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SDOS Newsletter September 2013

Welcome to our autumn programme which begins on **Tuesday, Oct. 8th** with an exciting talk by Chris Collins who will tell us about the 'Birds of the Russian Far East' including the latest information on the enigmatic Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Chris has travelled to over 50 countries in his search for birds. He comes to us as a highly recommended speaker so I hope we can provide him with a good audience.

On Nov. 12th we shall be taken to New Zealand with John Eyre for a 'Sea Bird Feast, Land Bird Famine'. My visits to this beautiful and diverse country did not allow for bird watching but I know it has much to offer so I shall be interested to hear what this talk discloses.

The Christmas Social and Members' Evening on **Dec. 10th** requires some help from you. We need contributions from 5 to 20 minutes in length on anything to do with birds. You could tell us about a favourite sighting, read a poem, test our knowledge (light-heartedly) with a quiz, show us some of your photos, recommend a book.... anything which may prompt a discussion or entertain us for a few minutes. If you have any ideas please let me know, my contact details are at the end of this Newsletter.

At our recent Council Meeting we decided that in our refreshment intervals we shall only serve a selection of biscuits and a hot drink. This is to see whether we can shorten the interval slightly and also because it is getting more difficult to find people who are willing to provide the refreshments. We shall try this for the October and November meetings and listen to your comments, so please tell us what you think. The Christmas meeting will have the usual festive fare, free to all members who attend that evening.

We have **two outings in October, the first is on the 12th** when Clive Hope will lead us, starting from Climping Beach. We have the advantage of covering the sea, small woodland and farm areas: there have been some good birds recorded from here on past outings.

On **Oct. 20th** you can join Bernie Forbes at Burpham to walk around the Burgh area. No doubt Bernie will be able to produce some raptors and local farmland birds in an area he knows very well.

We do give you reminders a few days prior to all our events on the sdosusergroup. On the whole most of our outings are for the morning only but occasionally there is the possibility of moving on to another site, if you wanted to do this you would need to bring lunch. This mainly applies to Bernie's outings and you can check with him beforehand for further details.

Annual Report and Programme.

We try to prepare these to be given out to you at the December Meeting (or sent by post). The reason for sending the Programme is to let you know who will be the speaker at the January meeting and for those early outings. It seems that some members may assume that, if they receive the Programme, they must have paid their subscription. Our Treasurer spends an inordinate amount of time chasing those who have not paid. Subscriptions are due from January 1st for the ensuing year. Those who pay by Standing Order will have the money taken from their account at the beginning of February. Our Treasurer favours this option and SO forms are available at all indoor meetings or upon request from the Treasurer: sdos.treasurer@yahoo.co.uk Renewal reminders will be sent out with the Programme.

A few details from some outings in August and September (not a list of all the birds seen). Our last four outings included the RSPB reserve at Pulborough for an early evening visit to see waders, a windy walk westwards along the downs from Kithurst Hill, the River Adur valley walk from Beeding and an early morning walk at Cissbury.

The RSPB threatened to be a washout due to persistent drizzle and heavy rain clouds plus a very discouraging forecast but something happened by the time we set out from the car park and we had superb light and warm sun. At Jupp's View we set up our telescopes and the birds came one after another. "One, no two, make that three Little Ringed Plovers"! A total of five were picked out amongst the mass of adult and young Pied Wagtails. Then Green Sandpipers appeared, gleaming in the sunlight, a total of seven feeding together. Two each of elegant Greenshanks and Grey Herons were also recorded. It was a most satisfying evening.

The next day Chantry Hill and Kithurst did not produce so many birds but we had good views of those we did see: Red Kite, Kestrel and Common Buzzard and amongst the smaller birds Whitethroat, Linnets and finches including one calling, but elusive Bullfinch. The wind was rather strong and we had very little sun until the return journey along the edge of the steep escarpment looking north, out of the wind, where many butterflies were seen searching for the nectar-rich plants. These gave great pleasure as they were very easy to see and also seemed to be in pristine condition: notable were many Chalkhill Blues and Small Tortoiseshells, just one Painted Lady and one Clouded Yellow.

Although on the day of the Adur walk it was cloudy, the air was still warm, comfortable walking weather. One target species was to find Common Sandpiper and although the tide was dropping fast we had good views of five of these attractive waders. We were also lucky to see Little Egrets standing side by side on the mud, there was one very obvious young bird which still had the grey scales on its legs and paler yellow feet whereas the adult bird had black legs and darker yellow feet. Later we heard the piping call of Kingfisher and the usual difficulty of seeing it as it flew away from the river across a field. Yellow Wagtails set us a challenge too but were found feeding around the feet of the cattle and there were very pleasing sightings of Swallows and a single Sand Martin resting on the telegraph wires and some House Martins feeding up before migration.

Cissbury is where we always hope to see visible migration. There was a definite autumnal feel in the air, but beautiful light, cool, crisp and sunny. We started with some close views of Wheatears and then as we walked up the north side seemingly numerous (about 70)! Chiffchaffs, calling and moving about in the trees around us, some showing very well. There were also a surprising number of Speckled Wood butterflies braving the rather cool conditions. Once on the top of the Ring we started to see Spotted Flycatchers doing what their name implies as they perched on an open branch as if posing for a photograph. Dorian probably captured the best picture of the day when we were admiring a juvenile Kestrel basking in the warmth of a Yew tree and surrounded with the beautiful silvery, feathery seeds of Old Man's Beard, it was a stunning sight.

