

August 2026 Bird News



The Quarterly News for Herefordshire Ornithological Club

Red Kite – W. Tanner

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EDITORS NOTES

This hot summer is becoming a problem for getting out especially as the heat builds in the afternoon, it is lovely to get up before breakfast early to savour the wildlife in the garden before the dreaded heat arrives. It has been a slow start for butterflies but now the still hot weather has generated large numbers which is great. Sadly the rapidly diminishing pond is not attracting the numbers of dragonfly and damsels I saw last year. At least the large flocks of Swifts are still gathering over Leominster before they sadly depart for foreign climes. This hot weather emphasises how we must all provide water for our garden birds to wash and drink from even if our gardens wither.

I went on a special holiday to St Lucia in the Caribbean in June. It wasn't specifically a birding holiday, but it has a lovely green centre and quite a few endemic island species. I was able to see some of these endemics in the Millet reserve with the help of a government ranger. It was thrilling to see 5 St Lucia parrots after a long wait, feasting on mangoes. Other colourful species I spotted included, Bananaquit (appropriate name), Broad winged hawk, Lesser Antillean Bullfinch, Red Eyed Vireo and Mangrove Cuckoo. I was lovely to swim with Pelicans and Frigate birds flying overhead. There were many different Herons often hiding in creeks and it was great to see 3 species Caribs or Hummingbirds often closeup.

Hope the rain comes soon and I hope the articles and pictures keep rolling in

Rupert Gulley - Editor

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Lapwing – Brockhall – N.Pegler

Notes from the Chair

I hope you have all had a great summer and coped with the heat. It does seem normal now to have these incredible temperatures into the mid- 30's, global warming in action. As birders we have seen this with birds that were once rare in the UK, the Egrets as an example have colonised, rare birds 15-20 years ago.

On the club front we still have the Event's Coordinators role to fill; the role will be well supported by the committee and this year's speakers are already in place, we also have field trips in place up until October, so we are well ahead in our plans.

As mentioned before, we have moved indoor meetings from Saxon Hall to the Tupsley Community Hall, and meetings will be on Thursdays starting at 7.30pm. The list of indoor events will be put onto the website soon, but are also in this edition of the Newsletter for your diary.

We have some interesting projects on-going with;

- Acoustic monitoring

The club undertook some Acoustic monitoring this spring for rare birds, we did a trial this year for Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, we will produce the results of this project once we have the data in, this year was very much a learning process and thanks to the team who lead this.

- Wellington GP

We have been kindly given an area to develop in the N/E corner of the main lake by the owners of the lake, this is an exciting prospect for the club, with plans to develop a viewing area and wildlife friendly zone, we will keep you informed as it progresses.

- Barn Owl boxes

We are working with landowners who are keen on putting up Barn Owl boxes on their land, the programme will hopefully help this iconic species in the county and give feedback as to how the species is doing locally.

- BTO Youth scheme

I have been in contact with this organisation and are planning to get a project ready for a BTO Youth candidate to link into some HOC work, they recruit possible candidates in the autumn, so it is hoped this could lead to some joint work for the future of the club.

- National Trust

We are working alongside the NT to record and monitor the birds in four Herefordshire sites over the next two years, Berrington Hall, Croft Castle, Weir Gardens and Brockhampton, the recording will be in the garden areas of these sites and look at what is there and put forward our recommendations or advice for any improvements.

If any members would like to get more involved with any of the above projects please get in touch.

Lastly, please feel free to forward your stories, photographs or items to Rupert for inclusion for the Newsletters, you can find Rupert's details after his editor's bit.

Terry Downes

Chair

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Stonechat – Croft – K. Smith

Field Event Reports April -June 2026

Hergest Ridge & Park Wood, Kington - Saturday 9th May -Mervyn Davies

Eleven of us gathered at the top of Ridgebourne Road just above Hergest Croft Gardens on this lovely clear, and soon to get warm, morning for the hike up on to the Ridge. Just through the gate on to the Common we were treated to a wealth of bird song – five summer migrants, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Redstart and Tree Pipit, all made their presence known – what a start! A little further up there were a number of pairs of Stonechat, one of which was feeding a juvenile in a clump of bracken. In addition, Red Kite

were almost ever-present overhead, a couple of Swift were seen in the distance and it was lovely to see a male Reed Bunting heartily singing.

As we climbed further, the singing of Skylark on this now beautiful sunny morning could be heard continuously, as well as Linnets dodging amongst the bracken and gorse scrub and a lone Whitethroat was also spotted. Meadow Pipit were present amongst the bales of bracken on the south-eastern slope, but under the watchful eye of a female Kestrel that kept flitting between the bales. As we descended off the Common, we came across Blackcap and Garden Warbler singing nearby, which is always good to reaffirm and distinguish their similar warbles. At Grove Farm, Swallow in particular, but also House Martin, were making good use of the farmyard nesting sites.

