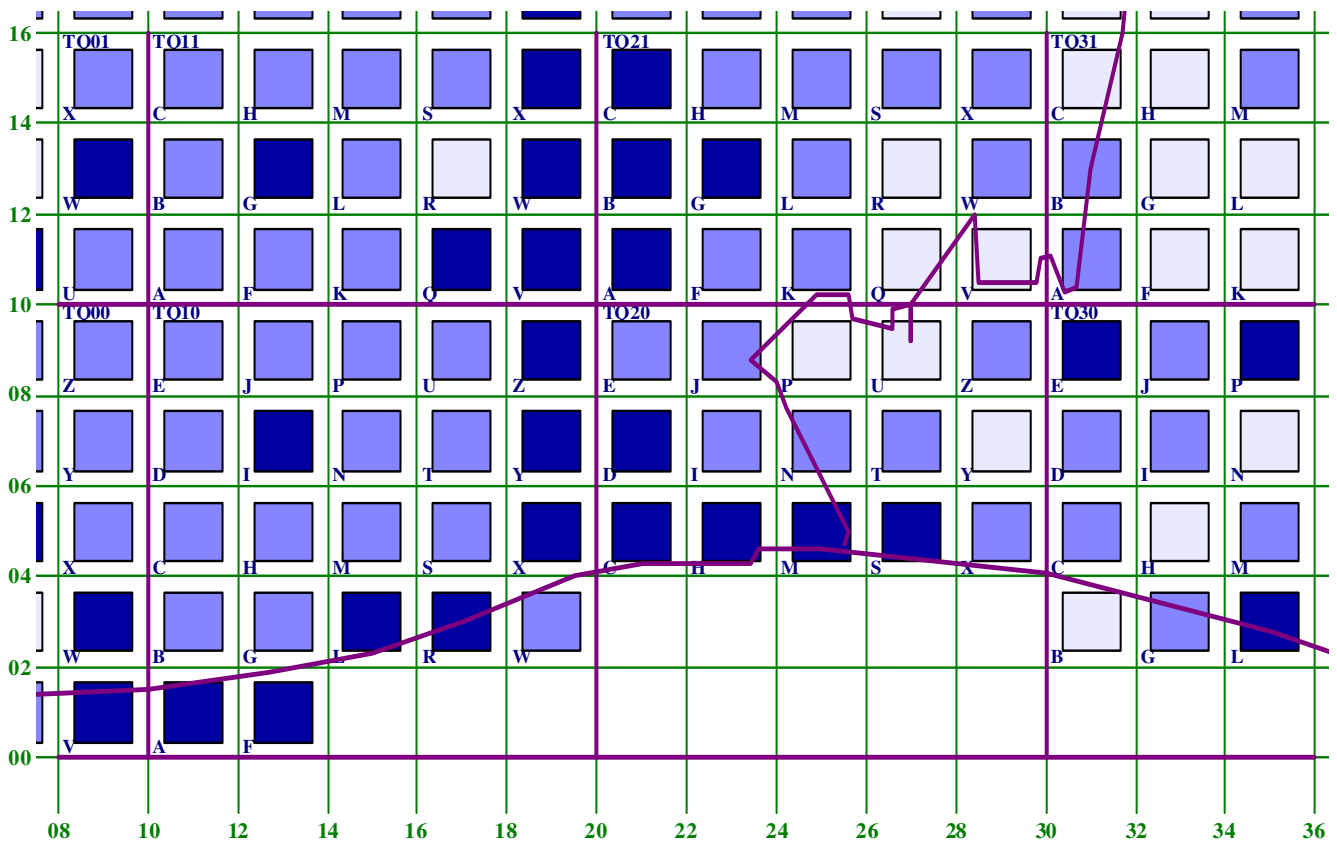


Winter Season Survey.

We have now reached the half way point for this ambitious four year project and on November 1st the fieldwork for the third winter period will get started. Earlier in the year I lodged on the Society's yahoo site a series of species distribution maps for the Society's recording area from the first two winters of fieldwork and very shortly the Sussex Ornithological Society website at www.sos.org.uk will be displaying, each week, the winter maps for different species at a county level.

