

The Hoopoe



Dorset Bird Club Newsletter

No.68

Summer 2009



Dorset Bird Atlas an Update
Dartford Warbler Ringing in Dorset
Birdwatching Langton Herring
Peregrines Poisoned Trapped & Shot

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Acknowledgements

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Front Cover Photograph:-

Collared Flycatcher - Dr. Paul Brewster

Inside Photographs:-

Little Owl, Oystercatcher, White Stork, Marsh Harrier - Nick Hull

Dartford Warbler (page 7) - Keith Mallett

Cuckoo, Dartford Warbler (page 9) - Wikipedia

Langton Herring - Google Maps

Blyth's Reed Warbler - Martin Cade

Linnet - Dr. Paul Brewster

Backcover Photographs:-

Raven, Common Whitethroat - Simon Johnson

Shelduck - Tim Balmer

Treecreeper - Nick Hull

Common Crane - Nick Hopper

Sub-alpine Warbler - Chris Courtaux

The Editor would like to thank all the photographers that kindly give permission to use their photographs within these pages.

Editor's Chat

First I must apologise for the lateness of this newsletter, Unfortunately, the deadline coincided with me being away on work courses or on holiday.

As many of you will be aware, it is common practice for the various bodies concerned with bird conservation in the UK and Europe to periodically produce a list of the 'Birds of Conservation Concern'. These bodies compile the lists of species which we have come to know as the Red, Amber and Green lists. The third versions of these lists have just been produced.

Two hundred and forty six species have been assessed against a set of objective criteria and placed in one of the three following lists.

Sixty eight species are on the Green list. These are species which are currently doing OK, giving no signs of decline and are maintaining their population levels.

The Amber list comprises those species which are of conservation concern with the potential to join those on the Red list if their declines continue. The Amber list currently stands at 126 species. It includes a small number of species that have shown signs of recovery because of targeted conservation actions eg Wood Lark and Stone Curlew. These species have moved from the Red to the Amber list.

The Red list comprises those species that are of increased conservation concern. Corncrake and Hen Harrier are two species that spring



to mind of the 52 species that are on this list, an increase of 12 species since 2002 with 18 species being added, but six moving to the Amber List. Eleven species are now on the Red list because of changes in the criteria since the last assessment. A number of species that have shown an increased conservation concern i.e. Cuckoo, Tree Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Wood Warbler, Balearic Shearwater, Herring Gull and Arctic Skua have all moved onto the Red category; Arctic Skua is the only species that has gone directly from the Green onto the Red list.

To see the lists or for the full account you can read more or download the PDF file by going to the BTO's website at:- <http://www.bto.org.uk>

Little Owls Eds

I would just like to thank all those Members who have sent in sightings and proof of breeding of Little Owls in the county so far this year. As a reminder, if you know of a breeding pair or regularly see Little Owls locally, please report them to the County Recorder. If you can give an OS map reference for the sighting, this will be of great help. All breeding locations will be kept confidential. All your sightings will help us evaluate the distribution within the county and if there has been any decline.



Newsletter Articles Eds

Although as Editor, I have a band of people who help me with regular articles for these Newsletters, it's always nice to get input from others. This could be observations of interesting behavior, or an account of a really great day's birding on your local patch. Maybe you're one of the many birding photographers and you would like to contribute an account of a species that you have finally managed to photograph. I'm always looking for articles – they don't have to be a major piece of work, just something that will interest our readers.

Conservation Bird Atlas in Dorset Dawn Balmer (BTO)

We're now half way through the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project and are starting to see some fascinating changes in the distribution of birds in the winter and breeding season. There are Ravens and Buzzards spreading east, Little Egrets and Nuthatch moving north and Cetti's Warblers spreading into central England. There are also some worrying pictures emerging for some of our long distance migrants like Yellow Wagtail and Turtle Dove. By the end of survey work in July 2011 we hope to have comprehensive distribution maps for all species – native and non-native.

There are two components to the fieldwork to ensure that we gather the data we need to produce maps showing distribution and relative abundance. Roving Records are essentially your casual birdwatching records and these can be gathered anywhere in Britain and Ireland. The Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs) are timed counts carried out in tetrads (2 x 2 km squares) and only two visits are required in the winter and two visits in the breeding season; the tetrad is then complete.

