

# Birding Surrey

The Newsletter of the Surrey Bird Club

No. 92

Summer 2011



# Photograph Gallery



*Figs 1 & 2, Little Gull, Island Barn Res, 4 Dec 2010 (Dave Harris)*



*Figs 3 & 4 Waxwing, Molesey 2 Dec 2010 (Dave Harris)*



*Fig 5. Siskin, Horley  
16 Mar 2010  
(Derek Washington)*

# Birding Surrey

The Newsletter of the Surrey Bird Club

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Front Cover Photo: Oystercatcher by Dave Harris

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# Notice of Annual General Meeting

Surrey Bird Club presents an illustrated talk on

## **A Winter's Journey in Eastern Europe**

**a trip through Bulgaria, Estonia and Hungary  
during the months of November to March  
by  
Mary Braddock**

Preceded by the

### **2011 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

on

**Friday 23rd September 2011**

**7.45pm for 8.00pm start**

**At the Millennium Room, East Horsley Village Hall,  
Kingston Avenue, East Horsley, KT24 6QT**

#### **AGENDA**

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of 2010 AGM**
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Secretary's Report for the Club's year to 31st March 2011**
- 5. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts for the Club's year to 31st March 2011 & ratification of subscription rates**
- 6. Election of Officers and members of the General Committee**
- 7. Appointment of Auditor**
- 8. Any Other Business**

Light refreshments will be served between the AGM and the illustrated talk.

**AGM Notes**

1. The minutes of the 2010 AGM were published in Birding Surrey No 90 and consequently they will be taken as read.
2. Nominations for election to the General Committee will be accepted at the meeting but preferably should be sent to the General Secretary before the meeting.
3. It is 20 years since subscription rates were last increased and to safeguard the Club's financial position it is proposed that subscription rates be increased with effect from 1 April 2012 as follows:

Full members (aged 18 - 64).....	£15.00
Full members (aged 65+).....	£10.00
Junior members (aged under 18).....	£10.00
Additional family members (each).....	£1.00
Affiliated Society.....	£15.00

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**DIRECTIONS TO AGM**

Avenue just prior to the Budgens convenience store. The hall is at the end of this road.

**BY ROAD**

From London/M25:

Take the A3 southbound, or leave the M25 at Junction 10 and take the A3 south towards Guildford. Leave the A3 at the junction after the M25 exit, signposted to Ockham and Ripley. Take the B2039 to Ockham and East Horsley. Stay on this road, passing under a railway bridge, and then take the right hand turn onto Kingston

From the South:

Take the A3 heading north. Exit at the junction after Guildford, signposted to Ripley, Woking and Dorking. At the first roundabout turn right towards West Clandon and Dorking (A247) continue through West Clandon until you reach a set of traffic lights and turn left onto the A246. Continue on this

road, going straight across a roundabout at West Horsley, continue until you come to a left turn with the Duke of Wellington Public House on the corner. Following this road past a parade of shops on the right hand side and on through a residential area until you find a second parade of shops. Right at the end of the second parade of shops, and before the railway

bridge, turn left onto Kingston Avenue. The hall is at the end of this road.

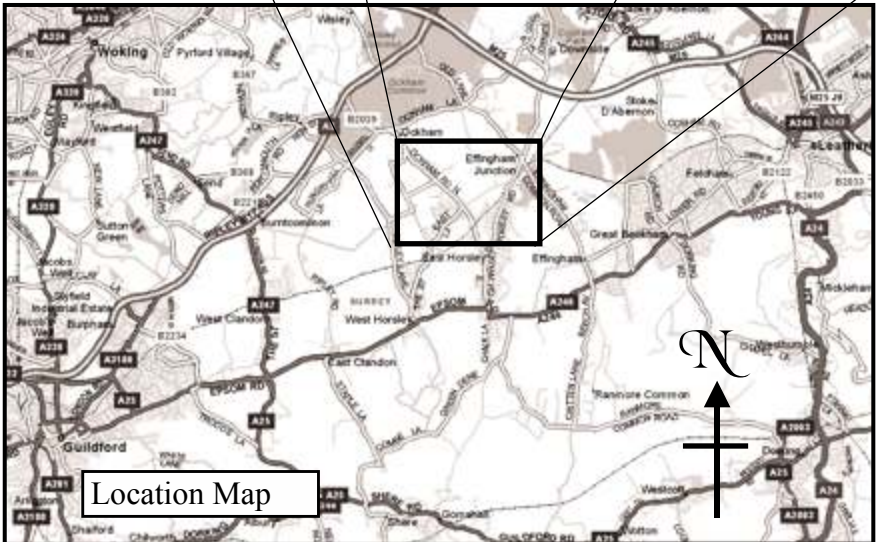
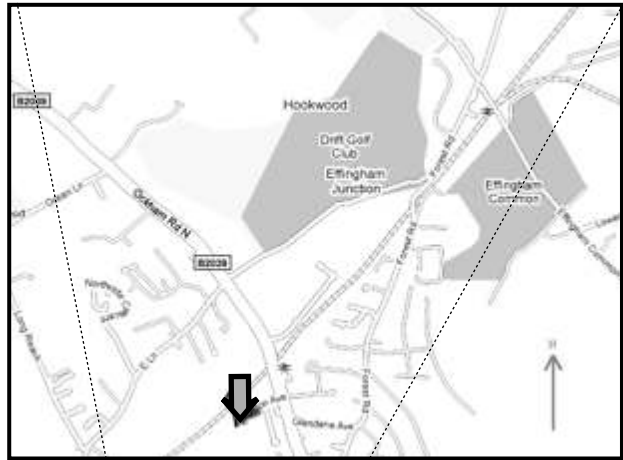
**BY RAIL**

Horsley station is just 300 metres from the village hall. On weekdays there are four trains every hour from both Waterloo Station and Guildford.

**Location plan for the AGM**

or

**Post Code  
KT24 6QT  
On your Sat Nav**



Location Map

## From the Chairman

Welcome to issue 92 of Birding Surrey.

### Members Questionnaire

The response to the members' feedback questionnaire that was included with the previous Birding Surrey has been completely overwhelming. To date well over half of the membership has sent a response, with a couple of weeks still to run to the closing deadline.

We have also sent questionnaires to recent past members where we are not aware of an obvious reason for their leaving, such as moving away from the area. In particular it would of course be very useful to know what the reasons were for not renewing their membership and in what way the Club did not perhaps provide what they were anticipating when they joined.

The level of response is extremely encouraging and it has included many excellent comments, suggestions and offers of help for which I would like to thank everyone who responded. However the high volume of response has meant that we have a great quantity of data to process and analyse so I apologise if it takes a little longer than we would like to get in contact if you have offered to help the Club

in some way. Once responses have all been received and collated we will of course share the results with you in the newsletter and let you know what the Club intends to do to address matters that emerge as a priority of the members.

I would also particularly like to thank Membership Secretary Penny Williams for the tremendous efforts she has put into this process.

### Bird Reports

Your copy of the 2005 report has hopefully arrived with this copy of Birding Surrey. Work on 2006 is now well underway and 2007 has just commenced. We are committed to continuing our efforts to catch up on the arrears as quickly as possible and steady headway continues to be made. A number of new volunteers have come forward as a result of the questionnaire, thank you, and as they become familiar with the requirements it should further speed progress.

