

# NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2017  
Editor: Tony Bates



## RSPB New Forest Local Group

### Fawley Power Station redevelopment

Recently, a series of public exhibitions took place on the proposal by Fawley Waterside Ltd to redevelop the Fawley Power Station in the Fawley, Langley and Calshot area.

It is proposed to create a new community of 1500 homes and “up to 2000 jobs”, as well as creating a marina/dock, which can take boats up to 2000 tons. It is recognised that the site is in, or borders, two SPAs, a SSSI and Ramsar designated site and ecological assessments have been made and mitigation measures proposed for replacing or creating habitat for birds, plants and wildlife. There are also measures to try to reduce human (and dog) activity along the foreshore. One may wish to question whether the mitigation is sufficient and whether it would work as suggested.



The redevelopment team was at the exhibitions to answer questions, but if you missed these, you can review the presentation by downloading the [Public Exhibitions Leaflet](#). There is no planning application listed on [New Forest District Council](#)'s website yet (as of 28 September), but full details of the application should appear there shortly.

# Tracking hen harriers

For 15 years Natural England has tracked hen harriers to research their dispersal behaviour using a combination of radio and satellite devices.

The satellite tracking devices are lightweight transmitters. These are harnessed to the back of fledgling harriers. The devices can work for at least 3 years and locate any tagged bird to an accuracy of within 150 metres. This accuracy is dependent on the tag being able to recharge using solar energy at least every 48 hours.

Between 2002 and 2017 Natural England tracked 158 individual hen harriers of which:

6 were still alive in 2017  
16 died of natural causes  
3 were known to have been persecuted  
The fate of the remaining 133 is unknown.

The latest tracking data can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hen-harriers-tracking-programme-update>.

# Bird Aware Solent

Additional house building in Hampshire will increase numbers of people using the coast and put additional pressure on coastal bird habitats. Bird Aware Solent is funded by developer contributions to take action to reduce the disturbance to over-wintering birds. Bird Aware Solent is the branding of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership, which comprises fifteen local councils, Natural England, RSPB, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and Chichester Harbour Conservancy.

Bird Aware rangers engage with visitors and communities along the coast to help people learn about the different species of bird and understand the impact of bird disturbance. Every year 90,000 waders and wildfowl fly here from as far as the Arctic. This makes the Solent coast of worldwide importance for wildlife.

These birds need to feed and rest undisturbed so that they can survive the winter and build up enough energy to fly back to their summer habitats. Their survival relies on everyone helping to prevent bird disturbance.



# GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

April - June 2017

It has only happened once before, but for this quarter everyone recorded blackbirds in their gardens during every week to produce a 100% figure in the birdweeks table! Generally the recording rates in the upper halves of both tables remained very similar to the corresponding quarter for last year with the exception of goldfinch and house sparrow, which both increased. Chaffinch and greenfinch figures both dropped down both in position and recording rate, which reflects the national trend for these species for which disease is a contributing factor.

Many species in the lower half of each table showed lower recording rates; coal tits were seen in about the same number of gardens (70%) but a lot less regularly (down from 43% of weeks to 30%); long-tailed tits dropped from 76% of gardens to 58% and from 26% to 17% of birdweeks. Great spotted woodpecker and jay also had similar results. Stock doves and bullfinches showed increases in both tables. Pied wagtails are usually seen less often in spring and summer but over a third of us saw them in our gardens this year and I have been lucky enough to have a family visiting occasionally.



As usual, there were no reports of house martins or swifts in gardens or on houses and only one person had swallows but she did have two pairs nesting in her garage. Quite a few people reported these species flying overhead. We don't normally mention mammals but a stoat was seen in a garden in Pennington and a badger dug up a wasp's nest at the bottom of my garden.

From your reports it seems that it was a good breeding season for our birds. Several people reported good numbers of young birds in their gardens with one lady recording juveniles of eleven different species. Another person saw a sparrowhawk take a baby blackbird. Two pairs of house sparrows nested in my new sparrow nest box but three baby blue tits did not make it beyond their nest box but six others did.

Rarer birds reported in only one garden each were tree sparrow, red legged partridge, hawfinch and lesser black-backed gull.

