

The Hoopoe



Dorset Bird Club Newsletter

No.64

Winter / Spring 2008



Editor's Chat - State of Europe's Birds

H5N1 Avian Flu in Dorset

Dorset Bird Club A.G.M

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Acknowledgements

Cover Photograph:-

Bearded Tits - Chris Steel

Inside Photographs:-

Willow Tit, Mute Swan - Ian Lewis, Mediterranean Gull - Nick Hull

Common/Hazel Dormouse - Hugh Clark

Cattle Egret, Little Auk - Kevin Lane

Cassowary, Greenland White-fronted Goose - Wikipedia

Backcover Photographs:-

All photographed in Poole Harbour

Spoonbill, Raven, Red-breasted Merganser, Pinkfooted Goose, Long-tailed

Duck & Sandwich Tern - Alan Hayden. Purple Sandpiper - Terry Elborn

Editor's Chat Nick Hull

Just recently, I was talking to a birding friend about our declining breeding species, their conservation and the efforts that the various conservation bodies go to. We discussed whether the money that the conservation bodies spend is justified, as some species are on their northern limit in Britain and are more common across the Channel in mainland Europe.

The conversation ended in front of the computer with us searching the internet for evidence to see if his claim was justified. Well, we both had a surprise when we found that our search for information revealed that mainland Europe's birds are in decline in much the same way as ours are.

In fact, an analysis of 124 of Europe's common birds revealed that over a 26 year period, 56 species (45%) have declined across 20 European countries - an alarming statistic which can only fuel fears for the future of Europe's birds.

Ten of the common European species that have shown the greatest declines, are birds of farmland habitats. Comparing old and new EU member states, declines in the new member states seem to be mimicking those in the longer-established states.

The RSPB has said, "The European declines of familiar farmland birds, like the Grey Partridge, Turtle Dove and Lapwing are deeply worrying. These declines are so severe that in Europe they are considered to be heading towards continental extinction - it is only the sizeable populations of birds in Asia which prevents them from being considered at risk of global extinction".

Of the 124 species, 33 were classified as common farmland birds and 28 as common forest birds. The analysis confirmed that farmland birds were in decline throughout Europe with the cumulative population of all 33 species of farmland birds having declined 44% between 1980 and 2005.

The species that have shown the greatest declines in Europe in the period are:

- Crested Lark - 95% decline
- Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - 81% decline
- Grey Partridge - 79% decline
- Eurasian Wryneck - 74% decline
- Northern Wheatear - 70% decline
- Common Nightingale - 63% decline
- European Turtle Dove - 62% decline
- Willow Tit - 58% decline
- Northern Lapwing - 51% decline
- European Serin - 41% decline.

It's not all bad news however. Although 56 species have declined, 29 species have increased and 27 species have been found to be stable. Because of lack of data, 12 species couldn't be assessed on a long term basis.

The species which have shown an increase are:

Collared Flycatcher - 182% increase

Common Raven - 118% increase

Blackcap - 82% increase

Common Buzzard - 80% increase

Black Woodpecker - 77% increase

Common Woodpigeon - 71% increase

Eurasian Collared Dove - 59% increase

Common Chiffchaff - 56% increase

Eurasian Green Woodpecker - 43% increase.

I do not think that there are any surprises in the species that have increased. Indeed, I think that we have noticed an increase in Dorset in a number of these species, particularly Raven and Common Buzzard. Likewise, we have seen the obvious declines in Grey Partridge, Lapwing and Willow Tit.



Charting declines and increases is one of the aims of the current BTO Atlas, fieldwork for which is underway. Volunteers are needed and it's not too late to get involved – survey areas are allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

Fieldwork for the Atlas started on 1st November 2007. Two types of records are requested - *Roving Records* aim to capture all kinds of distribution records, from species lists for grid squares to one-off records of hard to find species, and anything in between. *Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs)* are principally concerned with discovering the broad patterns of relative abundance. A *TTV* involves walking around a tetrad, birdwatching for 1 or 2 hours and recording everything you see and hear.

For full details of how to get involved:

contact the BTO Dorset Representative Mike Pleasants at mike@btorepdorset.org or by telephone on 01202 593500 or go to Mike's website at www.btorepdorset.org.

Chairman's Chat Jackie Hull

I'm about to start my third and last year as Chairman of the Dorset Bird Club. The last two years have rather flown by and have seen a number of changes.