One area that we are still struggling with is obtaining notes and papers to include in the reports. If you have made any studies; behavioural observations of a particular species or group; records of a local patch over a period of time or other interesting information relating to

birds in Surrey then Bird Report Editor Stella Bignold would be very happy to discuss with you the possibilities of having them published to share with the membership.

### **Annual General Meeting**

This year's event will be at the usual central venue of East Horsley Village Hall on the evening of

Friday 23rd September, so please get the date in your diaries. We have had excellent talks in recent years and this year's promises to continue the quality but with a change of theme being a winter birding travelogue in eastern Europe by Mary Braddock who has been very highly recommended.

*Steve Chastell*

## Annual Nightjar Surveys

Annual surveys are organised for Nightjars on local heaths. Volunteers are always welcome. The dates are as follows:

Chobham Common on Wednesday 8 June

Pirbright Ranges on Thursday 16 June

Ash Ranges on Wednesday 22 June

MOD Camberley (includes the ranges) on Sunday 26 June

If you are interested contacts details are as follows:

Chobham and Pirbright: David Cary,

Email: [david.cary@ntlworld.com](mailto:david.cary@ntlworld.com)

Tel. 07855 104045 / 01276 684197

Ash Ranges: John Clark,

Email: [johnclark50@sky.com](mailto:johnclark50@sky.com)

Tel: 01252 623397 / 07946 482360

MOD Camberley: Patrick Crowley,

Email: [patrick.crowley@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.crowley@btinternet.com)

Tel: 01344 776473 / 07963076940



# Bird News - Winter 2010/11 - part 1: late 2010

*Shaun Peters*

## ❖ Highlights of the quarter

These included a flock of 14 **Bean Geese**, 4 **Pink-footed Geese**, a **Ferruginous Duck**, 2 flocks of **Eider**, a **Velvet Scoter**, a **Gannet**, a **Great White Egret**, a **Rough-legged Buzzard**, a **Common Crane**, a **Ring-billed Gull**, an **Iceland Gull**, a **Guillemot**, 6 **Bearded Tits**, a **Twite**, a **Lapland Bunting**, 2 **Snow Buntings**, a **Corn Bunting**, and influxes of **Waxwings** and **Mealy Redpolls**.

**Bean Goose** A flock of 14 flew east at Beddington SF on Dec 1st.

**Pink-footed Goose** A party of four dropped in to Holmethorpe SP for about two hours on Dec 2nd, before leaving high SW.

**White-fronted Goose** A party of six flew over the London Wetland Centre and Beddington SF on Oct 9th. The cold weather in December produced several flocks overflying the county. The largest of these was of 62 NW at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 22nd. On Dec 31st parties of two and six flew over Beddington SF and one flew north over Capel.

**Brent Goose** Single birds were at Island Barn Res on Nov 21st and QE2 Res on Dec 22nd.

**Shelduck** Birds were seen at Beddington SF, Frensham Great Pond, Holmethorpe SP, the London Wetland Centre, QE2 Res and Walton Res, with the largest number four at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 5th.

**Wigeon** The largest reported numbers were 116 at Boldermere on Nov 14th, 124 at Thorpe Water Park on Nov 14th, 75 at Frimley GP on Nov 21st, 81 at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 30th and 199 at Walton Res on Dec 22nd.

**Gadwall** The largest reported numbers were 112 at the London Wetland Centre on Oct 1st, 72 at Boldermere on Nov 14th, 56 at Island Barn Res on Nov 29th, 116 at Holmethorpe SP on Dec 3rd, 65 at Frimley GP on Dec 17th and 104

on the River Wandle from Carshalton to Wandsworth on Dec 28th.

**Teal** The largest reported numbers were 350 at Beddington SF on Nov 13th, 419 on the Thames from Barnes to Putney on Dec 18th, 156 on the River Wandle from Carshalton to Wandsworth on Dec 28th and 472 at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 31st.

**Pintail** Mid-November saw a small movement of this species with a pair at Island Barn Res and single males at QE2 Res and Pen Ponds, all on Nov 17th, and a male at Beddington SF on Nov 21st. The cold weather in December produced a flock of 14 west at Holmethorpe SP on Dec 1st. The feral flock at the London Wetland Centre peaked at eight on Dec 31st.

**Shoveler** The largest reported numbers were 71 at Pen Ponds on Nov 19th, 159 at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 24th and 80 at Holmethorpe SP on Dec 2nd.

**Pochard** The largest reported numbers were 200 at Thorpe Water Park on Nov 14th, 130 at Walton Res on Dec 26th and 62 at Frimley GP on Dec 28th.

**Ferruginous Duck** A female was at Burgess Park Lake on Nov 28th.

**Tufted Duck** The largest reported numbers were 480 at Thorpe Water Park on Nov 14th, 300 at Holmethorpe SP on Dec 4th, 409 on the Thames from Barnes to Putney on Dec 18th, 500 at the Surrey Docks on Dec 23rd, 813 at Walton Res on Dec 29th and 692 at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 31st.

**Scaup** A first-winter male was at Walton Res from Dec 7th-31st and four (three males) were at the Surrey Docks on Dec 23rd.

**Eider** At the London Wetland Centre 16 flew over on Dec 1st and 11 flew over on Dec 31st.

**Velvet Scoter** A female/immature was at Island Barn Res from Nov



*Velvet Scoter, Island Barn Res.,  
19 Nov 2010 (Dave Harris)*

10th-25th and then at Walton Res from Nov 26th-Dec 12th.

**Goldeneye** The first was at Walton Res on Oct 13th. At nowhere did numbers reach double-figures, the largest count being eight at QE2 Res on Nov 28th. Birds were also reported from Frensham Great Pond, Holmethorpe SP, Island Barn Res, Longside Lake (Thorpe), the Thames at Richmond, Thorpe Water Park and Walton Res.

**Smew** Up to three redheads were at Holmethorpe SP from Dec 1st-27th, a redhead was at Thorpe Water Park on Dec 9th, with a pair there on Dec 13th, a male was at Walton Res on Dec 13th, with three redheads there on Dec 20th, and two redheads at QE2 Res on Dec 24th.

**Red-breasted Merganser** A party of seven flew south at Beddington SF on Nov 8th and a redhead was at Island Barn Res from Nov 13th-18th.

**Goosander** The first were at the London Wetland Centre on Oct 22nd. There were no double-figure counts, with the largest nine at QE2 Res on Nov 30th and nine on the River Mole at Leatherhead on Dec 27th. Smaller numbers were

reported from Beddington SF, Frensham Great Pond, Papercourt GP and Walton Res.

**Red-necked Grebe** Single birds were at Island Barn Res from Nov 12th-13th and Cutt Mill Ponds from Nov 18th-24th.

**Slavonian Grebe** One was at Walton Res on Dec 5th.

**Black-necked Grebe** Single birds were at QE2 Res on Nov 7th, Walton Res on Dec 3rd and Frimley GP on Dec 4th. There were two at Walton Res on Dec 27th.