Dorset update

In Dorset, we have made good progress and our coverage of tetrads for Timed Tetrad Visits is coming on well. We aim to cover a minimum of eight tetrads in every 10-km square, or all tetrads in coastal 10-km squares with fewer than eight tetrads on land. We have achieved coverage of 63% of the tetrads that we need to cover to reach our minimum target in winter, and 60% in the breeding season. We need volunteers for TTVs in all 10-km squares but particularly in the north and west of the county. The maps below show our coverage by early June.



The above tetrad surveyed in breeding season (left) and Tetrads surveyed in winter (right). Yellow=early only; white=late only; Black=both periods; red=single visit to remote tetrad.

A good indication of our progress towards achieving comprehensive species lists in every 10-km square is to look at the 'species richness'. Using records from the previous Winter Atlas in 1981-84 and Breeding Atlas in 1988-91 as a basis for what we are likely to find in a 10-km square, we are able to look at what progress we have made towards meeting that target. The maps show that we are making excellent progress in the winter, especially in the west of the county but there is still more to do in the east. General birdwatching records are all that are needed to boost the species lists for each 10-km square. In the breeding season, only five 10-km squares have been really well covered and have achieved close to the expected species list. It's much harder to turn squares red in the breeding season as we need breeding evidence to go along with every record so try to record what the bird is doing such as singing, a pair together or carrying food for young. We are aiming to confirm

breeding for as many species as possible although some will be extremely difficult to do that!



Percentage of species found so far in winter (left). And percentage of species found so far in the breeding season(right). White=1-50%; Yellow=50-74%; Orange=75-90%; Red=greater than 90%.

Species maps

A few example species maps for Britain and Ireland are shown on the Atlas website www.birdatlas.net and the same species are shown in greater detail for Dorset by looking at 'Latest results' and following the links to 'Regional results'. 'Bird of the Day' on the home page shows a new species map every day and gives an excellent flavour of the results so far. Below are maps for Barn Owl and Skylark showing their distribution by 10-km squares in the breeding season. Are these maps a fair representation of these species in Dorset? Skylark has been confirmed breeding in just five 10-km squares – watching the adults carrying food is the best way to confirm this species breeding. Can you fill in any gaps?



Skylark Breeding distribution(left) and Barn Owl distribution (right)
White=no evidence; Yellow=possible; Orange=probable; Red=confirmed breeding.

Take part

We welcome new volunteers to gather Roving Records and these can easily be submitted online at www.birdatlas.net or by requesting paper forms from BTO. We also need volunteers to take on Timed Tetrad Visits and you can sign up for a tetrad by registering for the Atlas online and clicking on 'Request TTV' or by contacting your local organiser Michael Pleasants (email: mike@btorepdorset.org) or by contacting Dawn Balmer at BTO (email: dawn.balmer@bto.org, Tel: 01842 750050).

Thank you

Many thanks to everyone who has taken part in the Bird Atlas so far; we are making great progress!

Dawn Balmer

Atlas Co-ordinator, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2LD.

Ringling Dartfords in Dorset Simon Lane & Giselle Murison

Since its start in 2002, the Dartford Warbler colour-ringing project has ringed approximately 600 birds across more than 20 heathland sites in Dorset. Colin Bibby carried out the first significant ringing study of Dartford Warblers in the UK following the dramatic decline of the species during the harsh winter of 1962/63. He recognised the Dartford Warbler as being entirely dependent on heathland and was instrumental in developing management strategies for this increasingly threatened and fragmented habitat. Very few birds were ringed in the following decades despite the steady increase in numbers and by 2000, only 1710 individuals had ever been ringed in the UK (this compares with 1,084,204 for Willow Warbler and 687,243 for Sedge Warbler).

