

Welcome to the second edition of the Devon Birds newsletter. In this issue we give an update on the work we have been doing with the Barn Owl Trust and have news of exciting opportunities for you to get involved with field projects.

We are always open to news articles and items of interest to our members, so please feel free to forward anything that you feel may be worth publishing in the newsletter. Please email engagements@devonbirds.org

Help for Bird Survey in South Tawton in 2022

South Tawton Common, located on north-east Dartmoor (outlined on the map), requires a breeding bird survey in 2022. The Common covers 927ha with Cosdon Hill (550m) at its centre. The habitats are comprised of dry and wet heathland, grassland, much of which is dominated by purple moor-grass, mires, streams, and on the lower slopes scrub (gorse or bracken dominated with scattered hawthorn and rowan trees) and oak/ash woodland. The Common is grazed by sheep, cattle and ponies with grazing intensity controlled at a relatively low level under the conditions of a Higher Level Stewardship agreement.



Extra WeBS counter(s) needed at Roadford Reservoir and on the Kingsbridge Estuary

Roadford Reservoir is a large and important wetland site in West Devon, where counts have been carried out for the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) since its completion in 1989. However, it now needs one, or preferably more, additional counters to join the current team. The reservoir holds a good variety of wildfowl with numbers currently peaking at around 700–1,200. It also attracts passage waders and is internationally important for its roosting Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Counts are carried out on a Sunday morning near the middle of each month, but not everybody is obliged to attend every count. If interested, and/or would like to find out more about counting at Roadford, please contact the new count coordinator John Laws on jalaws@icloud.com.



Roadford Reservoir. *Emma Scotney*



Red-breasted Mergansers on the Kingsbridge Estuary. *Michael Brooking*

The beautiful **Kingsbridge Estuary** provides rich feeding for waterfowl, waders and gulls. Last month, with winter visitor numbers building, the WeBS count was over 1,800 waterbirds and 1,000 gulls. Next month there should be Red-breasted Mergansers, Golden Plover, more grebes, Brent Geese and maybe one or two surprises. The counts are carried out once each month around low tide and on the same morning by several pairs of counters to cover all the creeks and central areas. But more counters are needed! Experienced birders would be welcome, but if not confident about your ID skills, you could be paired up with a regular team member at first. A small cash balance is available to help towards purchase of binoculars if needed, perhaps by a young person. Anyone with a boat on the estuary would be especially welcome to cover the wide Harbour and Bag areas. If you are interested in joining the current WeBS team of 12 volunteers, please contact the coordinator Chris Klee at cklee@pobroadband.co.uk or phone 01548 288397. An extra counter would also be useful on the **Dart Estuary** – contact Peter Reay if interested.

WeBS is the national monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK and aims to provide the principal data for the conservation of their populations and wetland habitats. Further details can be found on www.bto.org/webs. In Devon, there are nearly 80 active sites, comprising estuaries, stretches of open coast, coastal marshes, a few sections of rivers and a great variety of leys, lakes, reservoirs, ponds and pits. In 2020, about 90 species of waterbird

were covered by WeBS counts, with species site counts varying from one to over 5,000 and winter totals of all species of wildfowl and waders exceeding 40,000 birds. Many of these counts appear in the Devon Bird Reports but an annual Devon WeBS Report is also produced. Please get in touch if you'd like to know more about WeBS, are interested in becoming a counter or just want a copy of the latest report.

Peter Reay (WeBS Local Organiser for Devon, except the Exe, Taw-Torridge and Tamar Estuaries) peter.p.j.reay@btinternet.com

Dartmoor Bird Report 2020

The *Dartmoor Bird Report* for 2020 should be completed by the end of October. It will soon be available on the Devon Birds website, but a pdf can also be requested from either of the compilers, Peter Reay peter.p.j.reay@btinternet.com and Fiona Fresney fionafreshney@btinternet.com. The report includes species accounts, photographs and a summary of over 20 projects and surveys currently being carried out on Dartmoor's birds. There is also recognition of milestones in two important long-term Dartmoor surveys: David Price's breeding bird survey of Dunsford Woods which began in 1980; and Mike Sampson's monitoring of breeding waders and other species on the high moor which began in 1970 with his discovery of a Golden Plover nest.



Golden Plover. Rippon Tor, 8 April 2020. Steve Young

Mid Devon AGM Date

Mid Devon branch AGM at 7.00pm Wednesday 17th November at The Boniface Centre, Church Lane, Crediton. The Boniface Centre is 50 yards east and adjacent to Crediton's parish church. Look out for signs, Parish Church Boniface Centre. For sat-navs the post code is EX17 2AH. Parking is available behind the church down the lane on the east side of the churchyard and beyond the Centre and neighbouring dairy.

Devon Birds needs your help

A Member Volunteer is invited to conduct a review of the charities financial controls. The emphasis is on the processes followed rather than the correctness of our numbers, which are checked by Thomas Wescott's annual 'Independent Examination'. The effort required would include a visit to the treasurer to review records and telephone interview with trustees as thought needed. A Charity Commission checklist ([see here for guidance](#)) is to be completed along with a short narrative of what has been undertaken, conclusions drawn and any suggestions for improvements. For more information email treasurer@devonbirds.org

Do you use Facebook

If you do, then we are looking for people to keep the page up to date with news and sightings information.