**Gannet** An adult was picked up in Lloyd Park, Croydon on Dec 22nd and taken to Beddington Wildlife Hospital.

**Bittern** Up to five were present at the London Wetland Centre from Oct 14th onwards. Elsewhere, single birds were at Frensham Little Pond from Dec 8th-27th, the River Mole at Leatherhead on Dec 26th and Morden Hall Park on Dec 30th.

**Little Egret** Around 20 were reported from a total of 13 sites. Most reports involved one or two birds but there were four at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 26th, three in Farnham on Dec 10th

and three along the River Wandle from Carshalton to Wandsworth on Dec 28th.

**Great White Egret** One flew north over Frensham Outlet Pond at 1042hrs on Nov 27th. The tenth county record.

**Grey Heron** There were 85 at Beddington SF on Dec 18th.

**Red Kite** Single birds were seen at Englefield Green on Nov 12th, Pewley Hill on Dec 19th, Abbotswood and Leith Hill on Dec 20th, Chertsey and Ottershaw on Dec 23rd, Badshot Lea and Banstead on Dec 26th, and Lyne on Dec 30th.

**Marsh Harrier** A female /immature flew NE at Beddington SF on Dec 31st.

**Hen Harrier** A male was at Canon's Farm, Banstead on Nov 8th-9th, a ringtail at Ash Ranges on Dec 27th and 30th, and one flew south at Beddington SF on Dec 30th.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** One flew west along the River Mole at Leatherhead at 1440hrs on Dec 24th. The seventh county record.

**Merlin** A female was at Capel on Nov 29th.

**Grey Partridge** There were ten at Rushett Farm, Malden Rushett on Nov 19th and Dec 9th, and two at Stakescorner, Loseley on Dec 30th-31st.

**Water Rail** Birds were reported from Beddington SF (2), Frensham Great Pond (3), Frensham Little Pond (up to 9), Gatton Park (1), Holmethorpe SP (up to 5), the London Wetland Centre (up to 10), Richmond (1) and South Norwood CP (up to 4).

**Moorhen** There were 248 along the River Wandle from Carshalton to Wandsworth on Dec 28th.

**Coot** The largest reported numbers were 259 at Thorpe Water Park on Nov 14th, 572 at Frensham Great Pond on Nov 28th and 283 at Frimley GP on Dec 28th.

**Common Crane** A juvenile was at Beddington SF from Dec 5th-7th. The ninth county record.

**Grey Plover** At Beddington SF three flew west on Dec 1st and one was there the next day. Another was at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 22nd-23rd.

**Dunlin** Birds were seen at Beddington SF, Island Barn Res, the London Wetland Centre, QE2 Res, South Norwood Lake, Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea) and Walton Res. The largest numbers were at Beddington SF with a total of 55 passing through on Nov 8th (largest flock was 30) and then through the next day.

**Ruff** There were three at Beddington SF on Dec 2nd.

**Jack Snipe** The first were at Beddington SF on Sep 26th. Wintering birds were reported from Beddington SF (up to 4), the London Wetland Centre (up to 3), QE2 Res (2 feeding in the cracks of the reservoir basin on Dec 23rd), Tice's Meadows, Badshot Lea (1) and Wimbledon Common (1).



*Jack Snipe, QE2 Res., 23 Dec 2010  
(Dave Harris)*

**Black-tailed Godwit** There were two at Beddington SF on Dec 21st and one at Island Barn Res on Dec 25th.

**Curlew** Single birds were at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 8th and Island Barn Res on Nov 27th. The cold weather in December displaced a number of birds with reports from Beddington SF, Canon's Farm (Banstead), Holmethorpe SP, Leith Hill, QE2 Res and Walton Res. The largest parties were of five at Holmethorpe SP and Walton Res on Dec 9th and six over Canon's Farm on Dec 23rd.

**Spotted Redshank** One was at Island Barn Res on Nov 13th.

**Greenshank** One was at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 3rd.

**Green Sandpiper** Birds were reported from Beddington SF (up to 12), Holmethorpe SP (2), Island Barn Res (up to 5), QE2 Res (up to 2), Tice's Meadows, Badshot Lea (1) and Walton Res (up to 3).

**Mediterranean Gull** At Beddington SF there was a first-winter on Nov 2nd and 5th and up to three birds were present in December. The regular adult was at Burgess Park Lake from Nov 13th-

Dec 5th, a first-winter was at QE2 Res on Nov 23rd and an adult was there on Dec 13th and at Island Barn Res on Dec 16th.

**Little Gull** At Beddington SF there was an adult on Nov 8th, four adults flew SE on Nov 9th and an adult flew east on Nov 21st. An adult and first-winter were at QE2 Res on Nov 8th and an adult was at Island Barn Res on Dec 3rd-4th.

**Ring-billed Gull** A first-winter was at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 1st.

**Iceland Gull** A first-winter was at Beddington SF on dates from Dec 15th-30th and also at Island Barn Res on Dec 31st.

**Kittiwake** An adult flew west at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 8th.



*Iceland Gull, Island Barn Res.,  
31 Dec 2010 (Dave Harris)*

**Guillemot** One flew low west over Unstead SF at 0905hrs on Dec 26th.

**Short-eared Owl** Single birds were at Esher on Nov 8th, Banstead on Nov 10th, Beddington SF on Nov 14th and 21st, QE2 Res on Nov 19th, Wimbeldon Common on Nov 27th and Ash Ranges on Dec 28th.

**Skylark** There were 300 at Holmethorpe SP on Nov 28th.

**Rock Pipit** Single birds were at the London Wetland Centre on Nov 23rd and Beddington SF on Dec 30th.

**Water Pipit** The first was at Tice's Meadows, Badshot Lea on Sep 27th. Peak numbers at the two regular wintering sites were four at Beddington SF and two at the London Wetland Centre. One was at Stoke on Nov 20th.

**Waxwing** The county was treated to an early appearance of this species in this 'Waxwing Year' (normally they do not arrive until the turn of the year). The first were at Battersea on Oct 28th and Stoke the next day. Only small numbers were seen in November with the largest flock a mere 14 in Epsom on Nov 24th. During December many



*Short-eared Owl, QE2 Res., 19 Nov 2010*

*(Dave Harris)*

more arrived, with around 650 birds recorded and a distinct bias to the north and west of the county.

The largest flocks were 150 in Streatham Hill on Dec 18th, 100 in Balham on Dec 19th and 24th (probably the same birds) and 153 in Ash on Dec 29th. Flocks of 50-80 were reported from a further 10 sites.

**Black Redstart** At Canon's Farm, Banstead there were three on Oct 10th, one on Oct 12th, two on Nov 6th-7th and one from Nov 10th-12th. Single birds were at the London Wetland Centre from Nov 26th-28th and Oxted on Dec 20th.

**Ring Ouzel** A female was in a New Malden garden on Dec 9th.

**Fieldfare** The first were at Thursley Common on Oct 5th. Peak movement was in late October with 300 SW at Thursley Common on Oct 20th, 630 west at Beddington SF the next day and 471 NW at the London Wetland Centre on Oct 25th.

**Redwing** The first was at Ewhurst on Sep 25th, followed by others at Camberley, Capel and QE2 Res on Sep 27th and Frensham Little Pond, Holmethorpe SP and the London Wetland Centre the next day.

