



The Harrier

The Devon BirdWatching & Preservation Society Newsletter: October 2012 No 5

THE DEVON ATLAS PROJECT



Chairman's Message

This edition of the Harrier is largely devoted to the Devon Atlas Project.

It is vital that we make a first rate job of the “**New Devon Atlas**” and I am very pleased to add my voice to Stella's to stress the importance of continuing data gathering up to the end of the breeding season in 2013.

It is Devon Birds most significant current project and I urge all members to get behind it to ensure that the records we use for this new Atlas are as complete and accurate as possible. The bird data that we publish will then provide the basis for our conservation and preservation work in Devon for many years to come.

Please make sure you read and respond to the Devon Atlas article that follows. You will see that a huge amount of work has been done but there are still gaps within areas of Devon and more breeding evidence is required. Please come on board and help us fill them and in turn ensure the Devon Atlas reflects the true status of birds in the county.

George Harris

www.devonbirds.org - See Atlas pages

Devon Atlas website: <http://www.devonatlas.co.uk/>

The Final Frontier!

The Last Chance to Contribute

We are now about to enter the last year of recording for our atlas and are so near to completing all our tetrads - over 1850 of them - that we have a dream of getting them all covered.

Thanks are due to the many people who have been surveying, first for the national BTO Atlas, and continuing on to the completion of the tetrad surveying for the County Atlas.

Can you help us in this final year by taking on one of the last few tetrads? Just think of the final book: your name on the list – your warm glow of pride – your sense of camaraderie ...

So dust off those binoculars, sharpen that pencil, and get those wellies back on for some more Atlas fun!

If you can, then please email: recorder@devonbirds.org or get in touch with the Atlas team via the 'Contact Us' page at www.devonatlas.co.uk. The website is also the place to find out more information about the Devon Atlas including the very latest news on which tetrads need a surveyor.

Whilst most previous County Atlases have simply recorded “presence or absence” of a species, with the highest recorded level of breeding activity for each tetrad, we are aiming for an estimate of **abundance** of each species as well – based on the techniques used for the BTO’s national atlas – the purpose of the tetrad count.

But we also need *every* DBWPS member’s notes (including any post Nov 1st 2007 that have not already been submitted) of which birds they see in their vicinity – what, where, when (and something about their activities in the Breeding Season). We still have squares without a robin or a blackbird, so don’t assume that someone else has done it!

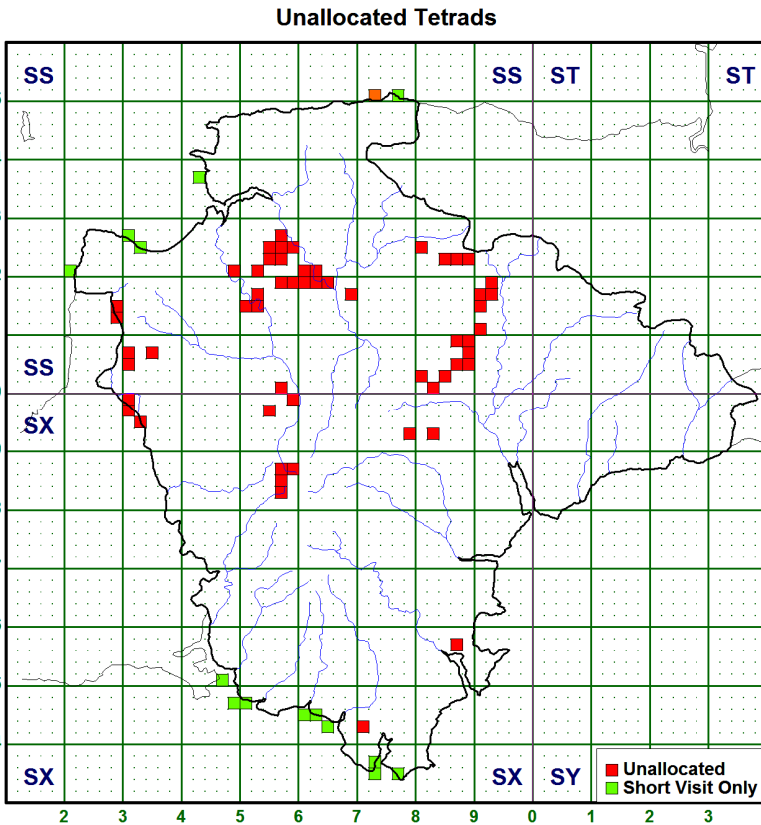
You can submit these ‘Roving Records’ either directly on to the BTO Atlas website, if you are registered on this – or email a spreadsheet, or send in paper records, ideally on the DBWPS form, direct to our Database Manager, Julia Harris. Please let us have your records regularly and don’t leave it until the end of the year. 50,000 records at a time is quite a mouthful!