As you will see we did not have particularly exceptional birds on these outings but what we did have were excellent leaders sharing their knowledge (and telescopes) and including all our members regardless of their expertise to make sure the birds were seen by everyone. Thanks to Chris Wright: RSPB and the Adur, Clive Hope: Chantry, Bernie Forbes Cissbury, with extra assistance from Dave Smith and Dorian Mason on two of the outings. At our Council Meeting last week we discussed the proposed outings for next year. If you have any ideas or good or bad comments about outings PLEASE let us know. We do our best but feedback is very helpful.

Ringling groups: The Mumbles, Cissbury and Ladywells.

We are fortunate to have three ringing stations in our recording area, in three very different habitats, run by SDOS members and involving a vast amount of constant effort and early morning attendances at each site. Following the sessions all the information collected has to be put into the database. It is a huge commitment of time and determination and usually the more experienced ringers are also training new recruits. This is the second year in which Lancing College students have been working in the Ladywells.

The reports they put on our sdosusergroup make fascinating reading: the variety of birds caught which have to be sexed, weighed, recorded as adults or various stages of juveniles etc.. You may have been put off by the unfamiliar terminology in the lists but it is quite fun working out what the code is! I think I am right when I say you need to use five letters: A good one to start with! Dunno = Dunnock Blabi = Blackbird Blaca = Blackcap It is only a little more complicated when the bird has two or three parts to its name: Lotti = Long-tailed Tit Hergu = Herring Gull Woopi = Woodpigeon Grewo = Green Woodpecker but Grswo = Great-spotted Woodpecker -- a slight challenge but it keeps the mind alert! You can see how the ringers need this type of shorthand when they are dealing with a lot of birds. Now you know what is happening when people refer to Lottis and Woopis on our outings!

Also if you don't want to wade through every part of these reports, scroll down to the comments in plain text at the end where many more interesting details are revealed.

THE BIRDS of SUSSEX SOS book soon to be published in partnership with the BTO. "Both authoritative and a good read, if you are at all interested in the birds of Sussex, this is for you! Written by a team of the county's finest bird experts and edited by Adrian Thomas of the RSPB, for each of the 397 species on the Sussex list..."

If you order this book before December 31st 2013 there will be a saving of up to 43% on the published price of £35. It will cost SOS members £20 and non-members £25 To save on postage (£5) the book will be available at the SOS Conference on January 25th 2014 and could be collected for any SDOS members who have ordered it.

More details are on the SOS website: www.sos.org.uk or www.bto.org/sussex-birds

Urgent call for help with SDOS publications.

As you can see by the fact that this Newsletter has come from your Chairman we do need a Newsletter Editor. It is an important contact with all our members and particularly those who do not have access to a computer. It is not an onerous task to bring out three Newsletters a year but we do need someone who will put it together. Most people receive it electronically the rest through the post. If you are willing to help, or have any ideas, please contact; briannereeve@yahoo.com 01273 452 497

Even more important is to find a replacement for Brian Clay, our Annual Report Editor. Brian has given more than we could have hoped to SDOS over many years but has to stand down, definitely, after the production of this current Report (for 2012). He is very happy to show someone else what he does but needs to do that in the next few weeks.

Please, please do get in contact. This is really very important.

The Adur Local Plan 2013

For those of you affected by the ALP a revised draft is now available and can be seen in local libraries and various dates at: Lancing Village Action, Shoreham Centre, Shoreham Farmers' Market (Oct. 12th), Southwick Community Centre, Harriet Johnson Centre Sompting and the Adur Civic Centre.

A star in the making!

Peter Casebow will not thank me for that heading as he certainly does not seek the limelight but I thought some of you might be interested. Peter has been instrumental in the reparation of the windmill at High Salvington for more than fifteen years. He is a skilled craftsman particularly with wood and found himself deeply involved when this splendid windmill threatened to fall into irrevocable disrepair.

Many of you have probably watched the BBC TV series about the Victorian Farm. There is to be a sequel starting in October on a Tudor Farm. After filming at the Weald and Downland Museum the BBC approached Peter regarding 'his' windmill for some action shots. He did point out that there was a slight discrepancy in it coming within the remit of Tudor, but nevertheless he dressed up as the miller and did his piece about setting the sails and then grinding the corn into flour!

I do hope they will show some of the incredible craftsmanship in the working of the interior: wheels, cogs and pulleys too. Peter said they seemed to be interested and were filming on and off for six hours. He has been told the series will start in October running through to November but no firm date has been given.

Jake's progress!

Jake, our youngest member, has cleverly arranged to get himself a place at the university of East Anglia very close to one of his most favourite parts of the country. He has joined the very popular university bird society and has set up his own blog. For those of you who visit that area too you can keep up to date with Jake on;

<http://universityandeastangliabirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

John Reaney's drawings.

You will all be familiar with John Reaney's delightful black and white drawings which have enhanced our Annual Reports, the 50th Anniversary book, Newsletters and the series for the John Stafford Prize. With John's permission we are now offering a set of cards using up to a dozen of his drawings. They can be used as birthday or Christmas cards or general notelets as there will be no specific greeting inside. **Each pack will hold six cards of different designs, printed on good quality recycled card and includes envelopes. The cost will be £3 a pack. They will be available at indoor meetings and can be sent to you for the cost of the postage.**

Any profit from these sales will go into our project fund which we have used to finance four seats, three of which were designed and constructed by Bernie and Dorian, three graceful Whitebeam trees planted on the Downslink and the St. Barnabas House bird feeding project for the benefit of the patients. We are monitoring this latest idea with Dorian being our main contact. We shall be supplying another feeder and more bird food by October 2nd.