**Cetti's Warbler** Up to seven were at the London Wetland Centre and one was at Holmethorpe SP on Dec 10th.

**Firecrest** Two were at Banstead Downs GC from Nov 6th-Dec 13th and two were at Frensham Great Pond on Nov 14th. Elsewhere, single birds were at Shirley Park GC on Nov 1st, central Croydon on Nov 3rd, Shirley Hills on Dec 10th, Beddington SF from Dec 21st-30th (with 2 there on Dec 31st), Frensham Outlet Pond on Dec 26th, Selsdon Park GC on Dec 27th, South Norwood Lake on Dec 28th and Wisley Airfield on Dec 29th.

**Bearded Tit** Up to three were at the London Wetland Centre from Nov 6th-21st and at Beddington SF two flew over on Nov 14th and one flew over on Dec 28th.

**Great Grey Shrike** Single birds were at Thursley Common from Oct 10th-Dec 31st, Wishmoor Bottom from Oct 10th-18th, Witley Common on Oct 21st, Frensham Common from Oct 23rd-Nov 6th (and again on Nov 24th and Dec 27th), Ash Ranges from Nov 13th-Dec 31st and Crooksbury Common on Dec 30th.

**Raven** Two were at Westcott on Nov 10th, single bird(s) were at

Thursley Common on Nov 23rd, Nov 24th, Nov 25th and Dec 7th, and one was at Hambledon on Nov 27th.

**Tree Sparrow** One was at Wisley Airfield on Dec 5th.

**Brambling** The first was at Beddington SF on Sep 29th followed by two over the London Wetland Centre the next day. Birds were reported from 18 sites with the largest numbers 20 at Hindhead Common on Oct 21st, 40 at Coldharbour on Nov 1st and 32 at Wisley Airfield on Dec 25th.

**Siskin** Birds were reported from 13 sites in November/December with the largest flocks 300 at Frensham Little Pond on Nov 6th, 110 at Pen Ponds on Nov 24th and 230 at Frensham Great Pond on Dec 25th.

**Twite** One flew west at the London Wetland Centre on Oct 12th.

**Lesser Redpoll** Birds were reported from 15 sites in November/December with the largest flocks 100 at Frensham Great Pond on Nov 20th, 300-400 at Headley Heath on Nov 22nd and 23rd, 100 at Chobham Common on Nov 24th and 170 at Banstead on Dec 19th.



**Mealy Redpoll** There was an influx of these birds into the UK this winter and this produced birds at eight sites in the county. Up to three were seen at Banstead, Beddington SF, Capel, Chobham Common, Headley Heath, the London Wetland Centre, Thursley Common and Tice's Meadows (Badshot Lea).

**Crossbill** Despite over 100 reported in the autumn very few were seen in the winter. There were 20 at Busbridge on Nov 11th and one flew over Streatham Common on Nov 14th.

**Hawfinch** One was at Holmwood Common on Nov 16th and two were at Bookham Common from Nov 23rd-Dec 28th.

**Lapland Bunting** One flew east at the London Wetland Centre on Dec 6th.

**Snow Bunting** One was at

Hindhead Common on Nov 13th and one was at Beddington SF on Dec 3rd.

**Yellowhammer** There were 90 at Holmethorpe SP on Nov 18th.

**Corn Bunting** One was at Canon's Farm, Banstead on Nov 6th.



*Corn Bunting, Canons Farm, Banstead, 6 Nov 2010  
(David Campbell)*

*Some records are subject to final check by the county or national records committees.*

### ❖ Escapes

**Bar-headed Goose** There were three at the London Wetland Centre on Oct 12th.

**Red-breasted Goose** One was with Barnacle Geese at Walton Res on Dec 14th.

**Harris' Hawk** One was again at Beddington SF on Nov 7th and 9th.

**Budgerigar** One was at Beddington SF on Nov 7th.

❖ **Contributors**

*Barn Elms Bird Group/WWT, Beddington Farm Bird Group, John Bedford, John Birkett, Doug Boyd, Canon's Farm website, John Clark, Croydonbirders website,*

*Ray Fry, Jeremy Gates, Dave Harris, Holmethorpe website, Londonbirders website, Brian Milton, Ken Noble, NW Surrey RSPB Group, Alan Prowse, David Smith,*

*Surreybirders e-group, Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society, Unstead Bird & Wildlife Group, Jeff Wheatley, and Penny Williams.*

**Note: January to March 2011 news to Shaun Peters ASAP please (contact details on page 32)**

## Notes

❖ **Welcome** to new members: Douglas Maughan, Chiddingfold, Matthew Phelps, Aldershot, Andrew Jamieson, Sunbury on Thames, Rick Lawlor, East Clandon, Tomaz Cahalane, Reigate, Peter Cusdin, Woking, and Janice Fisher, Ashstead.

❖ **Subscriptions** Thank you if you have already paid, but if not please send your subscription to the Membership Secretary. If you would like to let your bank do all the work please contact the Membership Secretary for a Standing Order form. Alternatively you can pay by online banking to Surrey Bird Club (Account No 59951338) at the Natwest bank, Guildford (sort code 60-09-21)

quoting your name and post code as a reference.

❖ **Call for Papers** - We would be pleased to receive papers for publication in future bird reports. Please contact Stella Bignold to discuss prospective papers or ideas.

❖ **Member Survey** - Have your say! We would be pleased to receive a completed questionnaire from anyone who has not yet returned it. See the website if you have misplaced your copy.

❖ **Birds of Surrey** - Our county avifauna. Take advantage of our special offer and order direct from David Brassington (contact details on page 32). **Price: £25 Delivery free in UK.**

## Surrey Bird Club Records Committee.

Our 2011 meeting was held on Mar 27th at my place in Walton on Thames. In attendance were John Clark (ex-Hants County recorder), Jeff Wheatley (ex-Surrey County recorder), Shaun Peters, Eric Soden (County recorder), Jeremy Gates, Johnny Allan, Steve Chastell (SBC Chairman & Database manager), Steve Spooner (ex London-in-Surrey recorder), David Griffin and myself (Records Committee Chairman for my sins).

We had in the region of 80 records to wade through. The majority of these were relatively straight forward, with most having already been circulated electronically. There were perhaps 20 or so birds upon which no decision could be made, hence an annual meeting is always needed to discuss these at more length.

In the end 18 of these were deemed 'NP' (not proven) with two birds pending as even after the meeting no decision could be reached, and more information would be requested.

The full list of decisions appear in the table on the next page, and these along with the previous two

meetings findings can be found on the Surrey Bird Club website News page here:

<http://www.surreybirdclub.org.uk/news.html>

An increasing number of submissions these days are supported by photographs. This is to be encouraged as it makes the committee's job easier (and more interesting). However, the importance of notes cannot be understated (please use the rare bird form on the website)

A number of birds known to have occurred last year and which still remain un-submitted or supported by notes are also listed below and can be viewed on the website.