Our website has had a facelift thanks to Nick Hull, Jol Mitchell and Kevin Lane. They have set up a rota to ensure that the sightings page is updated every day without being an undue burden on one person as has happened in the past. The new website will provide more information on what is happening in the Club and on conservation issues and surveys within the county. We hope that you will get involved, particularly with the new BTO Atlas.

Another change has been our newsletter, which has been very well received; our thanks go to Editor Nick Hull. He is always looking for new and interesting pieces to include. Why not write about your local patch, county or even out of county birding experiences?

Please come along to our Annual General Meeting on March 29th at 7p.m at The Methodist Church Hall, Wareham. The Club's AGM is

never a stuffy affair and it is a good way to catch up with other members and then to be treated to a splendid talk. This year, Magnus Robb will be talking on the birds and adventures he had while producing the book "Petrels and Shearwaters of the Western Palearctic" published by the 'Sound Approach to Birding'.

This is just one of the many interesting talks that Ian Lewis arranges for the Club as Indoor Meetings Secretary, usually as a joint meeting with other like-minded groups and societies in Dorset. All members and guests are welcome, so why not come along and bring a friend?

We have a couple of changes to our Committee with Catherine Whitby stepping down as Vice Chairman after many years. On a personal note, I will miss Catherine as she helped me enormously when I was Editor of the Bird Report and when I took over as Chairman. I know that not just the Committee but many members will miss Catherine and appreciate all the work that she has done for the Bird Club.

James Lidster is stepping down as County Recorder. His commitments as a leader for Sunbird and serving on the British Birds Rarities Committee are now taking up much of his time. He has inputted all the records to the database during his period as Recorder, a task that has grown enormously with the huge increase in the number of records submitted. Our sincere thanks go to James for his true dedication to the job - we are very sorry to lose him.

We are pleased to welcome two new faces to the Committee - Nick Urch as Vice Chairman and Kevin Lane as County Recorder. I am sure that you will give them your support.

Lastly, Ian Southworth, has been our Treasurer for nine years and would welcome a break, so we are looking for someone to take over this role. Please contact me if you are interested or would like to know more about what is involved. Ian would be very happy to discuss what he does as Treasurer.

From the Membership Secretary

Could those members who pay by standing Order please check that you are paying the correct amount, we have a few members still paying the old rate. Thankyou

Ordinary membership	£12
Joint /family membership	£16
Student membership	£7
Junior membership	£4

Avian Influenza H5N1 confirmed in Dorset

Due to the announcement of bird flu at Abbotsbury on the 10th January, I've included a statement made by Defra including contacts telephone numbers and website information in case anyone has any concerns.

The RSBP Website also has information on many of the common question asked about bird flu ie. is it safe for me to continue feeding the birds in my garden, What is the risk to our family pet etc. The RSPB website is at www.rspb.org.uk



The Statement from Defra

Defra confirmed Avian Influenza in three dead wild mute swans in the Chesil Beach area in Dorset, following positive test results from the Veterinary Laboratories Agency for the highly pathogenic strain of H5N1. These birds were found and tested following our routine surveillance programme.

A Wild Bird Control Area and Monitoring Area are being established around the premises, encompassing Chesil Beach and Portland Bill, and the shape of these is based on expert ornithological advice.

Inside these areas bird keepers are required to house their birds or otherwise isolate them from contact with wild birds, bird movements will be restricted, and bird gatherings are banned. Defra is also working closely with ornithological and other experts to consider what wider measures may be needed. Further details can be found on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/avianflu

No disease has been found in domestic birds, and a programme of surveillance is being carried out in the local wild bird population. There will be no culling of wild birds because such action may disperse birds further and would not aid control.

Acting Chief Veterinary Officer, Fred Landeg said:

“While this is obviously unwelcome news, we have always said that Britain is at a constant low level of risk of introduction of Avian Influenza. Our message to all bird keepers, particularly those in the area, is that they must be vigilant, report any signs of disease immediately, and practice the highest levels of biosecurity.”

A full epidemiological investigation is underway.

All poultry keepers on the GB Poultry Register are being notified, and the EU Commission has been informed.

Further information

Information is available from the Defra Helpline (08459 33 55 77) Bird keepers can also call the Animal Health recorded information line for the latest updates on 0844 884 4600.

Further details can be found on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/avianflu

Or on the RSPB Website

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/avianinfluenza/>

From the County Recorder James Lidster

Records

It's that time of year again - time to send those records in to help make the Dorset Bird Report as comprehensive as possible. Please email any records (preferably in the form of an excel spreadsheet) to **dorsetbirdclub@hotmail.com** asap to ensure that records don't go astray.