Other species among the 51 reported were: sparrowhawk (10 gardens); black-headed gull and rook (9); green woodpecker (8); herring gull (7); goldcrest (6); blackcap, mallard and tawny owl (5); marsh tit and chiffchaff (4); pheasant, grey wagtail and feral pigeon (3); common buzzard, willow warbler, grey heron and reed bunting (2); tree creeper, mistle thrush and swallow (1 garden each).

**Table 1: Percent/Birdweeks**

1	Blackbird	100	1
2	Wood pigeon	96.8	2
3	Dunnock	95.1	3
3	Robin	95.1	4
5	Blue tit	89.4	5
6	Goldfinch	82.7	9
7	Great tit	80.3	6
8	House sparrow	76.8	8
9	Starling	74.6	12
10	Collared dove	75.4	7
11	Magpie	63.6	11
12	Chaffinch	51.1	12
13	Greenfinch	47.8	13
14	Carrion crow	45.2	16
15	Nuthatch	42.7	14
16	Jackdaw	37.7	17
17	Great spotted woodpecker	32.5	18
18	Song thrush	30.8	19
19	Coal tit	30.1	15
20	Stock dove	26.9	23
21	Siskin	25.2	20
22	Wren	23.4	21
23	Bullfinch	20.6	24
24	Long-tailed tit	16.6	22
25	Rook	15.8	-

**Table 2: Percent/Birdgardens**

1	Blackbird	100	1
1	Wood pigeon	100	1
1	Dunnock	100	1
1	Robin	100	1
5	Blue tit	97	1
5	Great tit	97	1
7	Starling	94	10
7	Collard dove	94	7
9	Goldfinch	91	11
9	House sparrow	91	11
9	Magpie	91	7
12	Chaffinch	79	7
13	Carrion crow	73	17
14	Song thrush	70	16
14	Wren	70	14
16	Coal tit	70	17
17	Greenfinch	67	11
18	Nuthatch	64	17
19	Jackdaw	58	21
19	Long-tailed tit	58	15
21	Great spotted woodpecker	55	17
22	Bullfinch	48	22
23	Siskin	45	23
24	Jay	36	23
24	Pied Wagtail, Stock dove	36	-

The percentage figure in Table 1 is calculated by adding the percentage of weeks that each observer records any species and dividing by the number of observers. If an observer records a species for 9 weeks in a 12 week period this is 75% for that observer. If the total of all the percentages for 50 observers is 3000 this gives a percent/birdweeks figure of 60. If half of the observers each record a species for half of the weeks we would get 25% for the percent/birdweeks figure.

The percent/birdgardens figure is simply the number of gardens in which a species has been recorded divided by the number of recorders and multiplied by 100. The last column in each table gives the corresponding rank position for the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

# TRIP REPORTS

**Martin Down** Wednesday 7 June 2017

Thirteen local group members met at the Sillen(s) Lane car park on a very breezy, but occasionally bright morning - luckily the torrential rain of Tuesday had abated. House martins and swifts were hawking over the car park and the sound of skylarks filled the air. We started off on the path to the south of the car park where we could hear chiffchaff and wren singing from the trees on the left and see and hear skylarks across the open downs to the right. The call of rooks was incessant. We had a couple of tantalising glimpses of small doves flying. There were scattered common spotted and fragrant orchids to the left of the path, and in places they carpeted the open grassy areas to the right.

At the junction in the paths, we took the one to the south-west through small trees and bushes. Here turtle dove put on some beautiful hovering display flights. We had the first of several sightings of common whitethroat in the bushes and heard the song of lesser whitethroat coming from dense cover. Distant cuckoo and pheasant were heard. Bullfinch and chaffinch were seen in the bushes.



At the junction, we took the north-east path where greater butterfly orchids were present. Skylarks seemed to be everywhere; yellowhammer sat in the low hawthorn bushes and stonechat were active along the dyke. Small blue and small heath butterflies were settled on the path. A white orchid spike proved to be an unusual fragrant orchid. A large pale raptor was thought to be a buzzard, but only provided a brief view. Continuing on the path we found a clump of burnt tip orchids before takes a path across the down to pick up the return path to the car park, where we ate our packed lunches.