In general, we don't really need more records from the well-visited coastal and estuarine locations, so please consider checking out some of the less popular inland areas during this final year of our project!

If we ALL try to ensure that all areas of the county are covered, and submit our records, we will be able to produce an Atlas which will not only be directly comparable with the previous "Sitters Atlas", but will extend this to show the Winter distributions as well.

Stella Beavan
07710879277

stella@treedown.eclipse.co.uk



The View from the North

This coming Winter Season (November 1st 2012 to February 28th 2013) and next year's Breeding Season (April 1st to July 31st for purposes of the Atlas project) comprise the final year of surveying for our Devon Bird Atlas project.

The task is nearing completion! – but there's still plenty to do during this last year.

There has been a very encouraging response to our pleas to take-up some of the outstanding TTVs in the North and Mid-Devon so far this autumn – special thanks to these birders! – you know who you are, so give yourself a pat on the back! – but there are still plenty to go round.

However, because of the relative dearth of DBWPS members in some of these rural areas, we do need to ask people from the population centres of southern Devon to travel some distance to these tetrads! – but maybe less distance than you often travel for your “normal” birding trips. Please help us if you can.

The map on the previous page shows which tetrads still need surveyors, they are:

North Devon (SS squares)

SS21 – 2 tetrads by Upper Tamar Lake

SS30 – 3 tetrads near Holsworthy

SS42 – 1 tetrad NW of Great Torrington

SS50 – 1 tetrad S of Hatherleigh

SS51 – 5 tetrads SE of Great Torrington

SS52 – 7 tetrads S of Barnstaple

SS61 – 4 tetrads between High Bickington and Kings Nympton

SS62 – 2 tetrads just E of High Bickington

SS80 – 8 tetrads around Crediton and Cheriton Fitzpaine

SS82 – 4 tetrads around the Knowstone area

SS91 – 5 tetrads W & NW of Tiverton

Paul Madgett tel: 01271 812617 email: madgett@baggypoint.org.uk

The View from the South

You will find the outstanding SX tetrads are listed below and on our new www.devonbirds.org website together with several coastal areas which just require four shorter visits during the year which could be combined with a coastal walk.

Further information on any of these can be obtained by speaking to me, Julia, on 01822 853785.

Southern Devon (SX squares)

SX39 – 3 tetrads S of Clawton

SX58 – 4 tetrads on NW Dartmoor - do we have an energetic long distance walker in our midst?

SX59 – 2 tetrads N of Okehampton

SX74 - 1 tetrad between S Milton and West Alvington

SX79 – 1 tetrad just E of Cheriton Bishop

SX89 – 1 tetrad SE of Tedburn St Mary

SX74 – 1 tetrad W of Kingsbridge

SX85 – 1 tetrad SW of Paignton

As well as asking members to help complete these tetrads we are still keen for everyone to pass on their records of successful breeding birds as mentioned earlier.

We have situations like SX64N, an area of land between the R Erme & R Avon where in the breeding season 38 species have been recorded but only two records of breeding. Surely Blackbird, Robin, tit family, crow family and many finches and warblers bred?

Help fill the gaps!

If you'd like to know what gaps there are where you live please get in touch and we can let you know the current situation.

Don't wait - get involved now!

Julia Harris tel: 01822 853785 email: clonwayteam@bopenworld.com

DEVON BIRDS RECORDS COMMITTEE

After serving as a member of the Committee for five years, Gavin Haig will be standing down at the end of December 2012. Gavin, who started birding in London before moving to Devon in 2002, has been an active member of the Committee, and his consistently pragmatic approach to assessing records has proved invaluable. His expertise and enthusiasm for Gulls will also be highly missed. The Society would like to thank him for his contribution over the past five years and wish him well in the future.