Dorset Records Panel

The Dorset Records Panel will undergo a small change with the appointment of Kevin Lane as County Recorder. The assessors remain the same, namely Dave Chown, Paul Harris, James Lidster, Shaun Robson, Dave Smith and Ian Stanley. This group of active birders give a broad geographical spread in the county as well as offering a wealth of specific knowledge. With JL stepping down as County Recorder, it has been decided that Kevin Lane will act as a non-voting Chairman of the Panel. This allows the Panel, and JL in particular, more time to concentrate on assessing records and KL will be involved in the chasing and collation of rarity records. The Panel is still assessing over 100 records a year but over the last few years it has become an almost entirely 'electronic' system, a definite step forward.

County Recorder signing off

Finally, I would like to thank all those people who have supported me during my time as County Recorder in Dorset. Former Recorders Shaun Robson and Martin Cade freely gave of their advice, Jackie Hull and Mark Andrews were always supportive as editors of the Bird Report and I thank all those people who sub-edited the Bird Report or sent in records. During the last few years, Dorset bird recording has really moved on from the days of thousands of small pieces of paper floating around in people's homes to a Bird Club database going back four years and containing tens of thousands of records, surely good news for Dorset's birds!

Dorset Mammal Atlas Project Anna Hobbs

Dorset Wildlife Trust is planning an exciting new project to increase mammal recording effort and our knowledge of mammal distributions in Dorset, with the aim of producing a Dorset Mammal Atlas by 2012. The Atlas will consist of species distribution maps and accounts written by local experts and the project will be a collaboration between volunteer recorders, Dorset Wildlife Trust, County Mammal Recorder John Stobart and Dorset Environmental Records Centre.

Many of you will spend a considerable amount of your time out and about in the countryside, possibly undertaking bird surveys in specific locations. Would you be prepared to note down the mammals you see whilst you are out and send the records in to us? We have prepared a new mammal recording sheet, which can be



downloaded from our website www.dorsetwildlife.co.uk or obtained by contacting Anna Hobbs, 01305 264620, ahobbs@dorsetwildlife.co.uk. Completed forms or records should be sent in by the end of each year to Anna at the above email address or to: Dorset Wildlife Trust, Brooklands Farm, Forston, Dorchester, DT2 7AA.

Dorset Wildlife Trust will also be providing training in surveying for various species, and organising surveys in areas that are under-recorded for mammals. Each year we will be looking at updated maps of mammal records in order to identify target areas. If you are interested in becoming involved in these targeted surveys, please contact Anna.

As always we would be very grateful for any help with surveying for this project.



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Outdoor Field Visits Trevor Thorpe & Andy Humber

Saturday March 29th 2008

New Forest (SU186156) 09.30hrs Meet at Ashley Walk car park, 1 mile east of Godhill village on the B3078, Fordingbridge to Bramshaw Telegraph Road. All day. Leader T.B.A

Sunday April 13th 2008

Cogden Beach – near Burton Bradstock (SY502882) 09.30hrs. Meet at the National Trust pay & display car park. Morning Only. Leader Alan Barrett.

Sunday May 11th 2008

Acres Down, New Forest (SU268098) 09.30 – All day. Meet in car park on B road between Emery Down and A31. Leader Andy Humber.

Friday June 20th 2008

Sherford Bridge (SY919927) 19.30hrs evening meeting for Nightjar and Woodcock. Meet in car park by bridge. Leader Andy Humber.

Saturday July 5th 2008

Martin Down (SU031195) 09.30hrs – Morning Only. Meet in car park off the A354 Blandford to Salisbury Road. Leader Trevor Thorpe.

Saturday August 30th 2008

Keyhaven (SY309914) 09.30hrs – Morning Only. Meet in the car park opposite 'The Gun' public house. Leaders Nick & Jackie Hull

If you have any enquiries about any of our outdoor meetings please contact.

Outdoor Secretary

Trevor Thorpe tel. 01202 849089 e-mail - TREVBIKDMAN@aol.com

31 Harness Close, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 2UF.

Indoor Meetings Ian Lewis

Saturday 29th March 2008

Dorset Bird Club A.G.M. 19.00hrs at The Methodist Church Hall, Wareham.

Following the A.G.M.

Magnus Robb talks on Petrel Night and Day.

The team that published the 'Sound Approach to Birding' are now producing a book on the Petrels and Shearwaters of the Western Palearctic. Magnus describes some of the adventures and many of the birds that will appear in the groundbreaking work.