*Dave Harris*

Table of SBC Rarities Committee decisions

Species	Location	Date	Observer	Verdict	Notes
White-fronted Goose (6&2)	Beddington SF	31/12/2010	FP et al	OK	
White-fronted Goose	Holmethorpe SP's	09/03/2010	GJ	OK	1st/w
Eider	Queen Elizabeth II Res	03/01/2011	DMH	OK	fm/imm
Eider	Queen Elizabeth II Res	24/01/2011	DMH, SJS	OK	fm/imm
Velvet Scoter	Island Barn Res	10/11/2010	DMH et al	OK	fm/imm
Scaup	Thorpe Park	06/02/2011	KD	OK	
Garganey	Frensham Great Pond	12/04/2009	SPP	OK	
Quail	Canons Farm, Banstead	28/08/2010	DC et al	OK	
Great Northern Diver	Island Barn Res	16/01/2011	DMH et al	OK	
Red-throated Diver	Frensham Little Pond	31/12/2009	SPP et al	OK	Dead 2Jan
Red-necked Grebe	Island Barn Res	12/11/2010	DMH et al	OK	
Red-necked Grebe	Cutt Mill	18/11/2010	RH et al	OK	
Black-necked Grebe (2)	Frensham Great Pond	14/05/2009	SPP	OK	
Gannet (3)	Beddington SF	25/09/2010	KG et al	OK	
Great White Egret	Holmethorpe SP's	06/09/2010	GJ	OK	
Great White Egret	Frensham Outlet Pond	27/11/2010	SPP	OK	
White Stork (6)	Cobham	10/02/2009		NP	
Honey Buzzard	Binscombe	09/05/2010	RB	OK	
Honey Buzzard	Ewell	18/09/2008	CM	NP	
Honey Buzzard	Holmethorpe SP's	07/09/2010	GJ & PK	NP	
Hen Harrier	Chelsham	14/04/2008	BT	Pend	
Hen Harrier	Holmethorpe SP's	21/03/2011	GJ	NP	
Hen Harrier	Canons Farm, Banstead	09/11/2010	DC	OK	
Hen Harrier	Ash Ranges	23/01/2011	NB	OK	
Hen Harrier	Thursley Common	10/01/2011	KG	OK	
Marsh Harrier	Frensham Common	21/04/2010	SPP	OK	
Marsh Harrier	Frensham Great Pond	10/05/2010	SPP	OK	
Goshawk	Barnes WWT	26/08/2007	RK	NP	
Goshawk	Horsell Common	14/04/2009	NW	OK	
Goshawk	Ewell/Stoneleigh	24/04/2010	NB	NP	
Rough-legged Buzzard	Leatherhead	24/12/2010	AP	Pend	
Merlin	Barnes WWT	26/10/2006	RK	NP	
Merlin	Barnes WWT	27/10/2006	RK	NP	
Merlin	Island Barn Res	16/04/2008	SJS	OK	
Merlin	Beddington SF	05/01/2011	MS	OK	
Merlin	Witley Common	28/02/2011	RB	OK	
Spotted Crake	Unstead SF	12/09/2010	BM et al	OK	
Spoonbill	Tice's Meadow	17/07/2007	KD	OK	
Common Crane	Beddington SF	02/05/2010	PA et al	OK	
Common Crane	Beddington SF	05/12/2010	FP et al	OK	
Pacific Golden Plover	Beddington SF	02/05/2010	RB, PA et al	OK	BBRC

Species	Location	Date	Observer	Verdict	Notes
Pacific Golden Plover	Barnes WWT	02/05/2010	RA, WN, RR	OK	BBRC
Little Stint (3)	Tice's Meadow	15/08/2010	KD	OK	
Bar-tailed Godwit	Tice's Meadow	24/04/2010	KD et al	OK	
Pectoral Sandpiper	Tice's Meadow	26/09/2010	RS	NP	
Curlew Sandpiper	Tice's Meadow	07/08/2010	RS	NP	
Spotted Redshank	Island Barn Res	13/11/2010	RS et al	OK	
Marsh Sandpiper	Tice's Meadow	07/10/2010	RH	NP	BBRC
Arctic Skua	Hollow Farm, Worplesdon	24/09/2010	JG, IG	OK	
Iceland Gull	Beddington SF	15/12/2010	PA et al	OK	
Iceland Gull	Island Barn Res	31/12/2010	DMH	OK	
Iceland Gull	Island Barn Res	21/01/2011	DMH	OK	
Caspian Gull	Barnes WWT	16/12/2010	RS	NP	
Caspian Gull	Beddington SF	08/09/2010	JPA	OK	
Caspian Gull	Beddington SF	27/10/2010	JPA	OK	
Caspian Gull	Beddington SF	01/11/2010	JPA	OK	
Caspian Gull	Beddington SF	08/11/2010	JPA	OK	
Caspian Gull	Island Barn Res	09/11/2010	DMH	OK	
Short-eared Owl	Papercourt GP's	01/06/2008	NW	OK	
Short-eared Owl	Canons Farm, Banstead	10/11/2010	DC	OK	
Red-rumped Swallow	Frensham Great Pond	30/04/2009	CS	OK	
Common Redpoll (2)	Bookham Common	13/02/2009	SJS	OK	
Common Redpoll	Dorking	02/01/2011	SM	NP	
Common Redpoll	Tice's Meadow	27/11/2010	RS	NP	
Common Redpoll	Papercourt GP's	11/03/2006	BM	NP	
Common Redpoll	Beddington SF	08/12/2010	JA et al	OK	
Common Redpoll	Canons Farm, Banstead	19/12/2010	DC	OK	
Snow Bunting	Beddington SF	03/12/2010	PA et al	OK	
Corn Bunting	Bletchingly	05/10/2010	KG	OK	
Corn Bunting	Canons Farm, Banstead	06/11/2010	DC	OK	
Corn Bunting (3)	Oxted	20/12/2010	JJ	NP	
Pallas's Warbler	Woking	06/11/2010	RAD	OK	
Yellow-browed Warbler	Ridlands	08/11/2009	PJO	OK	
Raven	Busbridge	23/04/2010	ES	OK	
Raven	Canons Farm, Banstead	16/03/2010	DC	OK	
Raven	Dorking	18/09/2010	CY	NP	
Raven	Frensham Great Pond	22/03/2009	SPP	OK	
Raven	Frensham Manor	25/10/2010	SPP	OK	
Willow Tit	Wimbledon Common	11/08/2007	GG	OK	
Willow Tit	Forest Green	20/02/2011	RS, RH	NP	
Tree Sparrow	Cross Lane	25/07/2010	MR	NP	
Tree Sparrow	Wisley	28/11/2010	AB	OK	

Key: NP = Not proven, OK = Accepted, Pend = In circulation, BBRC = British Birds Rarities Committee.