A formal application to fill the vacancy has been received from Chris Townend, from Budleigh Salterton, which is supported by members of the Committee. Chris has been birding for over thirty years, being based in Devon for roughly half of this time. He spends most of his birding time now on his local patch – the River Otter, with last year's Bonaparte's Gull being his latest good find for this small Estuary. Chris was employed by the RSPB for eight years, where he spent time working on Species Protection and managing the Cornish Cirl Bunting re-introduction project. He now works as an ornithological consultant and leads bird watching holidays through his own wildlife watching company. This takes him to many places across the world leading tours and seeing a huge variety of bird species.

Unless the County Recorder receives any other applications before 20th October 2012, Chris will be formally elected to fill the vacancy for a five-year period.

For more information and/or an application form please contact:

Steve Waite, County Recorder, 38 Durley Road, Seaton, Devon, EX12 2HW

Tel: 01297 20326

E-mail: stevewaite85@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEWS

Peter Goodfellow's book "Avian Architecture" (see "Devon Birds" April 2012) has won the PROSE AWARD for 2011 awarded by The Association of American Publishers, in the Popular Science and Popular Mathematics section. It is still available on-line, and a UK edition is planned for next spring.

BIRD SENSE – WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A BIRD BY TIM BIRKHEAD

The publishing details for the above book were omitted in the June Harrier. They are: Published by Bloomsbury, 2012. £16.99 hardback. ISBN978 1 4088 2013 1
Pro. Tim Birkhead F.R.S., is Professor of Animal Behaviour at Sheffield University. In 2009 he won Best Bird Book of the Year with *The Wisdom of Birds* (Bloomsbury).

DEVON RECORDS FOR 2012

Please would members start thinking about collecting their records together and perhaps sending in the first half year records to help avoid the end of year **avalanche**. At the moment we have 9,000 records and will end up with nearly 60,000 - every year I seem to be tied to the machine for days and nights on end, so to allow me time to sleep or even go birding, **please** start sending records in now.

This message is particularly important to members who handwrite their records and only send them in at the end of the year, please consider starting on your records now and send in the first installment to help spread the load for the small band of helpers who type them up.

Also if anyone needs Rarity forms please contact Steve or myself and we'll send them on to you.

Julia Harris

MESSAGE FROM THE SOCIETY ARCHIVIST

It is with great regret that, due to family commitments, I shall have to stand down at the next AGM. If any member wishes to take on the Society Archives would he/she please contact The Chairman, George Harris. Any applicant must have sufficient space to be able to hold and store the current archives and add to them as necessary. As a rough idea of space required I am currently using about ten feet of shelf space with a max height of fourteen inches between shelves plus a large suitcase.

OFFICIAL JOB DESCRIPTION (Adopted at a Council meeting June 2004)

1. To hold in a safe and secure place the archives and associated memorabilia of the Society.
2. To maintain accurate records of material held in the archive and to send periodically a copy of the records to the Secretary.
3. To identify and obtain if possible suitable material from the past.
4. To identify and obtain material from the present day which may be of use in future generations. (A guide to suitable material can be found in the archive presentation binders)
5. To ensure that in the case of death or incapacity of the Archivist, a friend or relative is aware of the existence of the archives and arrangements should be made for their transference to an Officer of the Society until such time as a new Archivist is appointed.

Dave Jenks Society Archivist

If you would like further information or are interested in taking on the role please get in touch with me: George Harris 01822 853785
email: clonwayteam@btopenworld.com

RED-BACKED SHRIKE

As some of you may know Red-backed Shrike once again bred on Dartmoor this summer, for the third year in a row, and again, members of Devon Birds along with volunteers from other organizations spent thousands of hours watching over the birds this season. Unfortunately, this year they failed to fledge any young, due to the extremely wet and difficult weather conditions, which had a negative effect on many species this last 'summer'. We would however like to take this opportunity to say a **very big thank you** to those members who put in time and effort, often working in cold, wet and frankly miserable conditions, to ensure the birds were again protected from egg collectors and not disturbed.

This is the third year that Devon Birds has been in partnership with the other organizations on this project (Dartmoor Study Group, Devon & Cornwall Police, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England and RSPB), and we would like to thank the RSPB for coordinating the operation and employing site staff. Funding for the project came from DBWPS, Dartmoor Sustainable Development Fund, Natural England and RSPB. Hopefully we can look forward to better weather and more successful years ahead.