If you have any enquiries about any of our indoor meetings please contact.

Indoor Secretary

Ian Lewis - tel. 01202 623200 e-mail - gryllo.poole@tinyworld.co.uk

20 Heights Road, Upton, Poole, Dorset BH16 5QL..

Dorset Bird Club Agenda

for the
TWENTY FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
to be held at
THE METHODIST HALL WAREHAM
on
SATURDAY, 29th MARCH 2008 at 7.00 pm

1 **Introduction and apologies.**

2 Minutes of the twentieth AGM held at The Methodist Hall Wareham, on Saturday, 24th March 2007

3 Chairman's Report.

4 Treasurer's Report and presentation of accounts for 2007.

5 County Recorder's and/or County Editor's Reports.

6 Election of Officers and Committee for 2008– 2009
Nominations from the Committee:

Officers:

Chairman- Jackie Hull; Vice-Chairman – Nick Urch

Honorary Posts:

Secretary - Phyl England; Membership Sec – Diana Dyer; Treasurer (also CHOG rep) - Ian Southworth; Recorder & Database Manager – Kevin Lane; Editor – Mark Andrews,

Committee:

Conservation –Jol Mitchell; BTO reps (ex-officio) Mike Pleasants; Newsletter –Nick Hull; Indoor Meetings – Ian Lewis; Outdoor Meetings – Trevor Thorpe and Andy Humber; Publicity - Chris Chapleo.

Alternative nominations for any of these posts should reach the Secretary -Mrs P England Amberley Russell Drive Swanage. BH19 2HD, in writing at least 14 days before the AGM. The nominee must be a club member who has agreed to serve, and be proposed and seconded by club members.

7 Appointment of Auditor.

8 Any Other Business.

SPEAKER (approx 8.00 pm):

“Petrel Night and Day” by Magnus Robb (a member of the team that produced “The Sound Approach to Birding”)

There will be an interval before the talk when refreshments will be available. A raffle will also take place.

Birder's Profile - Ian Lewis Jackie Hull

Born: Coventry, West Midlands.

Occupation: Biomedical Scientist working in the Microbiology Department of Poole Hospital.

Living: Upton, Poole since 1978.

Number of years birding: 31, although I was always interested in wildlife, it was hiking in the Yorkshire Dales in the mid seventies that persuaded me to take up birding.

Optics Used: Nikon ED 80 telescope and Nikon 8 x 32 binoculars.

Dorset Birding

Dorset Life List (BOU): 341 - there are a further 9 species that I give the 'benefit of the doubt' to mainly through taxonomic considerations, but in one case due to the debate about its origins. Incidentally, my British List still stands a bit short of 500, even counting all 'benefit of the doubt birds' but my long distance twitching days are largely over and it will be some time before I close that gap.

Favourite Dorset birding site and why: To the dismay of some of my Poole birding colleagues, I really enjoy birding in the Weymouth/Portland area. I am quite a social birder and enjoy exchanging information with others, something that is easy to do at Portland. Also, there is often great seawatching, scarce migrants, a chance to see birds in the hand or participate in ringing and if there is nothing else going on, there is a first rate bookshop. Portland Harbour, the Fleet, Radipole and Lodmoor can all be visited on the way home, making for a great day out.

Best Day's birding in Dorset: Some memorable moments include the 'big seawatch' off Portland in September '92, then there was the day when we set the then Winter Bird Race record of 127 (it now

stands at 129), some of the cold weather movements in the late seventies and early eighties when finding a Smew in the course of a day's birding was likely, some of the big 'falls' I have experienced, especially when ringing at Chapman's Pool.

Most memorable bird in Dorset: I suppose the biggest rarity I have seen in Dorset must be the Ipswich race of Savannah Sparrow at Portland in April '82, which remains the only British record of this globally rare form. Realising that it was soon to be split, I was one of the very few birders who twitched the Steppe Grey Shrike at Portland in November '89, and although not the finder, I was one of the identifiers of the Little Swift at Studland in November '83.

World Birding

You are a very well travelled birder, how many countries and continents have you been to?

84 countries and all the continents.

What is your current world list?

7,060, although I would need to knock about 240 species off that total if I stuck religiously to the Clements checklist. There are a further 126 species that are 'heard only' but in spite of numerous debates with Mark Constantine I haven't yet been persuaded to count them. My interest in what can and what cannot be considered a full species isn't entirely based on my desire to increase my world list. I have a basic knowledge of genetics and I am particularly interested in how and why species have evolved to occupy their current ranges and ecological niches and the pressures that have led to new species evolving.