The following file contains reports for which no submission has been received. We welcome submissions from the finder or observers:

2010

Black-necked Grebe:	Frimley GP 1 December 4th
Shag:	Holmethorpe 1 January 1st (from 2009)
White Stork:	London Wetland Centre 2 flew ESE February 3rd
Whooper Swan:	Southwark Bridge 5 flew SE over Thames February 13th
Pink-footed Goose:	Holmethorpe 4 December 2nd
White-fronted Goose:	London Wetland Centre 6 October 9th London Wetland Centre 62 flew NW December 22nd Capel 1 flew N December 31st
Ferruginous Duck:	Burgess Park Lake 1 f November 28th
Scaup:	Thorpe Park 1 m January 17th Surrey Docks 1 f 3 m December 23rd
Eider:	Epsom Common 1 m flew N April 13th London Wetland Centre 16 over December 1st London Wetland Centre 11 over December 31st
Hen Harrier:	London Wetland Centre 1 m February 14th
Honey Buzzard:	Banstead 1 May 20th Barnes Common 2 May 20th Wimbledon Park 1 May 30th Unstead SF 1 June 12th Morden 1 June 27th London Wetland Centre 1 August 25th Chessington 1 September 5th Holmethorpe 1 September 19th
Black Kite:	London Wetland Centre 1 flew N August 31st
Montagu's Harrier:	London Wetland Centre 1 f flew NW September 3rd
Merlin:	Thursley Village 1 April 8th London Wetland Centre 1 September 30th Battersea Power Station 1 October 10th Capel 1 f November 29th
Corncrake:	London Wetland Centre 1 (taken by a Grey Heron) August 30th
Stone Curlew:	Wimbledon Common 1 April 2nd
Temminck's Stint:	Walton Res 2 May 24th
Arctic Skua:	River Thames 1 flew E near Tower Bridge September 23rd
Ring-billed Gull:	London Wetland Centre 1 first winter November 1st
Glaucous Gull:	South Norwood CP 1 first winter flew SE March 7th
White-winged Black Tern:	London Wetland Centre 1 September 26th
Guillemot:	Unstead SF 1 flew W December 26th
Hoopoe:	London Wetland Centre 1 April 21st
Golden Oriole:	Ham 1 June 30th Burgh Heath 1 July 2nd
Bearded Tit:	London Wetland Centre up to 3 November 6-21st
Common Redpoll:	London Wetland Centre up to 5 various dates to March 26th Badshot Lea 1 January 16th and 18th Cranleigh 1 February 15-16th London Wetland Centre, Capel, Chobham Common, Thursley Common, various dates and numbers during autumn influx
Lapland Bunting	London Wetland Centre 1 October 15th London Wetland Centre 1 December 6th
Snow Bunting:	Hindhead Common 1 November 13th

# Recording your bird sightings

The purpose of this article is to encourage readers to submit reports of their bird sightings. This provides invaluable scientific data, but in addition it is a convenient way for you to maintain your own records. If you have access to the internet, data entered electronically into the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Surrey Birders websites will be available for you to look at for years to come.

This article is not likely to be the last, as there are many aspects to the subject and it is not going to be possible for me to cover them all here. In addition, the BTO are shortly going to change the way Birdtrack information is passed on to the County Recorder which should make life easier for him and that may change how we ask you, as club members, to report sightings.

## The recent questionnaire

Readers will recall that they received a questionnaire with their renewal papers recently. Completed questionnaires are still arriving but already the Club has obtained a great deal of information. So far over half of the membership has responded and, at the time of writing this article, there are still four weeks left for members to return the questionnaire and be entered into the prize draw.

I therefore know that three quarters of the members who responded keep records of the birds that they have seen, but only 30% report sightings to the Club, and 30% (often the same people) send records in to the BTO. That means a great many members who keep records but do not pass the information on.

The questionnaire also asked about internet access. 80% of those who replied have internet access, which means they can submit records electronically to the BTO and to the Club. However, not having access to the internet does not prevent you from submitting information to the Club (or the BTO for some surveys), as paper records are acceptable.

I will now look at how to submit records to the BTO and to the Club, and why it is important in certain cases to make two separate reports.

## Reporting sightings to the BTO

Most of you will be aware that the BTO, as confirmed on its website, is an independent charitable research organisation. It combines professional and citizen science aimed at using evidence of change in wildlife populations, particularly birds, to inform the public, opinion-formers and environmental policy and decision-makers. It is possible to become a

member of the BTO, to provide funding and to demonstrate support for its aims, but it is also perfectly possible to submit reports to the BTO without being a member.

There are a number of different methods of providing information to the BTO:

1. BirdTrack - this is an online database into which you can directly record your sightings. You set up your regular sites so that you can select them through a dropdown list of your regular birding spots (but you can add records of sightings at any location). You can see a list of all the birds you have ever entered, and locate them on a map. It is an amazing resource.

Also the BTO is trying to encourage birdwatchers to use BirdTrack for all their sightings and, in particular, to record first and last sightings of migrating birds. The website contains charts that show the progress of birds migrating across the UK. For example, last autumn it was possible to see the progress of waxwings south from their initial landing spots in the North-East.

Bird-track is a crucial tool for the future monitoring of change in bird populations, and combines the resources of BTO and RSPB. It can track changes almost as it happens, and so I want (and only in part because I am the regional rep for the BTO) to encourage club members to use it as

their standard system, partly because it provides you with a permanent record of your own observations.

2. Bird Atlas - as you will know from articles written by Hugh Evans, you can enter records for the Bird Atlas project directly into the Bird Atlas database by way of roving records. As this is the last year of the survey evidence of breeding is really important. It is also possible to submit information in paper form.

3. Nest box challenge - this records information about nests (not only in birdboxes), including when any nest was built, when eggs were laid, when the eggs hatched and when the birds fledged. Data for this scheme is entered online.

4. Garden Birdwatch - this scheme is a membership scheme as it needs to cover its own costs. You pay an annual membership fee of £15.00. You can record not only birds but insects including dragonflies, damselflies, butterflies and bees, also reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Information other than bird records is sent on to the relevant recording organisation. Data can be entered online or sent in on paper forms. Members of Garden Birdwatch receive a magazine called Birdtable every three months. I understand the BTO are doing a "three week taster". To request a free BTO Garden BirdWatch taster pack, which includes a copy of the Garden BirdWatch magazine Bird



Table, email [gbw@bto.org](mailto:gbw@bto.org) or phone 01842 750050. one report is going to be made.

5. Other BTO surveys - these include the Breeding Bird survey, the Water Breeding Bird Survey, the Heron survey, ringing, the nest record scheme and Wetland Bird Survey. All the results go into the BTO main database. Information can be entered in paper form, or online (for BBS and WeBS only).

All the information that the BTO obtains is very important as it will be used by them whenever information is required about bird numbers and locations. Most of the BTO records, in relation to sightings in Surrey, are made available to the Club - and therefore the information can be included in the annual reports. The exception is that information from Garden Birdwatch is not currently available to the Club. Therefore, if you submit information to Garden Birdwatch, and the bird or birds should be reported under the Club's reporting policy for example you see a Brambling which the Club always wants reported, it is important that you pass this sighting to the Club as well as to the BTO, for the reasons explained in the next section of this article.