After lunch we drove up to the car park on the A354. We decided to stay on the south side of the Salisbury Road rather than crossing to explore the coppices on the north. Linnets and yellowhammers were on the bushes and a male kestrel flew overhead. Adonis blue butterflies were found near the rifle butts. A hobby flew through fast and low. A small patch of frog orchids was found, very easily overlooked. Finally, we had great views of a

corn bunting sitting on a low bush, before we head back to the cars. The hobby made another swift pass over the car park just before we left. Despite the strong wind, we had found a good range of birds and butterflies.

Bird species: Pheasant (H), Buzzard, Kestrel, Hobby, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo(H), Common Swift, Magpie, Rook, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Skylark, Swallow, House Martin, Chiffchaff, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Wren, Blackbird, Song Thrush (H), Robin, Stonechat, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Linnet, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting

Orchid species: Common Spotted, Burnt Tip, Fragrant, Pyramidal, Frog

Butterfly species: Brimstone, Red Admiral, Holly Blue, Small Blue, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Grizzled Skipper, Small Heath, Meadow Brown, Marbled White, Small White, Green-veined White

Other: Chimney Sweeper Moth, Ruddy Darter Dragonfly

## Goatspen Plain Saturday, 20 June 2017

After a successful and enjoyable BBQ at Anderwood, 27 people met at Goatspen car park to take a short walk across the heath in the setting sunlight to listen to chirring nightjar. A song thrush was singing persistently from across the valley and a small bird (lbj) flew past make a distinctive flight call that had us all baffled. A large departing raptor flying with the typical accipiter flap-flap-glide was believed to be a goshawk. After a short while the first nightjar was heard and then one was spotted flying low over the heath. It settled on a gorse bush for quite some time allowing virtually all those present to get a view of it through a telescope. Although standing in full view it was hard to locate through binoculars. After more chirring and fleeting glimpses, we decided to call it a night and returned happily to our cars.

## Keyhaven Marshes Tuesday, 4 July 2017

14 people met for an evening stroll around Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes. The group took the clockwise route round the marshes starting along the "Ancient Highway" and returning along the sea-wall. Here were good numbers of whitethroat, including juveniles in the bushes along the Ancient Highway. Also present were finches, including bullfinch. Tufted duck and gadwall were amongst the duck on the Balancing Pool and little grebe were evident.

A range of waders were still present at Fishtail, Butts and Keyhaven Lagoons including avocet, spotted redshank and sandpipers. Eider duck were present

on the sea and sandwich tern flew along the shoreline. The absence of raptors was possibly surprising as a number of species are usually present.

#### Species List:

Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Gadwall, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Eider, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Lapwing, Dunlin, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Wood Pigeon, Common Swift, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Swallow, Chiffchaff (H), Whitethroat, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Bullfinch, Reed Bunting

### Denny Wood Wednesday, 2 August 2017

This was our planned bird and butterfly walk for the year. The butterfly season was two to three weeks early this year, and most of the target species were unlikely to still be around. This, together with the grey and drizzly weather conditions resulted in a cancellation of the trip.

### Warsash and Hook Spit Sunday, 3 September 2017

With high winds and rain forecast for the day, this field trip was cancelled and a notice posted on the nfrspb.org.uk website the evening before the walk. Even so, four people turned out on a cold wet morning, but with weather conditions worsening by the minute, decided against continuing with the walk.

### Portland Bill Thursday, 14 September 2017

The weather forecast suggested a bright dry morning with the possibility of showers later, but a strong westerly wind for our annual trip to Portland to sample the autumn migration.

Disappointingly only five people turned up for a day that provided some unexpected sightings. Two of us set out early and had a quick stop at Ferrybridge on the way to Cheyne Weares. There were very few waders present on the mud, singles of sanderling and bar-tailed godwit, a couple of ringed plover and a number of oystercatchers



was all that were seen. Black-headed, herring and great black-backed gulls rested on the mud and several meadow pipits and a couple of pied wagtails foraged on the shore.