Which country has impressed the most and why?

Bhutan, it is the most beautiful and charming country on the planet. The people are delightful and all wear traditional dress. Away from the capital, there is virtually no traffic, there is no crime, the scenery is fantastic and the birding is some of the best in all Asia and certainly the best in the Himalayas. Any country that lives by the edict of 'gross national happiness before gross national product' can't be bad.

Can you give us some of your most memorable moments from your travels:

- Watching the sun set over the icebergs of Antarctica.
- Watching breeding Spoon-billed Sandpipers on a melt water pool by the frozen Arctic Ocean.
- Seeing a tiger cross the path in front of the jeep in India.
- Parting dense vegetation in Queensland and getting eye-ball to eye-ball views of a Cassowary.
- Sitting in albatross and penguin colonies with the birds displaying all around me
- Canoeing across an Amazonian lake before dawn, hearing the calls of owls and nightheron being replaced by howler monkeys and the dawn chorus.



Ringling

How many years have you been ringling?

29, 25 since I obtained my permit.

Which of the birds that you have ringed, has excited you the most?

In Britain, without doubt that honour goes to the Aquatic Warbler I trapped in August '83, only a few weeks after I obtained my permit. It remains the only Aquatic Warbler we have ever trapped at Lytchett Bay and the only one trapped in an evening (all others occurred immediately after dawn). Later that same autumn, I trapped a Twite at the same site, I think it was the first to be ringed in Dorset. Ringing is about recoveries and scientific findings not just the joy of handling the unusual, and the recovery in Algeria of a Pied Wagtail ringed at Lytchett Bay and the many discoveries made during the Nightjar research programme in the 1980's gave me great satisfaction.

Surely there have been some funny moments whilst out ringling:

Absolutely, the funniest situations that I have encountered in my life have been whilst out ringling, although I must emphasize that when birds are being handled, ringers are deadly serious. There are far too many, often lengthy, anecdotes to repeat here, and many were written up in an article for the Dorset Bird Club Newsletter, entitled 'Best Nights with Dorset Birds'. Nearly getting arrested by the Police for organising an illegal rave when they heard our Storm Petrel tape lure has to be one of the most bizarre.

What change would you like to see concerning birds or birding:

Although I have undoubtedly been guilty of this myself, I would like to see an end to the factionalism in the bird world; people being criticized because their take on birding is different from someone else's. Unlike a competitive sport, there doesn't have to be fixed rules in birding. As long as the welfare of the bird is paramount, we can all enjoy birds in whatever manner we choose. Surely there is enough room within the hobby to accommodate everyone's likes and dislikes.

From the Archives Jackie Hull

Looking back ten years ago, 1998 was memorable for the Dorset “Big” Birdrace held on 16th May. This was organised by Mark Constantine and attracted a few international birders from Canada, Holland and Ireland, also a team from Kent and from the Birdwatch magazine which included our President Bill Oddie. It raised money for wildlife and conservation and increased the profile of birding in Dorset.

It was also in this year that the controversial white egret was seen in Christchurch Harbour. It was in the area from July to October and was studied by hundreds of birders - it became known as the “Stanpit Egret”.

The only addition to the Dorset List was in November when two Blyth’s Pipits were discovered in the Top Fields at Portland Bill on the 22nd. At first thought to be Richard’s Pipits, Martin Cade managed to trap them and confirmed that they were in fact Blyth’s. Both birds were present until midday on 24th November but one may have been taken by a Sparrowhawk; the remaining bird was present until 6th December.

The DBC database: an update Neil Gartshore

Although we have now generated distribution maps for both Willow Tit and Tree Sparrow – the two species we selected as examples - I’m afraid that due to unforeseen circumstances we have not been able to complete a write up for this Newsletter to show how the database records can be used to look at species in a historical context within the county. However, by the time you read this, we will have completed the inputting of nearly 20,000 individual records (from 1957 to 1993) for a total of 50 species with work continuing on other important Dorset priority species.

We are still looking for additional helpers! Please feel free to contact me to see what is involved before committing yourself (or see Newsletters Nos. 62 & 63).