### **Reporting records to Surrey Bird Club**

The Club's current policy is that it would prefer sightings to be reported to the Club rather than the BTO if only

The Club collects information about sightings for a number of reasons: first, for entering on the Club's website page of recent sightings, and secondly for inclusion in the Newsletter and subsequently in the annual Bird Reports for Surrey published by the Club. However the records will also be used when the Club meets with local conservation organisations to discuss protection of areas and will also be supplied upon request to individuals or organisations who are going to use that information for conservation purposes. **Readers will be pleased to hear that businesses will be charged if they seek information from the club.**

Information about sightings, if you have internet access, should be submitted to the Club using the spreadsheet on the Club's website, following the guidelines that are on the website (and which are also set out in every Bird Report). I have not reproduced the guidelines with this article as I understand you will be receiving the 2005 Bird Report either with this Newsletter or shortly thereafter and so can look at them there. If you are able to submit sightings on the spreadsheet, this is much the most efficient way of doing it so far as the club is concerned because the information can be downloaded straight into the database. It would be appreciated if you could delete the sample entries before

forwarding the spreadsheet. If you do not have internet access then you can send in written reports but please make sure you supply all the information as detailed in the guidelines.

Information about sightings in Surrey can also be sent to a website called Surrey Birders ([www.birders-online.co.uk](http://www.birders-online.co.uk)). You have to join in order to submit records but there is no charge. Members' sightings are displayed on the website. Members have access to the database behind the website, and are able to see what has been recorded in the county and where. This website is not affiliated to the Club however the records from that database are passed to the Club so are included in the Club's Bird Reports.

### **Transferring data from the Club to the BTO and vice versa**

As will be clear so far, this is a very complex topic. Both the BTO and the Club need to receive reports but, as the two organisations use the data for different purposes, different information is wanted by each.

Information from the Club's website or from the Surrey Birders' website is not automatically passed to the BTO, so ideally separate reports should be made to the BTO.

However, the Club does obtain information from the BTO for the purposes of compiling the Annual Reports. However, this is not in a form

that can be easily used by the Club, and converting it into usable data is a time-consuming task. Two reasons for this are that some observers input details of every bird seen on every visit to a site, leading to more information than is needed (the Club does not need to know about every sighting of a blue tit, for example); and BirdTrack sites are often not identified by counties. Often tetrads are used (as this is how the Bird Atlas reports are being maintained), which means that out-of-county records have to be identified and deleted.

A further complication is caused by simple duplication. A report may be made to both the BTO and to the Club. Where a report is made to the BTO, and is later sent by the BTO to the Club, it is important that any duplications are identified and the duplicate deleted when the Annual Report is being compiled.

The Club's submission policies do not yet include procedures for reducing such duplication. This is something the Committee will be considering further and future Newsletters will explain any changes in reporting that we would like. In the meantime:

- As explained above, records sent to Garden Birdwatch are not provided to the Club so should be submitted separately to the Club when they are of interest (i.e. in accordance with the reporting guidelines).

- Other records submitted to the BTO, which meet the Club's reporting guidelines, should be submitted to the Club as well but, so that the Club knows that the record will also be received from the BTO:
  - i) When doing the report to the Club, in the notes section, please put a note to say that a report has also been made to the BTO.
  - ii) When doing the report to the BTO, in the notes section, please put a note to say that a report has also been made to the SBC.

Also, when naming a site in Birdtrack, please include the four digit grid reference in the site name (even if in brackets) and, if the site is in the Club's Gazetteer (as published in the Bird Report) use that site name and not a site name of your choice. Remember you can go into Birdtrack under "edit site names" and change the site name

to reflect the names in the Gazetteer and show the grid reference and doing this will make using your records much easier for the County Recorder.

Indeed, it is something I had better do now having realised that I have not done many reports for the Club and my site names in Birdtrack do not match those in the Gazetteer.

Finally, and I hope this article has encouraged you to send in some reports, it does not matter too much when records are submitted to the Club, up to a point. Please submit Records Committee bird sightings fairly quickly, with notes/ descriptions as appropriate. The remainder can be at the your convenience, perhaps a single spreadsheet at the end of each quarter.

*Penny Williams*

## Carrion Crow taking Grass Snake

At about 4:15pm on Sunday 1st May my wife called to come and look at something from our kitchen window in Farnham. When I arrived I saw a Carrion Crow taking off from our shed roof with a dead 600 mm long grass snake. My wife explained that the crow had flown up from behind the shed before adjusting its hold on the snake and flying off with it. It was

not clear whether the snake was killed by the crow.

Birds of the Western Palearctic lists snakes as being amongst prey items of the Carrion Crow, but it was a first for us. We have not previously seen grass snakes in our garden. Perhaps this is the reason why!

*Tim Chinn*

## Bird Atlas 2007-2011

Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds



### The final breeding season.

We are now less than two months from the end of the final breeding season of Bird Atlas 2007-11. How time flew!

In the Spring issue of Birding Surrey I appealed for a concerted effort to prove breeding during this summer. Thank you to all those who are actively doing so. Despite this effort there are still some extraordinary 'gaps' around the county, for species which we 'know' are breeding but haven't actually 'proved'.

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a spare Roving Record form. Could I ask everyone who has not already submitted records over the four-year period since Atlas began to check through their field notebooks and submit anything that plugs a gap. Obviously there is no need to enter records that have already been sent via any of the BTO recording schemes (Bird Atlas, BirdTrack, Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Garden BirdWatch (GBW), Ringing or the Nest Records Scheme (NRS), as these are being fed automatically across to Atlas where they provide additional information.

To find out what is currently missing from the Atlas database, providing you have access to the Internet, go to

[www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net) and from the Data Home page click on Any Square Summary > fill in the details of your 10km square and tetrad letter in the box provided > choose Winter or Breeding and a full list of species (for the appropriate season) will be displayed. For the Breeding season the breeding status is shown (Possible, Probably or Confirmed). Can you upgrade any of these categories? I should point out that Confidential Species will not appear on this list, they are held in the database and will be used in the final publication but possibly mapped at a different scale (i.e. at 10km rather than tetrad level). If in doubt please enter these rarer species anyway, it's better to have them twice than not at all, any duplications will be resolved.

If you have any records, going back as far as 1st November 2007, not yet entered, do please offer them to Atlas now. Should you need additional RR forms they can be downloaded from the Atlas website, or directly from me if you don't have Internet access. Please complete all forms by end of August if at all possible, and return directly to BTO, this is assuming you are unable to enter them directly through the online route. If you have a problem with Grid References and tetrad letter fill in the location in pencil in the left-hand columns (and mention the nearest feature that appears on an

Ordnance Survey map) send them to me and I will complete the details.

Thank you once again for the terrific support and enthusiasm that so many

have shown, since the project began.

*Hugh Evans (Atlas RO Surrey)*

## Surrey Ravens

Dear Editor,

I attach a series of photographs I took of a Raven at TQ0043 on 1 May 2011.

I took these pictures on my Panasonic DMC-FZ18 Lumix at the enhanced 27x zoom. The quality is not great but it is a Raven in Surrey!

I observed the bird from 13.00 to 13.20 from the road near Thorncombe. I heard it before I saw it, unmistakable Raven call, loud "Bullfrog" grok grok call constantly repeated. Other knocking calls also heard. The bird was perched near the top of a tall pine tree with a small bird in its bill. It then flew to another pine tree, constantly

calling. It came back to the original tree without the bird. It flew 3 more times, each time returning to the original tree. Large heavy bill clearly visible. Shaggy throat feathers seen when the bird was calling from the tree. I heard another Raven briefly calling some distance away to the South West.