We paused for a breather at the castle mound for good views of Lower Hergest, before crossing fields to Park Wood. In the wood, we encountered Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Bullfinch, and Treecreeper, and a keen ear amongst us also pinpointed singing Pied Flycatcher, but no Wood Warbler on this occasion. After the taxing climb back to the cars, Common Crossbill was heard calling nearby. In total, and thanks to Viv Quinn, we registered an amazing **52 species** during the morning walk.

After lunch in cars, six of us drove across the valley to Bradnor Hill, which is always a joy to walk around in good weather – the highest altitude golf course in England. However birds were rather scarce, but we saw **18 species**, including the usual Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Linnet and Stonechat, but also Swallow, Redstart, Reed Bunting and a Cormorant perched looking in to the pond nearer the Club house – but again, no Yellowhammer appeared in the usual spot. Thanks to all for making this such a good birding day.

Somerset Levels – RSPB Ham Wall & Shapwick Heath, 17th June – Toby Green

Twelve of us met on a grey but warm morning at Ham Wall. We set off for the Avalon hide, noting and commenting on the abundance of Swifts overhead, along with good numbers of Sand Martin. Reed, Cetti's, Sedge and Willow Warbler. Blackcap and Chiffchaff were all seen or heard.

Our first Bittern of the day flew over the reed beds and we started seeing Marsh Harriers, Red Kite flew over. At the hide we got lovely views of Reed Bunting, Reed Warbler and more Marsh Harriers. Great White Egrets outnumbered Little Egrets and at least two Grey Heron flew over. Some of the group variously saw or heard Bearded Reedlings, but most were left frustrated! Two Black-tailed Godwit flew across the marsh before disappearing from sight. Several more Bittern sightings were had before we reluctantly headed back toward the car park for lunch. The walk back did give us two Common Tern and a handful of Lapwings.

After lunch and an ice cream for some, we walked over to Shapwick Heath. Another Bittern flew across the marsh giving much better views. Numbers of Gadwall were high but looking

pretty scruffy already as they attained eclipse plumage. A Hobby was spotted perched up giving great views and then several more were seen flying around. At the hide we had a very brief snippet of song from the reported Great Reed Warbler but no views were forthcoming. We enjoyed the rest of the afternoon here noting a number of new species for the day including an Egyptian Goose roosting on a roof! A thoroughly enjoyable day out recording **62 species!**

Rotherwas to Bartonsham Meadows - Thursday 18th July – Sue Griffin

A slightly earlier start than usual, turned out to be a blessing as at 8.30am it was already 20°C. 12 of us left The Shell Store carpark (Rotherwas) looking for birds and butterflies. A few common water-birds were heard from a very overgrown pond. Self-sewn Buddleia bushes (small tree size) gave us a flush of butterflies, Red Admiral/Peacock/Meadow Brown/Small white/Gate-keeper, Painted Lady. We proceeded towards the banks of the river Wye via a shady green with mature trees, and we were all delighted to see (eventually!) a tree-creeper (well spotted by Richard H) and heard and saw male Blackcap and Chiff chaff. The hawthorn, scrub, and bramble bushes along the riverside walk produced a pair of Blackcaps, Whitethroat, Blackbirds and Goldfinch, plus we added Marbled white, Comma, Green veined white, and a Small/Essex skipper (ID was not 100%) butterflies to our count. We crossed the Wye via the Canary Bridge (named after the ladies who worked in the Rotherwas munitions factory in WW2). Once on Bartonsham meadows we were delighted to have good views of Kestrel hunting and a very loud reeling Grasshopper warbler within a few feet of us – and duly viewed by some. To our amazement 3 of us spotted, what could only be a Peregrine, also obviously hunting in a meadow on the other side of the reserve – no bird stoops like a Peregrine!

On the basis that we are a known and respected bird club, I was given permission by the HWT reserves officer David Hutton to lead our walk through the restricted area - this area is being allowed to regenerate naturally, with minimal human intervention, but with the assistance of White Park cattle to control the density of the scrub and so improve the habitat for birds, mammals and invertebrates.