Write, phone or email: Neil Gartshore
54 Corfe Road, Stoborough, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5AF.
Tel. 01929 552560
<mailto:yuki@onaga54.freeserve.co.uk>

The Rise & Rise of the Mediterranean Gull

Charles Richards

For me, one of the most interesting and gratifying aspects of birding in the last few years has been the phenomenal rise in the number of Mediterranean Gulls wintering in the Fleet / Ferrybridge / Portland Harbour areas. From single figures just a few years ago, these gatherings have gone through double figures to three figured counts in 2007. In fact, in just three years, the highest daily numbers seen in December have gone from 33 in 2005, 42 in 2006, to 200 in 2007.

What are the reasons for this surge in numbers? There has certainly been an increase in the numbers breeding on the south coast of England and more and more birds are coming here from Europe. It seems that changes in feeding and roosting behaviour is attracting more and more birds to the Portland and Fleet areas. In 2007, the build-up of numbers in autumn reached the first-ever three figure daily peak of 120 in November, and continued to rise in December. In November and December, I could see a regular pattern of behaviour in which some birds were feeding in the harbour,



some were feeding in the Fleet near the Bridging Camp, and some, having come from elsewhere, were gathering in the Fleet just beyond the Bridging Camp in the late afternoon, before flying to roost either in the harbour, or Weymouth Bay. In November, many Mediterranean Gulls could be seen flying in the harbour with lots of other gulls, attracted by shoals of small fishes. I even saw some hanging around near Razorbills, perhaps trying to steal fish from them, and in December, some could be seen loitering near groups of Red-breasted Mergansers.

The individuals that gather along the Chesil Bach side of the Fleet near the Bridging Camp seem to be feeding on items washed up by the outgoing tide. They have a distinctive mode of behaviour in which they “plunge-dive” by flopping into the water head-first, with outspread wings. The adults and second-year birds seem to do none of this, with the first-winters picking more food items from the surface. At one time, when only small numbers of Mediterranean Gulls wintered in the Weymouth and Portland areas, nearly all of those seen were adults. As the numbers have increased, so more and more first and second winter birds are appearing. In 2007, I would say that roughly 60-70% were adults, with the rest being immature birds.

As I write this in January 2008, it is nearly fifty years since the first

Mediterranean Gull was recorded in Dorset, in April 1958. In just half a century, it has gone from extreme rarity to regular breeding bird which can now be seen, in good numbers in winter. It is in danger of being taken for granted, as many common birds are, and this would be unfortunate, as the “ Med” is one of our most attractive gulls, and always deserves to be appreciated.

What of the future? Will its numbers continue to rise, or will it reach a peak and then decline? Time will tell, but I'm sure that enough of these excellent birds will always be around to provide pleasure for Dorset's birdwatchers.

The Birds of Dorset Rosemary Broadey
Tuesday evening 22nd January 2008.

Speaker: Pete Coe, a renowned local bird photographer. A joint of the Dorset Bird Club and Bournemouth Natural Science Society.

Pete travelled from his Portland home by motor-bike, on a mercifully dry evening. He joined other DBC members exploring the BNSS collections of stuffed birds, eggs, skins and memorabilia, before starting his illustrated talk.

Early pictures introduced Portland from the air, some shots being taken by Pete from a helicopter. His interest in bird photography extends over some twenty years, and his home patch is constantly in the birding news, being a prime spot to witness the spring and autumn migrations, rarities and vagrants.

His tips for wildlife photographers included shooting at a low angle. This throws the subject into profile and blurs the background into insignificance. He also utilises reflections and available light – rarely using flash. In one memorable shot, the reflections of nearby boats introduced colour to the rippled water around a Red-breasted Merganser. A reflected Little Grebe's portrait could have been inverted without loss of definition. He always strives to achieve a brightening highlight in a bird's eye.

Pete gets 'a real buzz' from seeing his work in print. In 1990 a small flock of Little Egrets was a rare enough sight over Dorset to merit publication. His first published picture of a butterfly was a Monarch

that had strayed into Portland from North America. A Harp Seal beached below the Portland Bird Observatory gave him a mammal 'first'.

We saw pictures of nesting seabirds, requiring a Special Licence to approach, at some discomfort and risk to the intrepid photographer. A ground-nesting Little Tern, and cliff-nesting Kittiwakes and Fulmars were shown. Returning migrants included Willow Warbler and Blackcap beautifully fully posed in a flowering blackthorn.

A resident Little Owl and a visiting Long-eared Owl featured. Rarities included a Pallas's Warbler and Allen's Gallinule.

