



(Above) - Bearded Tits – by Chris Barrass

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NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2021

2022 AGM

The AGM: will be held on **Saturday 19th March 2022 in the Community Centre, Sea Road commencing 7pm.** The AGM will be followed by a talk by the effervescent Pete Durnell – Manager of the Keyhaven/Lymington Nature Reserve, the subject upon which he will talk.

2022 Membership Renewals: Will next be due **1st January 2022.** **The 2022 MCV Membership Fee will be: £7.50**

2022 Bird Observatory Keyfob Renewals: These will also fall due on **1st January 2022.** **The Renewals Fee for Keyfobs is £5.00**

Further details will follow later in the year.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS REQUIRED

If you have some spare time, would you consider joining the MCV management committee? We are always looking out for new members. We currently meet once a month at South Lawn Hotel in the Library Room at 7 to 9pm. If you are interested, please contact David Horne – Chairman by email (as above). Alternatively, why not come along and sit in on one of our meetings to find out more about the inspiring local conservation and educational work we do?

COLOUR-RINGED REDSHANK

In July this year, Chris Barrass recorded and photographed a Redshank at the Pans Wetlands. He noted that the bird had coloured leg-rings and a blue/black 'flag' on one of its legs. The information was passed to our local licensed 'bird ringer' Graham Giddens who sent off the details and received back the following information:

The redshank had been colour-ringed as a chick this summer in the Avon Valley by ringer Lizzie Grayshon – Wetlands Research Assistant. Lizzie works for the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) who have an important conservation project on the go in the Avon Valley to help restore breeding wader habitat near to Blashford Lakes, but on the western side of the Avon. The GWCT has attracted redshank to return to breed here for the first time in many years.

The work of the GWCT does not always attract universal praise for some of the things that it does. They are responsible for breeding grouse (on northern moorlands) and pheasants (in their thousands) for shoots i.e. 'field-sports'. However, with this particular wader habitat project in mind in the Avon Valley, I take my hat off to them (*if I had one*) for the work they are doing with wetlands and wader breeding habitat.



The *‘Waders for Real’* project is a partnership between local farmers, GWCT, Hampshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

EU ‘Life’ funding was secured and is allowing four ‘hotspots’ to be managed for optimal wader breeding habitat. The partnership is also working closely with students from Sparsholt College connecting fields and creating more open habitats suitable for breeding lapwing and redshank. They are also adding a number of ‘scrapes’ to the sites that will provide ideal habitat for foraging chicks.

Anyway, back to the ringed redshank. The bird was ringed by Lizzie on 27th June this year, when it was a large chick. It fledged in early July and a few weeks later it was seen by Chris at The Pans Wetlands. We were told by Lizzie that this is the first re-sighting of this individual since it was ringed. The sighting provides a huge amount of information on the fledging success and juvenile dispersal.



Avon Valley Redshank with leg-rings and leg-flag – Courtesy of Daisy Gillman

If you see any redshank (or any other bird species) with colour rings (or leg flags) please try to photograph it or draw a sketch of the rings and let us know the date, time of day recorded and its location by emailing keithmetcalf@btinternet.com so that the record can be sent to Lizzie.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM PULLING

Over the last few months, you may have seen some of our volunteers in their high-viz gilets and waders, along the Danes Stream pulling out Himalayan Balsam plants. This year, on top of our usual 'pull' in Milford and through the Pleasure Grounds, we have been working in partnership with Hampshire Wildlife Trust further upstream, with the ultimate aim to clear the plant from the entire catchment. This will not be possible in one year but any upstream clearance work will hopefully lessen the impact of the seeds being swept downstream to Milford next year.



Julie Hallows, Mary Macmillan & David Horne - Photo courtesy of Catherine Chatters

As a small team of dedicated volunteers, we have worked tirelessly from Shorefield Country Park through the woodland south of the A337 right up to Hordle. The plants vary in size from a few inches to six-foot tree-like structures. They grow rapidly in wet ground from May to September initially producing pretty pink flowers, and from July onwards vast numbers of exploding seed pods.

If kept unchecked such prolific growth out-competes our native flora. This much reduces the diversity of the habitat and has a knock-on detrimental effect on the number of insects and other native fauna it can support. A further problem is that as a strict annual plant it rapidly dies down at the end of the growing season leaving the muddy banks of the stream exposed and prone to severe erosion.

Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped over the past few months.

CAMERON BESPOLKA TRUST – YOUNG AMBASSADORS VISIT BIRD OBSERVATORY

MCV was asked by County Bird Recorder – Keith Betton if we would like to host five young ambassadors from the Cameron Bespolka Trust on their visit to Keyhaven Marshes. Chris Barrass and I were delighted to meet Keith and the youngsters at the Bird Observatory on 1st August.

The five youngsters with a passion for the natural world were being led by Keith (B) along the Keyhaven to Lymington Nature Reserve and their first port of call was at the Observatory. The five budding naturalists are using their powerful voices to help engage with children and teenagers. They have been organising nature-orientated activities up and down the country, with talks and walks and will play a key role in developing the courses at Cameron's Cottage and the new RSPB nature reserve at Franchises Lodge in the north of the New Forest when it opens in the next few months.



Keith (M) and Keith (B) with five of the Cameron Bespolka Trust – Young Ambassadors at the Bird Observatory on 1st August 2021

They are particularly keen to meet and talk with like-minded young naturalists and to learn more about the ways they can make nature a central part of their life or career. Further details can be obtained from Programme Trustee, Amy Hall at: <mailto:amy@cameronbespolkatrust.com>

WHY WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT FLOODPLAINS

We recently came across an interesting article which we would like to share. The report was written by Stewart Clarke, a specialist in freshwater, catchments and estuaries for the National Trust. He says;

“Whether its floods or drought, water is on the frontline of the climate crisis. This summer’s huge floods in Germany and Belgium, followed a few days later by those in central China, once again prompts the debate about managing floods and developments in the floodplain. We cannot avoid the fact that we already have lots of homes and infrastructure that is built in these high risk places. So, while we must stop this type of development, we must think carefully about how we use the remaining undeveloped parts of the floodplain. In short, we need to think about floodplains in the UK differently.



By recognising the floodplain as the space for water during wetter times of the year it doesn't make sense to use them for anything that might be vulnerable to flooding."

***“Most floodplains are not fit for purpose.** Research shows that over 90% of UK floodplains are ‘not fit for purpose’ occupied as they are, by urban development, arable farmland and improved grassland. As well as being liable to flooding, these modified floodplains shunt water much faster downstream creating flood issues for communities. By repurposing them to help us deal with the consequences of the climate and nature crisis, we can both secure huge benefits for people and wildlife and avoid some of the costs associated with inappropriate use. Properly recognised, our floodplains could deliver a big chunk of the government’s ambitions around nature, climate and public engagement with nature.*

Such a vision is the epitome of the proposed Nature Recovery Network for England and could help reduce flood risk, store and lock up carbon and create space for people to enjoy nature, all on top of the obvious benefits for nature.

Here are three ways to help rethink how we use our floodplains;

- 1) Define floodplains and give them special status*
- 2) Set new targets for restoration (restoring the rich mosaic of habitats that characterise natural floodplains could make a significant contribution to the UKs overall nature recovery programme) and*
- 3) Introduce ways to drive floodplain recovery”*

So, is any of this relevant to Milford-on-Sea? In a word, ‘possibly’.



The silt mud-bank on the eastern side of Sturt Pond has been building up over many years

Did you know that Sturt Pond is an artificially man-made water catchment area? The Danes Stream feeds into the top end of Sturt Pond below the NFDC car park in Sea Road. The stream used to curve and meander towards the rear of the Guides Hut area before this part of the stream was straightened to help speed floodwater in the stream through the village to help stop it flooding properties.

More recently (1994/5) the Downton Flood Alleviation Scheme was constructed for a similar reason as properties around the bottom of Barnes Lane still used to regularly flood during heavy or prolonged downfalls of rain.

This time however, instead of the water filling up downstream into Sturt Pond, it was thought prudent to hold the water back above Milford-on-Sea village at Downton in the reservoir valley area. The stored water could then be slowly released back into the Danes Stream once rainfall had sufficiently lessened.



Maybe there are still lessons to be learned for the future from such schemes? E.g.

- 1) It might be beneficial to continue to store floodwater at Downton but release it more gently into the Danes Stream so that the silt mud-bank in the Pond develops over a much longer period.

“The silt mud-bank in Sturt Pond of course provides superb feeding areas for hundreds of wintering waders, duck and geese, but without some forethought to the longer-term future, the existing mud-flat will gradually increase in volume, dry out the ground, thus increasing reed growth that will suck out even more water to the point when the Pond would (without further intervention) turn into woodland!”