The breeding range of the Dartford Warbler is centred in south-western Europe and extends from northern Africa to the southern counties of England where it breeds almost exclusively on dry, lowland heath. It has a predominantly insectivorous diet and is

therefore susceptible to prolonged spells of cold weather, especially if snow cover is present. However, low populations can recover rapidly as Dartford Warblers typically raise at least two broods each year and are capable of laying up to five eggs per brood.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) of November 2000, allowed for increased access on foot for open-air recreation to heath, including the creation of new routes, and the promotion of those already in place. This new law instigated study into the possible effects of greater access on bird populations. In 2002, a doctoral study¹ at the University of East Anglia, researching the effects of recreational disturbance on Dartford Warblers, included the launch of a colour-ringing project in Dorset as part of its field research. The study, funded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Natural England, explored the impact of human disturbance, urbanisation



and habitat type on a Dartford Warbler population. Results from the colour-ringing project assisted in gauging the effects of disturbance on breeding success, juvenile dispersal, site fidelity and other aspects of Dartford Warbler population dynamics. Warbler density figures were aided by the presence of colour-ringed individuals in the population and revealed breeding density to be lower on heathland with high levels of recreational disturbance. Juvenile success immediate to fledging also declined with increased disturbance, a consequence of a corresponding rise in predation levels with increased urban cover. Furthermore, colour ringing helped determine accurate measures of territory size across a range of heathland habitat types and confirmed that Dartford Warblers exhibit strong site fidelity after disturbance from wild fires.

Advise to Contributors

Next Newsletter Deadline is 20th February

Sending Articles

By e-mail to the Editor - sapeur.pompier@virgin.net

Microsoft Word PC or Mac Format.

Text Arial 12

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 all 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.

Advertising

All adverts will be in black and white

If you wish to advertise your business we charge £20 for a page and £10 half page and £5 quarter page.

For personal adverts, we charge £2 for a twenty word advert.

Send to Nick Hull via e-mail to sapeur.pompier@virgin.net

or by post to 11, Pealsham Gardens, Fordingbridge, Hampshire. SP6 1RD.
Telephone enquiries on 01425 656841

Outdoor Field Trips from July 2009

Trevor Thorpe & Andy Humber

Saturday 25th July – Fontmell Down (ST887186)

9.30am – Meet at National Trust Car Park on the Blandford to Melbury Abbas Road (Higher Shaftesbury Road)

FOLLOW ON MEETING APPROX 2PM – Win Green (ST923205)

From the B3081 take the turning for the minor road to Ludwell Leader Phil Read and Ailsa McKey

Sunday 23rd August – Titchfield Haven (SU531023) 9.30am

– Park on seafront – note there is an entrance fee to the reserve
Leader Trevor Thorpe

Sunday 13th September – West Bexington (SY531865)

9.30am – Meet in the beach car park Leader Alan Barrett

Saturday 3rd October – Studland/Old Harry (SZ037824)

9.30am – Meet in car park adjacent to Banks Arms Pub Leader Andy Humber

Sunday 1st November – Tarrant Rushton (ST950051)

9.30am – meet at the Airfield War Memorial on the Tarrant Rushton/Witchampton Road Leader John Lockwood

saturday 12th December – Shell Bay (SZ035862) 9.30am –

meet in the car park on the Shell Bay side of the ferry Leader Trevor Thorpe

Saturday 9th January – Normandy Marsh (SZ330954)

9.00am – meet in the large car park at the end of Bath Road.

FOLLOW ON MEETING AT BLACKWATER ARBORETUM

(SU268048) COMMENCES APPROX 2PM – meet in the car park at Rhinefield Ornamental Drive Leader Andy Humber

Saturday 13th February – Blashford Lakes (SU151082)

9.30am – meet at the HWT car park off Ellingham Drove – 2 miles north of Ringwood. Leader Trevor Thorpe

Saturday 27th March - Broomy Plain/Holly Hatch

(SU199104) 9.30am – meet in the High Corner car park Leader John Vickerman

Outdoor Secretary

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Members Notice

You will notice that the indoor meetings itinerary is reduced from previous years. Unfortunately due to the low attendance to our meetings we do not cover the cost of speakers and the venue charge and we are unable to continue to support the losses we have occurred. So your Committee has made the decision to have indoor meetings in partnership with local groups except for our Annual General Meeting.