Finally, we visited the nearby RSPB Reserves of Radipole and Lodmoor which provide fresh water habitats for species such as Bearded Tit, Cetti's Warbler and Water Rail. The highlights of twenty years Dorset birding experiences featured in one evening!!

Many of Pete Coe's photographs illustrate The Birds of Dorset, George Green's county avifauna, a copy of which is in the BNSS Members' Lending Library.

Thanks to Pete Coe for an evening of memorable pictures and interesting commentary. Thanks also to Ian Lewis, DBC Indoor Secretary, for bringing the Club and this speaker to Bournemouth Natural Science Society.

Book Review Phyl England

Crow Country by Mark Cocker

Jonathan Cape 2007 £16.99 .Library reference 598.864

Before I read this book, I must admit that Rooks and Jackdaws were just "those pesky birds" who ate the ground seed I put out for the finches. However, I now view Rooks in particular with different eyes.

Mark Cocker shows a genuine love of these birds that he has been studying since he moved to a rundown cottage in the Norfolk Broads.

His interest was aroused by the sight of large flocks of Rooks and Jackdaws passing over his cottage twice a day to and from their roost in the Yare Valley. This led to him researching roosts all over Britain, studying the behaviour of the birds, particularly at the roost site and their relationship with the history and landscape of the British countryside.

I recommend this book as not only does it increase one's knowledge of what are still common birds but the writing has a poetic quality and

a feeling of magic which is often missing in bird books but hopefully we all have in our relationship with birds.

The Wild Flowers of The Isle of Purbeck Brownsea and Sandbanks

by The Rev. Edward Pratt

I am grateful for the opportunity to explain the thinking behind this book, due to be published by Brambleby Books in April, because it is a flora with a difference.

Its purpose is to encourage more people into the joys of flower-hunting, and not to be put off by the number of flower species, nor by the preference of some for scientific names over English names. Scientific names appear with English ones in the Plant List, but only English names are used in the Introduction.

The New Atlas showed that Purbeck is the richest area for its size in The British Isles for higher plants. So what better place to see them and to learn to identify them? The book lists over 1150 species and hybrids. It gives precise directions to the localities of less common flowers. Many localities are given to the nearest ten metres – see the example below. Use is made of parish public footpath numbers, which are shown on the sketch maps in the book, to avoid longer descriptions of routes.

The localities given are nearly all places where plants can be seen without permission having to be sought – by public rights of way, or on land which is either open access under the Countryside and Rights Of Way Act, or which is regarded as open access by the owner - such as The National Trust or The Dorset Wildlife Trust. These open areas are shaded on the sketch maps included.

There is much more in the book – guidance for flower-hunting, descriptions of flower-rich locations in the area, a calendar of outstanding displays, suggestions for walks, points of distinction which work for separating similar species, including some drawings, some descriptions of hybrids, and extra numbers of locations for specialities of the area. There is also a brief epilogue drawing on references to flowers in The Bible.

Price £18 - but there is a pre-publication offer of £15 including postage on <http://www.bramblebybooks.co.uk> from February 5th

to April 4th.

Hairy Birdsfoot Trefoil - *Lotus subbiflorus* (*L.hispidus*)
Native. Occasional. Dry, bare sandy soil. May to August.
Nationally Scarce.

Norden, just NE of roundabout on track. **Ower**, by SW side of
bridleway 7 10m N of crossing of bridledways 7 and 8, and here and
there by bridleway 8 from same crossing to Game Copse. **Godlingston
Heath**, 10m NW of gate on N side of bridleway 36 opposite E end of
bridleway 35. **Studland Heath**, N side of Knoll Beach Road just W
of coach park. **Shell Bay**, NW corner of car park. **Lilliput**, on triangle
where Minterne Road, Alington Road and Bingham Avenue meet.
Luscombe Valley, on bank at junction of Shore Road and Brudenell
Avenue. **Sandbanks**, in lawn 10m S of entrance from Banks Road to
small triangular garden S of junction of Banks and Shore Roads.
Branksome Dene Chine, above promenade 100m NE of chine.

Answers to the Xmas Quiz Mick Shepherd

1. Wren. 2.The Brown Pelican dives into water but the White feeds
from the surface. 3.Cuckoo. 4.Lincolnshire. 5.Brown Thrasher.
6. Sand Eels. 7.Great Bustard (but please see note below).
8.White-tailed Eagles. 9.Red-backed Shrike. 10.Snooker, the colours
in the bird names correspond to the colour of the balls used in this
game. 11.Emu. 12. Knot. 13.Budgerigar. 14. Cirl Buntings.
15.Osprey. 16.Wryneck. 17.Seven. 18.Rookery. 19.Dipper.
20.Gilbert White in Selborne.