If you are interested send a friend request to Tony Utting on facebook, or reply to a post on the page offering to help and we will get you involved

Barn Owl Trust

The winter bird feed crop that was sponsored by Devon Birds is flourishing this year and drawing in a number of species, including flocks of Linnets, Stonechats and a number of Pheasants.



Devon Birds has also sponsored the purchase of 24 remote cameras that the Trust will use over the winter to monitor known Barn Owl breeding sites. The cameras will help to reduce physical visits to the sites, thus causing less disturbance and in turn reduce the environmental impact of the monitoring program.



Members are invited on a Bird walk at the Barn Owl Trust. Waterleat, Ashburton, Newton Abbot, TQ13 7HU on either **Friday 10thDecember 2021** or **Friday 21st January 2022**. Please provide your Devon Birds member number(s). To Book, please call the BOT on 01364 653026, or 01364 255256 , or else email info@barnowltrust.org.uk and book a place. Numbers are limited.

Do you want to know what birds have been seen most recently across the County?

Then please visit the Devon Birds website to see all the latest reports
https://www.devonbirds.org/news/bird_news/devon_bird_sightings

Website refresh

As many will know, the Devon Birds website is undergoing a major re-vamp to make it more efficient, appealing, and useful to our members.

If you have any high quality photos of our Devon Birds Reserves or other birdwatching sites you visit in the county that could be used on the new website please send them to tony.utting@devonbirds.org. they don't need to be huge files as they will only be used on the web, so mid-sized jpgs are fine.



Broadsands Beach. Many bird species can be seen here including various Gull species, Little egret, Grey heron, Pied Wagtail, Rock pipit and offshore Diver species in in the winter time

What's on

Now that Covid restrictions are being relaxed, outdoor (and some indoor) activities have resumed. Below is a list of the up-coming activities that members may be interested in.

Nov 8 09:30 – 12:30 East Devon Field Meeting

Powderham Church – Turf. Meet at roadside near church at SX971843 Book in advance: Alex Parsons, alex.parsons@devonbirds.org Phone: 01392 669842

Nov 12 09:00 – 14:00 Plymouth Field Meeting

Slapton Ley for wildfowl, wetlands and sea-watch. Meet on Slapton Ley Bridge (SX828443) Sands Road. Leader John Lloyd. Mobile: 07811 232206

Nov 15 08:30 – 12:30 South Devon Field Meeting

Dawlish Warren. Meet at the far end of the main car park under the bridge. Leaders Sara & Nick D'Agorne. Contact Jeff Hacon Email: jeff.hacon@devonbirds.org by 12th November to book a place

Nov16 10:00 – 14:00 Mid Devon Field Meeting

Roadford Reservoir. Meet at layby near hide at SX435930. An interesting mix of dabbling and diving ducks, the odd wader or two, and the possibility of something unusual. Leader Digby Greenhill. Info/Booking: Nick Armstrong Email: nick.armstrong@devonbirds.org Phone: 01363 866860

Dec 2 09:30 – 12:30 East Devon Field Meeting

Escot Park, Talaton. Meet at car park at SY080979.

Dec 2 09:30 – 13:30 Mid Devon Field Meeting

Moland Common, near the village of Molland, South Molton, West Exmoor. Winter raptors and a fine walking country. Meet at the London Inn, next to the church in Molland, EX36 3NG. Grid ref: SS807283. We will then drive on and walk the common for the morning. Leader Nick Armstrong

Dec 13 09:00 – 13:00 South Devon Field Meeting

Exminster Marshes. Meet at the RSPB car park just over the bridge. Leaders Sara & Nick D'Agorne. Anyone wishing to take part should contact Jeff Hacon (email: jeff.hacon@devonbirds.org) by 10th December

Dec 14 10:00 – 14:00 Plymouth Field Meeting

St Johns Lake and River Lynher for waders and gulls. Meet on Marine Drive in Torpoint (SX438547). Move to Wacker Quay later for walk along the Lynher and back to St Johns Lake for the high water. (Possibly muddy walk along river bank). Leader Doug Herdson. Mobile: 07910 078599.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST**Nov 12 09:30 – 17:00 Dartmoor Society Conference**

Hallowed Turf: Perspectives on the Conservation of Dartmoor's Blanket Peat.

Charter Hall, Market Street, Okehampton, EX20 1AA

Speakers include Adrian Colston, Richard Brazier, Morag Angus, Kevin Cox, Martin Gillard and Geoff Eyre.

Full details here: <https://www.dartmoorsociety.com/events#event142>

Annual Draw 2021 Prizewinners

1st Prize	£200	Mrs J Cullen
2nd Prize	3 x photos of Dunlin, Black Tailed Godwits & Wigeon	Mr S Green
3rd Prize	£75	Mr R Mitchell
4th Prize	2 x tickets for the annual trip to Lundy 2022	Mr M Hill
5th Prize	Framed photo of a Glossy Ibis	Mr J Packer
6th Prize	Framed photo of a Long-tailed Duck	Mr R Macklin
7th Prize	Framed photo of a Stonechat	Ms M Hill