Remember you can keep abreast of what's happening with meetings and important announcements by logging on to the Bird Club Website.

at <http://www.dorsetbirdclub.org.uk>

Two Owls Birding

New Autumn/Winter programme

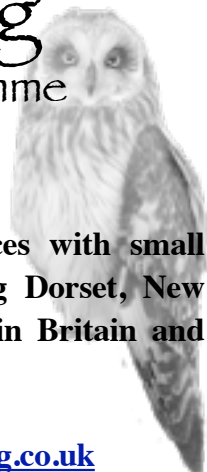
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We offer a wide range of birdwatching experiences with small friendly groups and expert local guides. Covering Dorset, New Forest and the Hampshire coast and short breaks in Britain and Normandy, France.

Please visit our website at www.twoowlsbirding.co.uk

or contact Jackie Tel: 01425 656841

Email: twoowls.birding@virgin.net



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Road,
Bournemouth,
Dorset, BH1 3NS.

Tel: 01202

553525

Charity no: 219585

www.bnss.org.uk



Welcomes all to lectures, donations
in lieu of admission charge.

Of special interest to DBC members
Saturday 22nd August at 2.30pm
Speaker: Colin Varndell
'Hidden Dorset'.

We have a wide programme of lectures/field
trips please see website for full details.

<http://www.bnss.org.uk>



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Although the research funding ceased in 2006, the work is continuing on a voluntary basis. The primary focus is now on the factors affecting the survivability of adults under the auspices of the BTO's Retrap Adults for Survival (RAS) project. The birds are ringed with unique combinations of colour rings during the winter months and then re-sighted during subsequent breeding seasons. The main benefit of colour ringing is that individual birds can be identified in the field without the need for re-trapping in mist nets. The Dartford Warbler is particularly suitable for this type of study as the species has high site fidelity and breeding pairs hold territories throughout the year.

Even though the RAS project will only provide reliable data after several more years we anticipate that the survival rates for adults holding breeding territories will be relatively high with average life spans of approximately three to four years. Indeed, we know of several ringed birds that are rapidly approaching the longevity record for the species of just over three and a half years. However, we suspect that the mortality of first winter birds is very high as remarkably few birds ringed as juveniles have been sighted again. Although juvenile mortality is high for many species, it is possible that saturation of Dartford Warbler breeding habitat has resulted in the dispersal of most young birds to alternative habitats that do not provide adequate food or shelter during the winter months. That Dartfords are settling on sub-optimal habitat is supported by results drawn from the PhD study, which found that birds in small territories on poor quality habitat were either unable to breed or had significantly lower reproductive success than pairs in similarly sized territories in good quality habitat. In addition, juveniles on sub-optimal habitat, particularly urban heath, experienced high levels of predation.

It is also possible that juvenile dispersal may involve considerable movement although evidence for this is limited. For example, a few years ago a male Dartford Warbler spent the winter on the moors above Darwen in Lancashire and there have been many reports from counties closer to their established breeding areas.

Interestingly, Dartford Warblers are also regularly seen at coastal sites such as the Portland Bill and Dungeness Observatories during the autumn and spring but seldom at other times of the year. Although it has generally been accepted that these birds are simply moving to the milder, coastal regions it is difficult to explain why they do not stay for the whole winter and why sightings are largely confined to the peak migration periods of April and October. It is also difficult to imagine a Dartford Warbler crossing Portland Harbour or negotiating the unfamiliar habitats of Wyke Regis and Fortuneswell unless it had a good reason to do so. However, until a ringed bird is found on the continent, the question of whether or not Dartford Warblers are partial migrants will remain unanswered.



The future of the Dartford Warbler in the UK now seems more secure than it did in the 1960's with saturation of much of the available lowland heath. It seems unlikely that we will experience another winter like that of 1962/63 and initial indications suggest that the prolonged cold spells over the last winter have had no significant impact on the population.

During the 2002-2006 study, the average size of a breeding territory was determined as approximately 1.5 hectares although it was dependent to a certain extent on the quality and structure of the habitat as well as the density of the Dartford Warbler population. We believe that many young birds are unable to breed in their second year and remain on the margins of heaths until a territory becomes vacant. Dartford Warblers breed in gorse as well as in mature heather, and while gorse nest sites are less common, alternative habitats such as chalk downland are yet to be colonised. This must happen if the population is to continue to expand and grow, as it is

unlikely that many more areas of heathland can be restored and maintained successfully.