At Cheyne Weares car park we had a couple of sightings of peregrine, one flew low along the line of the cliffs but the other went right over our heads giving an excellent view. We were unable to find one roosting on the cliffs in their familiar spot. At the quarry just south of the car park, we got brief tantalising views of blackcap, chiffchaff and willow warbler, but they kept themselves hidden most of the time. A little further down the road we came on the first rarity of the day in the form of a solitary buff-breasted sandpiper only about 20 feet from a footpath from which it could easily be watched without disturbing it at all.

The walk through the fields produced the first of the large number of wheatears and meadow pipits seen during the trip as well as a few stonechats and a single yellow wagtail. Kestrels seemed to be present virtually all the time either hovering over the cliff edge or swooping across the fields. Lunch at the lighthouse did not produce any sea passage although there were several cormorants and a sizeable flock of great black-backed gulls moving around. Rock pipits foraged around the café tables nearby.

A stop at the observatory quarry at first seemed fruitless with only house sparrows and stonechats moving, but one sharp-eyed member spotted and



photographed a wryneck in the brambles, which went unseen, not only by the rest of our group, but by the other 25 or so people present. Walking back along the cliffs produced more wheatears, we had never seen so many, more rock pipits now in more appropriate habitat along the shore and a sparrowhawk perched on a fence-post. Then the promised afternoon shower hit, which was heavy, cold

and accompanied by a strong wind such that the rain was horizontal. Chilled but not disheartened, we agreed to an unscheduled stop at Lodmoor on the way home to see if the American waders were still present.

We were greeted with the news that the stilt sandpiper had been flushed a few minutes before, but there was plenty of other interest with Mediterranean gull, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, marsh harrier, teal, moorhen, little egret, etc. A walk round to another viewing point produced good telescope views of a least sandpiper, but it was very hard to pick up on the mud with binoculars. A great white egret and grey herons were also viewable. A last stroll round to the first viewpoint was a first unsuccessful in locating the stilt sandpiper, which had not returned to its former feeding location but, straining to look at distant pools just visible over the tops of the reeds, we located the sandpiper with a group of dunlin. For some of us that was three "lifers" in one day!

Species list:

Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Teal, Mallard, Pheasant, Cormorant, Little Egret, Great Egret, Grey Heron, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Peregrine



Falcon, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Least Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-headed Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Kingfisher, Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Great Tit, Swallow, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Robin, Wheatear, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit,

## WHALE BIRD

There was a whale bird on Keyhaven Marsh. Well, if you insist, a red phalarope. Oh, if you are a British birder, a grey phalarope. So many common names for such a confiding bird.



It was swimming in a drainage channel by Keyhaven Lagoon, next to the footpath. It seemed totally unfazed by the cyclists, walkers with dogs, and walkers, like me, with telescopes and cameras. Just swimming up and down the channel feeding on insects. It was so near that the many men with big telephoto lenses were having to back away so that they could focus on its winter plumage.

What was it doing here? Well the lifestyle of this bird is fascinating. They nest in the high arctic tundra near ponds and streams in June and July. Then they migrate south, to West and South Africa (from the eastern part of their range) or to South America (from the western side). The female selects her partner(s) which, (having laid her eggs) she leaves to raise the chicks on his own. Like the dotterel, it is the female that is brightly coloured (red - as the widespread common name suggests). They feed on aquatic insects, hence nesting near ponds, and have developed the habit of eating parasites from the backs of marine mammals, hence 'whale bird'. During their southerly migration they get blown off course by strong winds and end up over land (albeit near coastal regions) usually in October or November. This in itself is remarkable as their migration, if undisturbed by gales and hurricanes, is totally over the oceans, never seeing land between the nesting grounds and their winter quarters.



(Images: Chris Robinson)

Why they are quite so confident is a mystery, they really don't fear people in a way that other birds do. Even sparrows (co-habiting with humans for 30,000 years) are warier. I suppose that nesting in marshy tundra and spending most of the rest of their lives out to sea means that they have never really felt the impact of people.

## SNIPPETS

### Which colour feeder do birds prefer?

Two students from Somerset (aged 14 and 15) have won an award for their work in checking what colours birds prefer. They set up five feeders in each of their gardens coloured blue, green, red, yellow and clear. The orientation of the feeders was changed regularly so as not to skew the results. They set up a camera for an hour each morning, afternoon and evening across all four seasons to record the bird visits to each feeder. They amassed data covering a total of 400 hours and got 3205 pieces of data.