The winner who receives an annual subscription to the Bird Club is,
for the second year in succession, Trevor Thorpe.
Well down Trevor - Ed.

Birding Highlights Phyl England

November

Dorset shared in the influx of Cattle Egrets this month with singles
seen at Holes Bay & Lytchett Bay (3rd), Radipole (4th), Hengjstbury
(7th), Wareham Moors (up to 3 birds 7th – 12th), Middlebere (8th) and
Upwey (up to 6 birds 24th – 28th). Four birds were seen amongst the
Little Egret roost at Radipole (29th) and one remained near Upton
Country Park from 28th. The tidal surge also resulted in frequent
sightings of Little Auks with one in Poole Harbour (12th- 16th), Studland

Bay (15th), Hengistbury (15th), Portland Harbour (25th) with passing birds at Portland Bill (24) and Hengistbury (24th & 28th). On 14th a Grey Phalarope was briefly seen in Poole Harbour. Yellow-browed Warblers were at Portland (1st - 3rd), Durlston (5th) and Studland (9th). Lapland Buntings flew over at Portland (2nd, 17th, & 22nd) and Durlston (17th). A Little Bunting (17th) and a Richard's Pipit (16th) were seen over Portland Observatory. At Butterstreet Cove a Ring-billed Gull passed with another at Abbotsbury (27th) and a White Stork was reported over Wimborne (9th). A further White Stork was seen at Cattistock. A Green-winged Teal at Abbotsbury from 19th is now thought not to be a hybrid. A Black Brant joined by another later was with the Brent Goose flock on the Fleet (from 3rd).



December

It was Cattle Egrets again that headed the rarities this month with the bird near Upton Country Park remaining until 6th and 2 further birds near Upwey from 9th which moved to farms around Buckland Rippers later in the month when up to 6 birds were recorded. A further bird flew past Abbotsbury (13th). Little Auks were at Weymouth (1st), past Studland (2nd) and one off the jetty at Brownsea (10th).



The Green-winged Teal remained at Abbotsbury until 3rd. At Portland a Siberian Chiffchaff has been regularly seen in the crop near the Observatory. There were further birds at Abbotsbury and Lytchett Bay (19th) and a possible at Studland. Two Greenland White-fronted Geese were at Bardolf Manor on 12th and remained in the area throughout. At Lodmoor a Ring-billed Gull was recorded (10th) and a Bewick's Swan remained on the Frome at

East Holme from 16th. Five Waxwings were seen flying over Canford Cliffs (13th) and a Lapland Bunting flew over the Portland Observatory (30th). Near Dorchester, a Great Bustard – probably one of the introduced Salisbury Plain birds – was found (31st).

January

It was the long-staying rarities that were notable this month with the Buckland Rippers Cattle Egrets being regularly seen. They or others regularly appeared at the Little Egret roost at Radipole with the last report of 2 on 28th. Single birds were reported at Bere Regis (12th – 20th) and Arne (12th & 13th). The 2 Greenland White-fronted Geese remained around the Frome near Puddletown and the Portland Siberian Chiffchaff was seen until 9th. At Morden Bog, the Great Grey Shrike has been regularly reported though often elusive. A Lapland Bunting was in the seed crop at Portland (3rd). Rarer gulls included Iceland Gulls in Portland Bill, Portland Harbour, Ferrybridge (6th & 22nd) and past Durlston (28th). A Ring-billed Gull was at Radipole (13th & 20th) and a juvenile Glaucous Gull at the Bill (6th). A Franklin's Gull was also found at the roost in the Wareham Channel (17th).



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Please remember that your annual subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2008.

The current rates are:

Ordinary Membership	£12
Joint/Family Membership	£16
Student Membership	£7
Junior Membership	£4
Corporate Membership	£50
Life membership	£200

To join or renew your membership, please send your name and address with the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary :- Diana Dyer, 3 Osmay Road, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 2JQ - E-mail:richarddiana@tiscali.co.uk

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Digital photographs should be a minimum of 300dpi/ppi if possible with a width of 500 pixels, but if you cannot do this I can size to suit. All photographs will be produced in black and white except for those on the cover and in the electronic version which will be colour.

Sending Handwritten Articles

Please write clearly, if you wish to send a copy of a photograph or an illustration to accompany your article please do as I can scan these for printing.

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