Ringling is now largely confined to four sites in the south east of the county but many ringed birds still survive on Dorset heaths from previous years. We would be very grateful for any sightings of colour ringed birds and further information is provided in the Conservation News section of this website.

1. Murison, G. 2007. The impact of human disturbance, urbanisation and habitat type on a Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* population, PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, Norwich

BIRDWATCHING IN THE LANGTON HERRING AREA

Graham Whitby

The Area of the Fleet near Langton Herring is the brief. This we have interpreted as from Rodden Hive in the west (SY600825) to Herbury in the east (SY615810).

Catherine and I often do a circular walk from the village of Langton Herring, so come on a walk with us. The roads in the village are narrow, so it is best to park carefully on the road that runs along the northern boundary. Walk west along the road until SY611827 where there is a sign to Lower Farm. Follow this road to its end and enter the field using the stile just past Ivy Cottage. The orchard opposite the cottage can be good for winter thrushes and woodpeckers. Walk straight across the middle of the field and across the stile at its end, thereafter keeping the hedge on your right (the Rodden Brook is the



field using the stile just past Ivy Cottage. The orchard opposite the cottage can be good for winter thrushes and woodpeckers. Walk straight across the middle of the field and across the stile at its end, thereafter keeping the hedge on your right (the Rodden Brook is the

other side of the hedge). The fields can be good for migrants in the autumn and spring. Redstarts and Whinchats are regular, perching on the hedgerows or barbed wire fences, the gorse patches add to the variety of habitats. Whitethroats and sometimes Lesser Whitethroats can be heard as occasionally can the song of reed warblers from the reed fringed bottom of the valley leading down from Rodden. If you are lucky in the autumn, you may even find a Ring Ouzel. At the end of the second field there is a walkway beside a copse and a scan through the trees here gives you a chance to see what waders and wildfowl are around in Rodden Hive. In spring the song of an early Blackcap or Willow Warbler are welcome sounds.

When you reach the shoreline of the Fleet you get a good vista looking into Rodden Hive Point westwards and south to Chesil Beach and Langton Hive Point. In winter this stretch of water can hold large numbers of wildfowl. Wigeon are numerically the most numerous of the duck but close to the landward side there are usually good numbers of pintail, with some Gadwall, Shoveler and Shelduck. There is a freshwater inlet at Rodden Hive and Teal are usually found close to this.

Brent geese can also be found here in winter but rarely in the high numbers to be found in the eastern part of the Fleet. You often have to look hard to pick them out when they are among the Wigeon. How times change - when we first birded here just over 30 years ago around 50 Brent were as many as you could find on the whole of the Fleet. A handful of pintail could sometimes be found at Rodden Hive, whereas now over 100 regularly occur. To see Gadwall we had to travel to Little Sea at Studland but now they are regulars.

Coots also occur in big numbers in this part of the Fleet. It never ceases to amaze us that these are migrants apparently here from continental Europe. It is difficult to imagine Coot embarking on a long migration but every autumn they are suddenly there.

Mute swans can also occur here in spectacular numbers and make a magnificent site in certain light conditions. These swans are occasionally joined by a few Whooper Swans, as happened this Winter. Gull watchers also often turn up goodies so scan through them and also the large expanse of water for Red-breasted Mergansers and grebes, usually Great Crested. Also scan the bank of the Chesil Bank itself as a Peregrine can sometimes be found just sitting, sometimes on the top or perhaps part way up. An Osprey can also sometimes be found perching on long dead branches, usually in the autumn.

In comparison with wader hot-spots, this is not a great wader area, but in the spring a special event is the Whimbrel migration. First hearing those wonderful calls of this seven note whistler, then seeing a flock of Whimbrel flying along the top of the Chesil Beach is always exciting. Small flocks can sometimes be seen in Rodden Hive itself and occasionally in the surrounding



fields. Redshank are the most regular waders, but anything can, and sometimes, does turn up. Whilst walking along the shore in early autumn you may suddenly find a juvenile Dunlin at your feet. You realise you are probably the first human being it has encountered. Such moments are special.