Our first birds in this area were a family of Stonechats – only recorded since HWT took over the management – Greenfinch, Wren, Whitethroat and Dunnock were also recorded. We returned to the river footpath in the hopes of hearing or seeing Kingfisher – but sadly only Lesser Black-backed & Black Headed gulls were present on this visit, Stock dove, Swift, Swallow and Buzzard were added to our list. The temperature had risen quite considerably by this time (27°C) and we were running out of shady refuges, so we shortened our proposed walk and headed back over the Canary Bridge; a single Sand Martin and a Swallow checked us out while we took a brief respite under the old railway bridge, which crosses the Wye. To our delight Robbie L spotted an immaculate obviously newly hatched Green veined white butterfly drying out on the brick wall, it was the brightest yellow that any of us had ever seen on a HOC walk and to add to our pleasure Mervyn spotted the chrysalis from

which it had emerged. The coffee shop in the Shell Store building provided cold drinks and air-conditioning, both were very welcome!

Our counts for the day = **31 bird species & 15 butterfly species**

Thanks to all who turned out despite the challenging conditions.



Green veined white butterfly & chrysalis

Outdoor Events – book on the events page of the HOC website

- 8/9/26 Slimbridge carpark 9.30 – 15.00
- 26/9/26 Eaton Hill, Leominster 10.00 – 14.00
 - meet at Broad St car park Leominster
- 24/10/26 The Darren, Longtown 9.30 – 14.30

Indoor Events 2026-27

St Pauls Community Hall Tupsley 7.30pm

<u>Date</u>	<u>Talk</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
24 th September	Life as a bird guide	Toby Green
22 nd October	Where's my Redpoll?	Mike Wheeler
	DNA & Taxonomy for the baffled	
26 th November	Birds and their Bugs	Ella Curry
17 th December	HOC Christmas Event Bird Quiz & Food	HOC

21ST January 2027

Iceland- land of fire & brilliant birds

Helen Mugridge

25th February 25th 2027

In search of Pheasants India & Bhutan

Toby Green

18th March 18th 2027

HOC AGM



Willow Tit – J.Tilby

Members Articles & Announcements

A Visit to the Global Bird fair

I visited Global Bird fair on July 12th which is held annually in mid-Summer near Rutland Water. It's a three day event (Fri, Sat, Sun) for birders to meet up, attend talks, buy merchandise, eat and drink and generally look at all things birding – think 'Birding Glastonbury' but without the music. I visited on the Saturday this year as the lectures that day were the ones I thought I would find most interesting.

For those who've not been before the fair is arranged on a large field with multiple marquee tents which cover different aspects of the hobby, the main ones being

- Optics (Cameras and Bins/Scopes) – all the main suppliers have a dedicated stand where you can try all their ranges (I used it two years ago to choose between Kowa and Swarovski scopes as I could try both within 10 minutes)
- Travel – lots of companies offering guided holidays in the UK and Worldwide where they show you their available - most companies were offering Bird Fair discounts
- Societies – different focus groups (e.g. Hirundines, Protection, even Dragonflies!)
- Books – quite a few stalls selling new (and signed) and ones with collectibles
- Art – a whole tent dedicated to Painting, printing, wood carving and other media

- Lectures – a whole series of events with about 50 talks a day across 4 stages , including ‘big names’ in birding – this year included David Lindo, Simon King, Megan McCubbin and Stephen Moss
- Events – there were walks to Rutland Water arranged, and bird ringing demos

This year I attended 4 talks. The first was a celebration of Spurn Observatory on its 80th Anniversary (somewhere I’ve yet to visit). Secondly a talk by Simon King (BBC Wildlife cameraman and original presenter of Springwatch) about his trips filming birds and also Polar Bears. I then attended two photography lectures delivered by the Nikon School of Photography on the Z-series system and ‘creative’ photography. Even with 4 talks and lunch and a coffee break there was still plenty of time to wander around the stalls mentioned above.

Practicalities are good and the event is well organised – large free parking on site, lots of food and drink stalls (burgers, curries, and coffee and cakes, beer and cider, ice cream etc etc). Also plenty of toilets on site. My ticket cost £20 for the day (early bird price via the website <https://globalbirdfair.org>) and includes all the talks, events, and parking. It’s a two and a half hour drive from Hereford, so can be done in a day (I left at 6.30am and returned by 7pm) but you can camp or use a campervan overnight on site, if you want, for an extra fee.

I’m waiting to see the dates and programme of events for 2027, but if anyone is interested in sharing a car trip then please let me know nearer the time.

Richard Hanson



Great Tits – S. Cadwallader

Mowley Nest Boxes

I have been monitoring the nest boxes for Pied Flycatchers in Mowley Wood for 12 years. Pied flycatcher numbers are in decline. The species' conservation status is Red Listed due to recent declines in both breeding populations and range. Woodland nest box schemes, are helping conservationists monitor breeding success and population numbers.

In late winter I clean out the nestboxes and in March block the entrances until I see the first Pied flycatcher arrive, usually in the second week of April. The male Pied Flycatchers arrive first from Africa, and invariably to the same nest box. The females then build a very distinctive nest lined with leaves, grass and sometimes strips of honeysuckle bark, and generally lay 7 blue eggs. These are incubated for 14 days and the chicks fledge after 14 to 18 days.