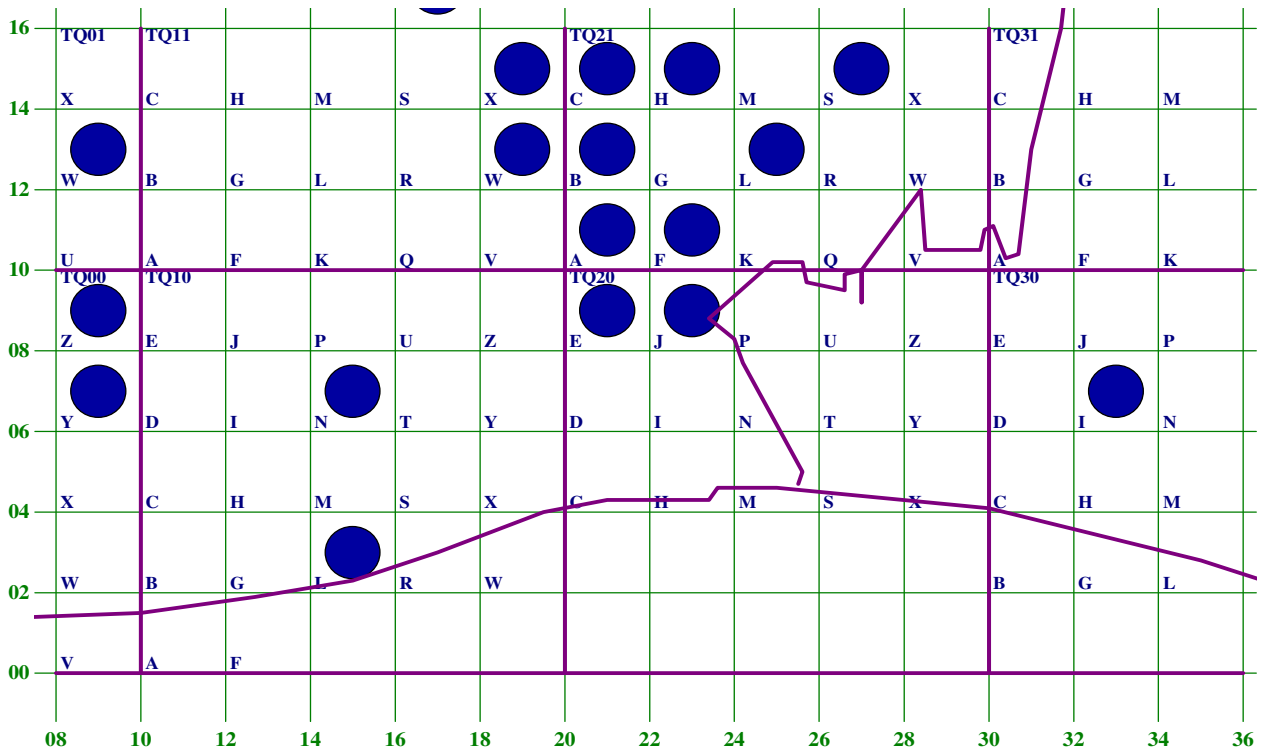
Coverage for this survey has been splendid and I would like to thank all who have, so far, contributed but there is still much to be done and many gaps to fill. The following map of our recording area shows the numbers of species recorded during the past two winters in each tetrad. Unlike other areas of the county there are no complete blanks but there are 16 tetrads with fewer than 30 species recorded. These, of course, may be poor areas with little variation in habitat but it is likely these pale squares result from little recording. It is notable that the dark squares fall mainly on the coast and in the Adur valley; areas likely to support a wide range of species but also locations most frequently watched.

Species richness all records (Dark >50, Medium 31-49; pale <30)