We often find our first Sandwich Tern of the year here, the distinctive call usually alerting us to its presence. The few posts out in the water are favourite perches for this species as they are also for Common Terns and, of course, Cormorants. Walking on towards Langton Hive Point you are accompanied by the songs of Skylarks in spring. You will walk past a steep gorse covered slope where nesting Linnets and Whitethroats can be found. You may possibly already have seen Stonechats but if not you should do so

somewhere along this stretch.. You will come to a track going inland and here you can curtail your walk and turn left back to the village, or continue along the shore, through two fields to Herbury Works. Here the bay enclosed by Herbury to the south does not hold the spectacular bird numbers encountered at Rodden Hive though over the years we have had good sightings here. One year recently two Long-tailed Ducks hung around for a while. Redshanks and Oystercatchers can usually be found and in Spring and Autumn Common Sandpipers and Greenshank often occur. Other waders such as Turnstone , Curlew and godwits do turn up in this bay so scan carefully.

As you reach the reeds in the north east corner of the bay look out for a Reed Bunting, or Reed Warbler or Sedge Warbler. Scan the arable fields as Hares can often be seen.

When you reach the next lane running inland, turn left back towards Langton Herring, However, if you have time a short detour to Herbury, the promontory forming the far side of this bay, can be profitable. The boggy area to the north side of the neck joining it to the mainland might produce the secretive Jack Snipe in winter.

Heading up the lane back towards Langton Herring this runs uphill and gives a choice of walking to the east or west of the copse which is used for Pheasant rearing. This is not the greatest of woods, but we have seen Firecrest here and this year Serin was seen in the area. The fields to the east opposite this wood are excellent for Roe Deer If you have not already have seen a Buzzard (which would be unusual), you can often find one here. Returning to the village, just keep your eyes open, particularly at migration times. Once back in the village follow the village road out to the road your car is parked in.

In Langton Herring there is a pub where you can get coffee and lunch. The nearest cafes are in Abbotsbury which also has 2 pubs and there are shops in Abbotsbury or Chickerell.

BOOK REVIEW Alan Snook

I am going to review two books this time, both are published in the Collins New Naturalist Series and are worthy of your attention.

**Islands by R.J.Berry published by Collins @ £50
ISBN9780007267378**

Islands by R.J.Berry should appeal to birdwatchers simply because it offers an insight into some of those mythical places most birders dream of getting to one day, Rockall, Mull and Fair Isle to name but three. He begins by defining what makes an island, and then moves rapidly on to the pressures they are under for various reasons. In chapter four he moves on to the inhabitants and in the next he covers the consequences of living on an island. Then he turns to the variety of different forms on islands and how they have evolved over many years and in the following chapter mentions species of particular note. By chapter 8 we are moving into Human history, hardy souls if I do say so myself. Then commences the real nitty gritty of the book as he moves round the coastline of Britain looking at particular islands and groups of islands in more detail. In chapter 15 we learn something of the naturalists who have inhabited these sometimes remote places and in the final chapter we read something about the facts and fancies of islands and the real pressure that they increasingly come under. Profusely illustrated throughout with colour plates and photographs and running to 384 pages this is a book to delve into at any time although once you start you will not want to put it down.

**Wildfowl by David Cabot published by Collins @ £50
ISBN9780007146581**

This one should be sought out by any birdwatcher worth his salt, delving as it does into a major group of birds, namely as the title suggests swans, geese and ducks or as they are normally classed

the wildfowl. David founded the Irish Wildfowl Conservancy in 1964 and is the author of another title in the series *Ireland: A Natural History*. Here in this book he has written about the fifty-six species recorded in Britain and Ireland in a wild or self-sustaining feral state. He begins by looking at wildfowl and people before moving on to the bulk of the book and the status and distribution of the species, illustrated by some fine photographs and an easy flowing text. He then looks at such things as social behaviour, food and feeding, population dynamics and finally a look at conservation. Finally he augments the book with a couple of appendices including one on feral species that are not self-supporting. We have long needed a good work on this group and I found this a fascinating insight, in particular I must single out the text relating to Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, I now fully understand the reasons for the eradication programme, although from a personal point of view, I find it sad that we have to take these measures in Britain and Ireland, Spain, yes, but surely a few wouldn't do any harm? The book is a hefty tome running to 460 pages, but maintains the high standards of the series and the jacket by Robert Gillmor is stunning.