Their results showed that a third of the birds visited the blue feeder with green the second favourite. Birds have an extra colour sense compared with humans which enables them to detect colour on the ultra violet spectrum. Could this explain their preference for blue and that they were more wary of red and yellow because these colours are often an indicator of unpleasant substances in nature?



After their research the boys thought about possible applications for their findings – could the less popular red and yellow help to deter bird strikes on wind turbines for example?

### Crowdfunding appeal for hides at Snettisham

The RSPB has launched its first ever crowdfunding appeal to try to raise £120,000 to replace two hides at Snettisham, which were destroyed in the great coastal storm of 2013. One new hide will replace the two that were destroyed in the storm. It has been designed by specialist architects to be more resistant to floods, whilst providing splendid views in two directions.

The crowd funding scheme allows members of the public to donate money for a specific purpose in exchange for awards, many of which are exclusive. The RSPB has managed to secure some wonderful awards that should inspire people to donate. How about a donation from the 'specialist architects'? (Perhaps they could afford one out of their fees!)

## One sea bird at least is doing well!

Although we keep getting told that sea birds are doing badly in the UK, it is good to be able to mention one species which is bucking the trend!

Since 2006, gannets at RSPB Bempton Cliffs have increased from 2550 pairs to 13400 pairs. This is an increase of 525%!

## Now local peregrines are being attacked!

We have heard a lot about Hen Harriers and larger raptors being killed illegally but it appears that peregrines are also being targeted. Earlier this year a teenage girl discovered a peregrine struggling to fly in Kings Somborne, near Stockbridge. She caught the bird and it was taken to the Hawk



Conservancy Trust near Andover. A vet found that the bird had a fractured wing caused by shooting.

The bird was ringed and it showed that it had hatched at Salisbury Cathedral in 2014 and was known as Peter. He recovered well after treatment and was released back into the wild.

Unfortunately this incident shows that it is not only shooting estates in the Pennines that are targeting raptors but that it is happening a lot closer to home.

## When are we going to get some rare breeders?

News came of great white egrets breeding at Holkham (had the local spoonbills told them it was a good place to breed?). This followed news that a pair of night herons had fledged two young at Westhay Moor, Somerset (first UK breeding) and that five pairs of cattle egrets had raised nine young at Ham Wall, Somerset.



There were 13 black-winged stilts fledged in Kent, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, but sadly the popular bee-eaters at East Leake in Nottinghamshire failed in their breeding attempts.

So when are we going to get some rare breeders down here? Have we got to wait for the Poole Harbour ospreys to start nesting or can we persuade Montagu's harriers or stone curlews to come back to Martin Down?

Remember red-backed shrike nested in the New Forest within living memory so why not again?

## Tagged Cuckoos – Selborne and Larry update

### Selborne

Selborne 'Our' tagged cuckoo was the first to arrive back in England on 13 April 2017 and spent the next few weeks around Pigbush, Beaulieu Road Station and near Brockenhurst before setting off south again on 20 June . That's only just over 9 weeks in England! He travelled down to Brittany and



then into the Basque region of northern Spain. He then spent some time in a wooded area of central Spain before setting off south again on 22 August arriving in Algeria on 24 August. He crossed the Sahara (990 miles!) and by 26 August was in south Mali. After passing through Burkino Faso he arrived in Benin on 31 August. At the beginning of September, he was in the Pendjari

National Park, home to elephants, lions, hippos, buffalo and antelope – a bit different to the New forest!

### Larry

Larry, a cuckoo from the Forest of Bowland , favoured a much more easterly route. He set off south on 19 June and went to southern Italy via France and Croatia. He had used southern Italy as a stop off point in his two previous migrations but this year it was exceptionally hot and dry and obviously not to his liking for he turned round and by 1 August he had amazingly gone up to Poland. None of the tagged cuckoos had ever visited Poland before! He stayed in Poland until 16 August but by 18 August he had gone back to Croatia and then Montenegro. On 23 August he was in Egypt, near the border with Libya (still much further east than the other cuckoos) and by 30 August he was in Chad having successfully crossed the Sahara.

So it looks as if Selborne and Larry were using different brands of satnav!

The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654