The RSPB would like to add that unfortunately egg collectors again visited the location and without this protection scheme the birds would no doubt have failed at their hands. This year however unfortunately a few birdwatchers/photographers also caused problems and sadly the police had cause to speak to at least one individual who ventured too close to the birds.

A protection scheme will run again in 2013 if the birds return and breed. While the location is not named or publicized, it is known to many within Devon and further afield, and we invite anyone visiting the site in summer to speak with the project staff and volunteers who will provide information on the project and advise suitable locations to view the birds without risking their disturbance – a project telescope will be on hand to view birds.

George Harris

Lundy Trip 2013

The 2013 trip to Lundy Island has been booked for Sunday 12th May 2013 sailing from Bideford at 7.30am. Further details will be published in due course.

DIARY DATES

FIELD MEETINGS

EAST DEVON BRANCH

- 6th Nov (Tu)10.00am. Roadford Lake - Meet c/p SX423898 J.R.
17th Nov(Sa)10.00am. Somerset Levels. Westhay & Ashcott - Meet SWT c/p
ST456437. D.J
27th Nov (Tu) 9.30am. East Budleigh Common. - Meet Four Firs c/p SY031863
(morning only) D.J
5th Dec (W) 9.30am. Escot Park. Field meeting followed by Christmas Lunch or
lunch only if you wish – meet Escot Gardens c/p
SY081981

PLYMOUTH BRANCH

- 9th Nov (F) 10.00am China Fleet Club/Kingsmill Lake – meet far end of c/p
SX428602. For Avocets and Spotted Redshank.
9th Dec (Su)10.00am Beesands – meet c/p near hide SX820405. For ducks and
divers.

TAW & TORRIDGE BRANCH

- 18th Nov (Su)10.00am Dawlish Warren – meet main c/p (charge) SX980785.
For car sharing meet Barnstaple Park & Ride Newport c/p
08.00am.
16th Dec (Su)10.00am Barnstaple to Ashford – meet Civic Centre c/p SS554334.
Leader: Andy Cudmore. Carry lunch or visit Garden
Centre café where hot food is available.

INDOOR MEETINGS

SOUTH DEVON BRANCH

- 19th November Birds and other wildlife in Torbay. Chris Proctor

TAW & TORRIDGE BRANCH

- 13th November The Yucatan -Temples, Humming Birds and Whale
Sharks. Mike Langman
11th December Wildlife of the Suffolk Coast Rob Macklin.

All Members are welcome at any meeting organized by the Society or branches.
Field Meetings may be cancelled in bad weather, if in doubt, please contact the
organiser – details in the Programme.

BIRD NOTES

Most of these records are unchecked and as yet unauthenticated. Birds present for more than one day are only mentioned on their first day. For the very latest Devon bird news visit: <http://birdnews.devonbirds.org>

Please send your bird sightings to either:

County Recorder

Steve Waite

38 Durley Road, Seaton, EX12 2HW

T: 01297 20326

E: recorder@devonbirds.org

Data Manager

Julia Harris

6 Clonway, Yelverton, PL20 6EG

T: 01822 853785

E: recorder@devonbirds.org

August

- 1 **Balearic Shearwater** (24), **Sooty Shearwater**, **Storm Petrel** (2) and **Pomarine Skua** Berry Head; **Wood Sandpiper** Black Hole Marsh; **Slavonian Grebe** Exe Estuary (still).
- 2 **Sabine's Gull** and **Sooty Shearwater** (3) Thurlestone; **Crossbill** (3) Clennon Valley.
- 3 **Great Shearwater** Exmouth; **Wood Sandpiper** (now 2) Black Hole Marsh
- 4 **Great Shearwater** Berry Head and Start Point; **Cory's Shearwater**, **Balearic Shearwater** (11), **Sooty Shearwater** (5), **Pomarine Skua** (3) and **Yellow-legged Gull** Prawle Point; **Wood Sandpiper** Bideford; **Mediterranean Gull** (75) Instow.
- 5 **Osprey** Dawlish; **Pomarine Skua** (6) Berry Head; **Roseate Tern** Thurlestone.
- 6 **Garganey** Bowling Green Marsh.
- 7 **Wood Sandpiper** (5) Exminster Marshes; **Balearic Shearwater** (13) Berry Head; **Pomarine Skua** (2) Sharkham Point; **Little Ringed Plover** Dawlish Warren.
- 10 **Aquatic Warbler** South Milton Ley.
- 11 **Sabine's Gull** Start Point; **Roseate Tern** Dawlish Warren.
- 12 **Stone Curlew** Smeatharpe; **Osprey** Kingsbridge Estuary; **Wood Sandpiper** Bishop's Tawton; **Curlew Sandpiper** (3), **Roseate Tern** and **Pied Flycatcher** Dawlish Warren.
- 13 **Curlew Sandpiper** (8) Dawlish Warren.
- 15 **Great Skua** (13), **Arctic Skua** (8), **Pomarine Skua** (6), **Balearic Shearwater** (6), **Black Tern** (7) Berry Head; **Little Gull** (4) and **Arctic Tern** (25) Slapton Ley; **Black Tern** and **Little Gull** Thurlestone; **Black Tern** (2) and **Little Gull** Dawlish Warren; **Curlew Sandpiper** (3) Skern; **Osprey** Yealmpton; **Wryneck** East Prawle.
- 16 **Great Shearwater**, **Balearic Shearwater** (53), **Sooty Shearwater** (8), **Yellow-legged Gull** Berry Head; **Black Tern** (10), **Arctic Tern** and **Little Tern** Northam Burrows; **Spotted Redshank** Bowling Green Marsh; **Curlew Sandpiper** (9) Dawlish Warren.

- 17 **Common Tern** (600), **Black Tern** (18), **Little Tern** (3) and **Arctic Tern** (2) Northam Burrows; **Little Gull** (6) Beer; **Spotted Redshank** (2) Bowling Green Marsh.
- 18 **Little Gull** Dawlish Warren; **Little Tern** (6) Northam Burrows.
- 19 **Honey Buzzard** Ringmore; **Pied Flycatcher** (2) Dawlish Warren.
- 20 **Melodious Warbler** and **Pied Flycatcher** (4) Start Point; **Pied Flycatcher** (2) Beer Head.
- 21 **Wood Sandpiper** (4) Powderham Marsh; **Spotted Redshank** Black Hole Marsh.
- 22 **Wood Sandpiper** South Huish Marsh.
- 23 **Wryneck** Wembury and Otter Head.
- 24 **Long-tailed Skua** Seaton; **Pomarine Skua** and **Little Gull** (3) Budleigh; **Hoopoe** Prawle Point; **Red Kite** Torrington.
- 25 **Osprey** Prawle Point; **Wood Sandpiper** (2) Aveton Gifford; **Curlew Sandpiper** Slapton Sands; **Black Tern** (2) Dawlish Warren.
- 26 **Wryneck** East Prawle and Thurlestone; **Tree Pipit** (5), **Whinchat** (4), **Redstart** (3), **Pied Flycatcher** and **Crossbill** Beer.
- 27 **Long-tailed Skua** (9), **Pomarine Skua** (6), **Arctic Skua** (134), **Great Skua** (65), **Balearic Shearwater** (53), **Sooty Shearwater** (9), **Storm Petrel** (2), **Little Gull**, **Iceland Gull**, **Yellow-legged Gull**, **Grey Phalarope**, **Black Tern** and **Arctic Tern** (11) Berry Head; **Long-tailed Skua** (5) Dawlish Warren, (4) Prawle Point (2) Beer and (1) Budleigh; **Sabine's Gull** Froward Point; **Roseate Tern** (2) Beer; **Garganey** and **Ruff** (2) Black Hole Marsh.
- 28 **Osprey** (3) Yealm Estuary and (1) Axe Estuary; **Roseate Tern**, **Arctic Tern** and **Black Tern** Dawlish Warren; **Black Tern**, **Arctic Tern** (3) and **Little Gull** Exe Estuary; **Garganey** Bowling Green Marsh.
- 29 **Long-tailed Skua** (3), **Balearic Shearwater** (83) and **Sooty Shearwater** (15) Berry Head; **Long-tailed Skua**, **Pomarine Skua** (3), **Sooty Shearwater** (8), **Black Tern** and **Arctic Tern** Hope's Nose; **Long-tailed Skua** Thurlestone and Beer; **Black Tern** (2) and **Little Gull** Northam Burrows; **Wood Sandpiper** South Efford and (3) Bowling Green Marsh; **Little Stint** Black Hole Marsh.
- 30 **Short-eared Owl** Orcombe Point; **Osprey** Exe Estuary and Steer Point; **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** (28) Exe Estuary.