From the Archives 1989 Jackie Hull

This year stands out with two new species recorded for Dorset, a Great Spotted Cuckoo at St. Aldhelm's Head on 11-12th March and Blyth's Reed Warbler trapped at Portland Bill on 12th June.

The beginning of the year started well with a 1st winter male Surf Scoter at Burton Bradstock in January along with good numbers of Velvet Scoter and a large flock of 320 Common Scoters.

The spring saw an early arrival of migrants with spectacular falls in late April and early May. A record day total of 1,100 Wheatears, 250



Redstarts and 3,500 Willow Warblers from Central Portland on the 24th April certainly contrasts starkly with 20 years later in 2009! There was also the 2nd county record of Rock Thrush, and the 3rd of Short-toed Lark and Lesser Grey Shrike.

It was a hot dry summer and some species did not fare so well in the breeding season but Quail and Dartford Warblers were recorded at unprecedented levels, two pairs of Raven bred for the first time since the early seventies. Firecrest, Tree Sparrow and Hawfinch also bred and for the first time in Dorset Ruddy Duck. Of interest there were two singing Common Rosefinch in June at Portland Bill and Durlston Country Park.

In the autumn Blue-winged Teal and Semi-palmated Sandpipers were both 2nd county records and two Radde's Warbler were 2nd and 3rd.

The year was rounded off with a further 2nd county record for Dorset with Dark-eyed Junco on Portland.

Peregrine Poisoned, Trapped and Shot in 2009 RSPB

This year looks like being one of the worst on record for crimes against peregrines.

The RSPB have been flooded with reports of birds being poisoned, trapped and shot and of their chicks being taken from the nest.

Reported incidents already number more than 50 for the year, with more waiting to be processed. There were 79 incidents reported for the whole of 2007.

As a result, The RSPB is urging the Government to add Peregrine to its list of priority species for wildlife crime enforcement.

Among the incidents reported this year are:

Shooting:

A dead Peregrine was found peppered with shot in the Forest of Dean. An x-ray revealed the bird, a seven-year-old female, had been blasted at close range with a shotgun.

Poisoning:

A female Peregrine and her chick were found dead on their nest near Sunderland next to the body of a pigeon, which police suspect was poisoned bait used to kill the peregrine family. Samples have been sent for testing. In Walsall, a racing pigeon was found with a pill capsule taped to its leg. A tip-off that some pigeon fanciers in the area were targeting peregrines led to the capsule being sent for tests. Results showed it had been filled with the banned pesticide Aldicarb. Since April, three pigeons have been found tethered to the ground near a peregrine site in Cumbria. It is suspected the birds had been laced with poison in an attempt to kill the peregrines. Samples have been sent for testing.

Trapping:

A Peregrine crash landed in a back garden near Litchfield in Staffordshire with its leg caught in a spring trap. It later died of its injuries. A search of nearby quarries by RSPB officers found three more traps on a ledge used by Peregrines.

Nest robberies:

All five chicks were stolen from a Peregrine nest site near Mansfield within a week of them hatching. It is the fourth year in a row the nest has failed.

Mark Thomas, RSPB Investigations Officer, said: "It has been a terrible year. One of the worst I can remember. In the last few weeks, barely a day has gone by without a call about Peregrine persecution.

What can we do?

Birds of prey continue to be mercilessly killed, despite the fact that it is illegal and has been for decades.

Please add your name to the RSPB's online pledge and say 'the killing must stop'.

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/campaigns/birdsofprey/>

If you are not online you can write to the RSPB at Sandy to support the pledge to stop the killing.

Birding Highlights Phyl England

March

A female Ring-necked Duck that had been discovered at Little Sea, Studland eventually moved to Swineham Gravel Pits and remained throughout. Likewise a Cattle Egret that had been seen at Wareham (7th) has settled at Swineham and is still present. Siberian Chiffchaffs have been at Holes Bay, Poole, Radipole and Portland. An Alpine Swift passed over Portland (14th) The Great Grey Shrike at Chamberlayne's Heath remained. At Bridport a Yellow-browed Warbler was discovered (16th) and was seen until 24th. A Serin was at Durlston (18th). Red Kites have been more frequent in the county being seen at Durlston, Abbotsbury, Holes Bay and Hengistbury. A Ring-billed Gull was found in Lytchett Bay (8th) with another at Stanpit (18th). A Glaucous Gull was off Brownsea (1st). Iceland Gulls were seen in Holes Bay (4th-8th), the Fleet (23rd) and Portland (29th). The Hooded Merganser remains at Radipole.