The Ravens are known in this area. I have heard Raven calling here before but this is the first time I have seen one here.

Regards,

*Timothy Staton*



*Raven, near Thorncombe, 1 May 2011*



*(Timothy Staton)*

## Field Meeting Reports

**Staines Reservoir - Sunday 17th April** flies which were around.

So far I have been extremely lucky with the 3 field trips I have led to Staines Reservoir. Yet again sunshine and very little wind. Indeed so little wind that, even when I left at noon, there were still beautiful reflections of the birds on the water.

I am also pleased to report that I had a number of people joining me. With no disrespect to my fellow committee members who joined me, the nicest surprise was Alex. Alex lives in Hampshire and is a budding Dave Harris. Alex is in his young teens and had come with his grandfather, who lives in Surrey, as he was staying with his grandfather that weekend. Alex not only knew how to recognise the birds, he was good with the camera as well.

Alex and his grandfather had arrived before 9.30 so the rest of the group met them up on the causeway. Some terns were flying over and Alex produced a lovely photo on his digital camera which led Hugh to identify the tern as common. We saw three swooping over the water feeding on the many

flies which were around. Shortly after that we managed to pick out some Little Gulls flying around. We had been told by a bird watcher we had spoken to that he had seen 30 that morning. There were certainly quite a few flying around. Most were in the distance but we had sufficiently good views of some in order to be able to see the black under the wings and note how the jizz was very different to the many Black-Headed Gulls which were around.

We checked the rafts but there were no terns on them just the Black-Headed Gulls and a couple of cormorants.

I had seen reports of Velvet Scoter and Great Northern Diver for a few days before the Sunday and the Velvet Scoter obligingly stopped diving and started preening quite close to some Tufted Ducks. This allowed us to make out the white in the wings and also compare the sizes of the two. The Velvet Scoter was clearly much larger.

We scanned both basins for the Diver but no sign. However we did find a female Mallard with 6

ducklings. They were very small and so obviously recently hatched. We also found quite a few Great Crested Grebes, Coot and Tufted Ducks. We found a few Wigeon over by the bank together with Shoveler and some Gadwall. Shortly after this a pair of Shelduck flew over.

We were then told that a small Grebe was at the far end of the causeway so off we went to see if we could see it. Amongst the Tufted Ducks and a Goldeneye we found a small Grebe. The light made identifying it very difficult as we were looking almost directly into the sun and the Grebe was diving regularly and never coming up where the telescope was pointing. My initial impression was of a Slavonian Grebe but Alex mentioned that he could make out some gold around the back of the head and I thought I made it out as well when the Grebe was at a certain angle. We therefore identified it as a Black-Necked Grebe. However I think now we were wrong. Kevin Duncan saw a Grebe there shortly afterwards when the light was more favourable and took the view it was a Slavonian Grebe. 17th April was also the date for the WeBS survey and the two WeBS surveyors, who

were able to see the Grebe from a totally different angle due to the access that they have to the basins, were able to confirm it as being a Slavonian Grebe.

Shortly after that Stella and Ruth made their way off and Hugh had to leave as well. Hugh's parting shot was that he hoped we would not see the Diver. Well Hugh we did not see a Diver we saw two. Suddenly in the middle of the south basin a really good view of two Great Northern Divers. They were diving regularly and moved away but our first views of them were excellent.

As we made our way back along the causeway more Little Gulls flew near us and the final bonus was a Great Crested Grebe coming up really close to us with a fish and taking some time to eat it. A great way to finish.

*Penny Williams*

**Bookham Common- Saturday 7 May**

Fourteen keen members turned up at 0930 hours but were leaderless. I had turned up in error at 0900 hrs and gone home. Frank rang me and got me on the right path again and the annual warbler walk commenced.

Whitethroats abounded. I knew of at least 40 territories - far more than the peaks of a decade ago yet this species suffered more than any in the sub-Saharan problems of the early seventies when their population dropped nationally by 75% in five years. The other victim of those days, the Sand Martin, has never recovered, so have the Whitethroats changed their winter quarters and migration route?

While enjoying the Whitethroats we heard plenty of Garden Warblers to contrast with the Blackcap song. The decline of Willow Warblers of a decade ago - from about 30 down to three - seems to be reversing with at least 9 pairs, so the news of summer visitors was not all bad. For the first time for several years there were two Cuckoos heard, one of which clipped his second note making identification easy, and we had flight views as he flew past looking for the female on my iPod. Two out of the four Nightingales present sang well for us, and the first Swift of the season flew over, as did House Martins and Swallows which still nest in the vicinity. One of the Nightingales was accompanied by an obliging Lesser Whitethroat, one of several on the plains.

A Kestrel was hunting, but it was a puzzle why he hovered so high up. Some Buzzards were seen and easily identified, but another came over which puzzled us for some minutes. In moult, it appeared to have more slender wings and a longer tail, and due thought was given to a Honey Buzzard, but rejected. Frank Boxall took some distant shots which came up well on the computer. They showed the pale band beyond the gorget, a pale line across the underwing coverts, and the pattern of bands on the primaries confirming the ID as Common Buzzard when we examined them the following day. We are getting to the stage where the camera is mightier than the telescope.

A walk past the ponds showed nesting Mute Swan and Canada Goose, with pairs of Little Grebe and Tufted Duck, and Broad-bodied Chasers and a Downy Emerald to add interest. We missed out on birds in the woodland, and did not even have a Nuthatch for our pains, but it was a wonderful good-humoured group and forty three species, and the rain of 0900 hours did not return.

*Alan Prowse*



## Future Field Meetings

### **Saturday 2 July, Thundry Meadows.**

For birds, reptiles and rare plants. Meet 9:30am where Seale Road meets the B3001 (Grid Ref SU897440). Car parking will be on road verges in the area. Morning only.

Leader: Ken Ankorn.

### **Saturday 13 August, Queen Mary Reservoir.**

Ringling demonstration, Hersham Ringing Group. Meet 9am at Ashford Road (B377 Gate) Laleham (TQ055695). Morning only.

Leader: Steve Chastell.

(Leader contact details except where stated are given on page 32)

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**Beddington Guided Tours:** August 21st, September 18th, November 20th

Contact Keith Millar on 020 8642 8938 or email enquiries to [keith\\_millar@hotmail.com](mailto:keith_millar@hotmail.com)

Meet 9.30 am at Hackbridge Railway Station car park (parking £1).  
Tours finish at 1 pm.

*The Surrey Bird Club hereby gives notice that all arrangements made by the Club for any person taking part in any meeting, visit or other activity are made by the Club as agents for that person and that consequently the Club accepts no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience arising from his or her participation in Club activities.*

*Passengers accept lifts in private cars at their own risk.*

**The copy date for the next issue of Birding Surrey is  
31st July 2011**

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*Fig 6. Avocets, QE2 Res, 8 March 2011*

*(Dave Harris)*



*Fig 7. Garganey, Walton Res., 16 April 2011*

*(Dave Harris)*



*Fig 8. Wheatear, Pirbright Common, 22 April 2011 (Kevin Smith)*



*Fig 9. Drake Garganey, Walton Res, 15 Apr 2011 (Dave Harris)*