This has been a bumper year for fledgelings, probably due to the warm weather earlier on.

Total fledged – 33 Pied Flycatcher, 61 Blue Tit, 17 Great Tit.

Sarah Cadwallader



Pied Wagtail – S. Cadwallader

My Local Patch

Bodenham Lakes

Having moved from Berkshire early this year, I have a whole new local patch to discover across Herefordshire. My first port of call was obviously the HOC web site for information on the local area and so I duly joined and started exploring the sites and turning up on the organised walks.

The nearest HWT site to me is Bodenham Lakes and so I visited the week after I moved in during the first week of March where my visit produced 35 species (seen + heard) – super to have a good mixture of habitats (lake, woodland, fields) in one location. I returned on the next weekend to find the Ring-Necked Duck which was hiding itself in the groups of Tufted Ducks – a great year tick for me (#146 UK only) as I'd only seen this species on Scottish lakes before.

I have been back a few times since; April was super for warblers, and I managed to find a Garden Warbler singing high up in the trees near the viewing screen. On the same day I watched a Common Snipe feeding on the scrape in front of the hide – nice to see them out in the open for once!



It looks to be a good all year-round site too, a morning visit in July delivered a year tick #202 with Green Woodpecker yaffling in the fields above the orchards. Also seen were excitable Wrens, feeding Goldcrest, a Sparrowhawk hunting along the river, two Spotted Flycatchers hawking insects from trees near the near, and a family (M+F+Juv.) of Bullfinches in the bushes feeding on soon to be ripe elderberries and blackberries.



I look forward to returning later in the year for Autumn and Winter sightings.

Richard Hanson

Members Sightings of Note

Date	Bird		Site	Finder
3rd Apr	Barnacle goose	1	Hartleton	A Everleigh
4th Apr	Grasshopper Warbler	1	Bartonsham meadows	unknown
5th Apr	White Wagtail	1	WGP	T Downes
6th Apr	Osprey	1	Winforton on Wye	P&T Downes
7th Apr	Golden Plover	20	Bradnor Hill	P Downes
9th Apr	Egyptian Goose	2	Oak Tree farm	M Bound
11th Apr	Ringed Plover	1	WGP	G Bilbao
15th Apr	Bar-tailed Godwit	1	WGP	J Tilby
17th Apr	Grasshopper warbler	2	Eardisland	E Curry
18th Apr	Whimbrel	1	WGP	P&T Downes
19th Apr	Dunlin	1	WGP	G Bilbao
24th Apr	Cetti's Warbler	1	Central Hereford	J Tilby
25th Apr	Whinchat	1	Bartonsham meadows	S Griffin
25th Apr	Osprey	1	BL	M Harber
27th Apr	Snipe	1	BL	R Hanson
8th May	Osprey	1	WGP	C Joseph
9th May	Ringed Plover	2	WGP	T Downes
12th May	Ring-necked Parakeet	2	White Cross	J Tilby
14th May	Dunlin	2	WGP	P Downes
16th May	Sanderling	1	WGP	P&T Downes
16th May	Cattle Egret	22	WGP	P&T Downes, J Tilby
17th May	Great Black-backed Gull	1	Wilton	D Webb
18th May	Avocet	1	WGP	C Joseph
19th May	Dunlin	1	WGP	J Tilby
21st May	Long-Eared Owl	1	North of County	P&T Downes
22nd May	Sanderling	1	WGP	G Bilbao
24th May	Nightjar	1	West of County	P&T Downes
25th May	Quail	1	Stretford Br	P&T Downes
30th May	Goldeneye	1	Kenchester Pools	J Tilby
4th Jun	Quail	1	Winforton on Wye	P Parsons
9th Jun	Corn Bunting	1	North of County	J Tilby
11th Jun	Barnacle goose	1	BGP	J Tilby
14th Jun	Quail	1	Wolfow	S Smith

30th Jun Mar-Jun	Redshank Firecrest	2 -	BGP at least 4 sites	J Tilby Various
Please note; these are reported sightings and not confirmation that they have been accepted by the rarities subcommittee.				
BGP=Brockhall GP, WGP = Wellington GP, BL= Bodenham lake				
John Tilby				

Editors Feedback

Please keep sending us your photos, observations, reviews of birding equipment, books and stories and we will publish them in the Newsletter.

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES

New HOC membership subscription rates - 2026

- Children £6 ,Single £16
- Couple £24 , Family £30
- Life £400 , Joint life £600 same address
- Senior life (over 65) £240 ,Senior joint life (over 65) £360 same address

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Details of other Committee members can be found on our website
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