April

Bird of the month has to be the Collared Flycatcher that was discovered on the 28th in a private garden at Southwell, Portland. A first for Dorset, this bird was still showing at the end of the month. The Ring-necked Duck remained at Swineham throughout. Serins were at Durlston (5th) and Worth Matravers (18th). At Osmington a Richard's Pipit was seen (8th). Great White Egrets were at Lodmoor (6th), over Wareham (13th) and Coward's Marsh (18th) with a White Stork seen at Frampton (17th). In Wareham Forest a Common Crane stopped briefly (18th). Portland hosted a Blue-headed Wagtail (18th & 19th) and a Red-footed Falcon was a fly-



over there (25th). On 29th a Woodchat Shrike was at a private site to the north of the county. A Hoopoe flew over Church Ope Cove on 19th.

May

The Collared Flycatcher at Portland remained until 2nd. At Lodmoor a Citrine Wagtail was found on 6th and an Alpine Swift flew over (13th). Golden Orioles were at Lodmoor (14th), one ringed at Portland (13th) with a further sighting at Portland (20th). Icterine Warblers were at Wick (15th-16th) and Broadstone (20th) and a Sub-alpine Warbler seen at Portland (9th). At Abbotsbury a Marsh Warbler was ringed with a further bird heard near Hatch Pond (25th). Six European Bee-eaters were at Rodden Hive with a further 3 over a Broadstone garden. Woodchat Shrikes were found at Portland (7th – 9th & 22nd – 24th), Dancing Ledge (23rd) and Middlebere (28th). On Brownsea a Spotted Crake called (25th-27th). Red-rumped Swallows were at Lodmoor (5th) and Portland (13th). The Swineham Ring-necked Duck was recorded on 3rd. A Cory's Shearwater was off Wyke Regis (16th). The Hooded Merganser remained at Radipole.

June

The started Great White Egret heading west over Christchurch Harbour and a Serin at Portland (1st) a female was at West Bexington on (7th) and a male was found singing at Hamworthy Park the same day. 2 Roseate Terns appeared on Brownsea Lagoon (2nd) and a single on and off at Lodmoor (7th-10th);



a Little Gull seen at Holloway's Dock on and off at Christchurch (3rd-17th). Pomarine Skua past Hengistbury Head (6th). Red Kite were seen over Lodmoor (7th) and over the A35 at Bridport (11th)

with 2 over West Moors with singles birds at Todbar and over the Wimborne By-pass same day (15th); 2 over Christchurch (19th) An Arctic Tern arriving at Lodmoor on (8th) and was seen pairing up with a Common Tern on (11th). Balearic Shearwaters were seen passing Portland on and off all month. A summer plumaged Little Stint was on Brownsea Lagoon (13th) and a small party of Little Tern were seen to head up river at Christchurch the same day. Late Great Northern Divers past Portland (15th & 16th); Quail were heard at Tarrant Rushton (20th) and a Bittern was at Radipole (21st), At Portland 7 Storm Petrels were tape lured and ringed on (22nd) and next day a Bee-eater was over Easton (23rd). a Wood Sandpiper was seen at Lodmoor on (26th); 2 Ruff at Stanpit (26th) and 3 there (29th), with a Garganey on the Priory Marsh Stanpit (27th-29th). The month ended with a Great White Egret in meadows by A31 at West Moors and Sooty Shearwater passing Portland on (30th).

Stop Press News

As many of you will know, that Marsh Harriers have been seen over Radipole and Lodmoor all spring and Nick Tomlinson the RSPB's Manager at Radipole was able to announce in June that a pair of Marsh Harrier had nested at Radipole and successfully raised three young. These are as far as we know the only urban nesting Marsh Harriers in Britain and the first pair to nest in Dorset since the last pair bred in Poole Harbour in 1962.

So congratulations to Nick and his team at Radipole and hopefully your success will continue with Bittern taking up summer residence soon.



Membership Subscriptions

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 :-

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