September

- 1 **Wryneck** Wembury.
- 2 **Melodious Warbler** Hallsands; **Wryneck** Bideford; **Little Stint** Thurlestone and (2) Black Hole Marsh; **Black Tern** and **Little Gull** Northam Burrows.
- 4 **Red-backed Shrike** Wembury.
- 5 **Osprey** Islay Marsh; **Spotted Flycatcher** (100!) Erme Estuary.
- 6 **Roseate Tern** Dawlish Warren.
- 7 **Ortolan Bunting** Lundy; **Osprey** Prawle Point and Thurlestone.
- 8 **Spotted Crane** Axe Estuary; **Hoopoe** Yelland.
- 10 **Pectoral Sandpiper** Bowling Green Marsh; **Curlew Sandpiper** (8) Northam Burrows; **Balearic Shearwater** (282+) Start Point, (87) Seaton, (36) Dawlish

- Warren; **Melodious Warbler** Lundy.
- 12 **Short-toed Lark** Lundy; **Osprey** Kingsbridge.
- 13 **Wryneck** Wembury; **Osprey** Exeter.
- 14 **Wryneck** Honiton.
- 16 **Curlew Sandpiper** Axe Estuary; **Curlew Sandpiper** (2) and **Little Stint** Dawlish Warren; **Osprey** (2) and **Little Gull** Kingsbridge; **Wryneck** and **Barred Warbler** Prawle.
- 17 **Osprey** (2) Taw Estuary.
- 18 **Nightjar** Dawlish Warren; **Balearic Shearwater** (16) and **Sooty Shearwater** (2) Prawle Point; **Black Tern** Slapton Ley.
- 19 **Osprey** Exe Estuary; **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** (17) Dawlish Warren; **Red-throated Diver** Slapton.
- 20 **Melodious Warbler** Lundy; **Spoonbill** Dawlish Warren.
- 21 **Common Rosefinch** and **Ortolan Bunting** Lundy; **Curlew Sandpiper** (4) Bowling Green Marsh and Thurlestone.
- 22 **Ruff** and **Little Stint** Colyford Marsh.
- 23 **Long-tailed Skua**, **Sabine's Gull**, **Balearic Shearwater** (39), **Black Tern**, **Little Gull** (2) Hope's Nose; **Leach's Petrel**, **Pomarine Skua** (2), **Balearic Shearwater** (74) and **Black Tern** (5) Berry Head; **Black Tern** (3) and **Little Gull** Shoalstone Point; **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** (4), **Black Tern** (2) and **Arctic Tern** Prawle; **Little Gull** Broadlands; **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Little Stint** (2), **Arctic Tern** (3) Thurlestone; **Wood Sandpiper** (2) Colyford Marsh; **Little Stint** Northam Burrows.
- 24 **Marsh Harrier** and **Curlew Sandpiper** Axe Estuary; **Ruff** Smeatharpe; **Firecrest** Burrator.
- 25 **Black Tern** Devil's Point.
- 26 **Jack Snipe**, **Firecrest** and **Yellow-browed Warbler** Lundy; **Wryneck** Sharkham Point; **Firecrest** Budleigh; **Balearic Shearwater** (207) Prawle Point; **Ruff** (4) Bowling Green Marsh; **Yellow-legged Gull** Axe Estuary.
- 27 **Osprey** Sharkham Point and Thurlestone Bay; **Wryneck** Holdstone Down; **Short-eared Owl** Froward Point.
- 28 **Pectoral Sandpiper** (3) Exminster Marshes and (1) South Huish Marsh; **Long-eared Owl** Lundy; **Wryneck** Soar.
- 29 **Tawny Pipit** Dawlish Warren; **Barred Warbler** Bolt Head; **Curlew Sandpiper** (5) Bowling Green Marsh.
- 30 **Corncake** Marlborough; **Pomarine Skua**, **Black-throated Diver** (2) and **Balearic Shearwater** (70) Prawle Point; **Balearic Shearwater** (24) Berry Head.

<p>Articles for the October <i>Harrier</i> should be submitted by 30th November 2012 to the editor: Jack Aldous Email: coxtor@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 01822 854483. Address: 3 Cox Tor Close, Yelverton, PL20 6BH</p>

The DBWPS is a Registered Charity No.228966