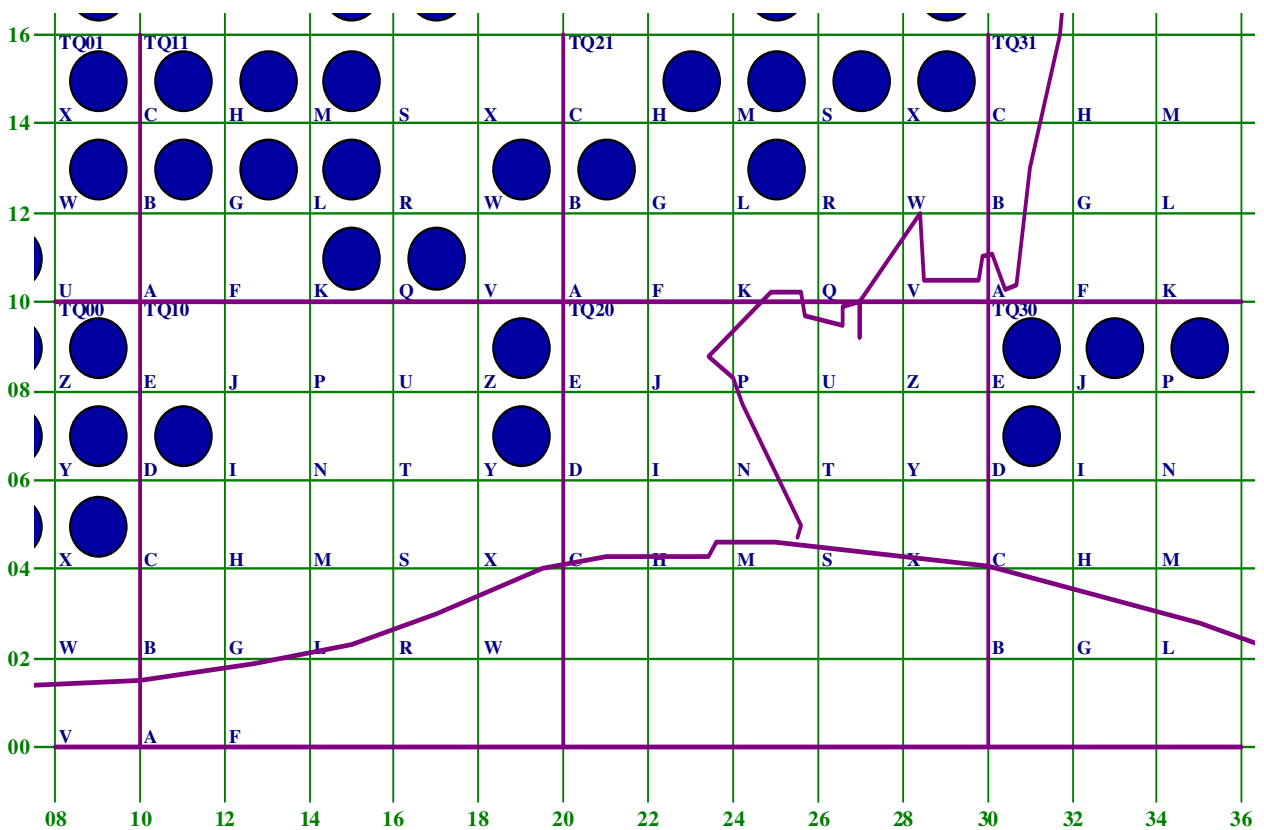


By taking a look at species which are not easy to find, Little Owl and Eurasian Tree Sparrow are two examples, may give some further idea where additional fieldwork may be required. It is unlikely there should be gaps in the distribution of Little Owl, particularly on the downs and I would expect to find Treecreepers in most squares particularly in the more wooded areas north of the downs.

Little Owl (Winters One & Two)



Eurasian Treecreeper (Winters One & Two)



So how can you help? Helen Crabtree, the Sussex BTO representative, has written an excellent ten-pointed guide to targetting Atlas fieldwork this winter. I have uploaded this onto the group yahoo site or copies can be obtained from me at jnewnham@bigfoot.com or 01903-247596

There is still plenty of time to contribute. The methodology of the survey has been described in previous Newsletters and can be found on the BTO website (see below). As I have stated before the only way to achieve complete distribution maps is to encourage as many observers as possible to diligently record and log their observations for common, scarce and rare species. Realistically this can be done in three ways:-

1. Entering Roving Records on-line into the Atlas at <http://www.bto.org.uk/birdatlas/index.htm>.
2. Enter species lists or casual records into the BTO's BirdTrack recording system at <http://www.bto.org.uk/birdtrack/index.htm>. Please ensure, however, your sites are defined at a tetrad or 1 km square level.
3. Enter your sightings into the SOS's data-base by using the "Record Capture" software. This can be obtained, with instructions, by downloading from the SOS website at <http://www.sos.org.uk/records/submission-forms-programs-and-lists.html>.
4. For those without computer access there are paper forms available from me.

Thank you again for supporting this important national and county survey.

John Newnham
Oct 2009

.... And Finally

There has been an encouraging response to my request for help to cover the work Chris Wright had undertaken for many years. We now have several people who are taking on the responsibility of opening the Hall for Indoor Meetings. Reg Bradbury will draw up a rota of those who have offered their help.

Bernie has organised the programme of speakers for 2010 and Di Howard is arranging to book the Hall and send the letters of confirmation to the speakers. She will be planning the programme for 2011 in due course and would like to hear from anyone with new ideas:

dhtheatre@tiscali.co.uk

Noranne Biddulph has written up the reports of the outings for the 2008 Report.

We are still looking for someone to take over from me as Chairman, please.

Brianne Reeve

Shoreham District Ornithological Society

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Electronic Newsletter

Almost half of the society's members have now opted to receive Newsletters electronically. By doing so they are helping to reduce our costs of printing and mailing and also saving our Chairman a considerable amount of time spent in stuffing envelopes! Another benefit, going forward, will be the potential for adding some colour in the form of artwork and photographs, currently prohibited by printing costs.

If you are happy to receive future Newsletters electronically please contact our Newsletter Editor, **Russ Tofts**, who will be delighted to add you to the Newsletter emailing list.