DOWNTON LAKES

In previous MCV News we have mentioned that the new Downton Lakes circular nature walk is now open to the public. Access is via a new wooden gate in Shorefield Lane off Blackbush Road. There are parking restrictions in all local roads near to this access point, so it is suggested that you either walk or cycle and padlock your bike inside the gate area.

Please also note that while dogs are welcome, they must be kept on a lead at all times. Follow the footpaths and stay clear of the edges of the seven ponds as birds are now using these areas to rest and feed and should not be disturbed.



Our local ‘bird ringer’ Graham Giddens and MCV committee member Julie Hallows and husband Andy, have been recording the birds and have already produced a wide range of species using, or flying over the site. The full list as it stands after just a few weeks of being open is 62 species. The birds are listed more or less in the order they were recorded:

Black-headed Gull
Coot
Stock Dove
Meadow Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Stonechat
Blue Tit
Mallard
Buzzard
House Martin

Grey Heron
Cormorant
Woodpigeon
Grey Wagtail
Wren
Jackdaw
Skylark
Green Sandpiper
Goldcrest
Raven

Little Grebe
Kestrel
Siskin
Bullfinch
Swallow
Robin
Canada Goose
Yellow Wagtail
Carrion Crow
Pheasant

Egyptian Goose
Sparrowhawk
Nuthatch
Herring Gull
Moorhen
Song Thrush
Little Ringed Plover
Tree Pipit
Grasshopper Warbler
Magpie
Whinchat

Redpoll (Lesser Redpoll)
Blackcap
Tawny Owl
Swift
Tufted Duck
Chiffchaff
Sand Martin
Kingfisher
Garden Warbler
Curlew
Trecreeper

Peregrine
Willow Warbler
Little Egret
Whitethroat
Blackbird
Marsh Harrier
Firecrest
Greenshank
Rook
Wheatear

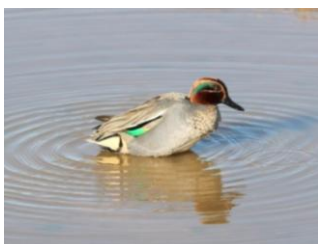
We thank Graham, Julie and Andy for recording the birds and we will produce a more detailed ringing report for the site in due course.

WINTER BIRDS HAVE STARTED TO ARRIVE

Birds that return to us each autumn/winter are starting to arrive. At Sturt Pond there is already a build up of Black-tailed Godwit (89 highest count to date), about 25 Teal and a sprinkling of the tiny Dunlin.

Unfortunately, many visitors (and possibly locals) still allow their dog off-lead when walking along the footpaths at Sturt Pond. We are sure that if they only knew that some of these birds have just flown over 1,000 miles to return to our shores, they would be a little more respectful of these tired birds that need to rest and feed up as quickly as possible to remain in a healthy condition.

It is quite amazing how often walkers allow their dogs to chase the swans, geese, ducks and waders into the water, some even encouraging their dogs into the water by throwing sticks, balls or toys for them to chase. The dogs of course are having a wonderful time like the two that were seen in early September with their owners several yards behind their animals watching them chase each-other along the edge and into the Pond where 50 Black-tailed Godwit had recently arrived and were feeding fairly close to the footpath. Fortunately the dogs showed no interest in the birds and were happily frolicking around each other. Neither, dogs or their owner recognised that the 50+ Godwit's were immediately put to flight.



Teal



Black-tailed Godwit



Dunlin



Despite looking as though the dogs were chasing the birds in this photo, they were not particularly interested in them, but they did put up all the birds and they didn't return for some while. Meanwhile, the owners were content to watch their dogs splashing around in the water without any thought to the disturbance to the birds!!

GOOD NEWS

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BAD NEWS

<i>Spoonbills</i> raise 2 young at Abberton Reservoir – A first for Essex	<i>Great Skuas</i> suffer disastrous breeding season in Shetland
<i>Bitterns</i> nested successfully in the West Midlands for the first time in more than a century	First Orkney <i>Golden Eagle</i> chicks in 40-years perish due to cold and wet weather
<i>Hen Harriers</i> enjoy their best year in a decade with 24 successful breeding attempts, fledging 84 chicks	The World's rarest heron – the <i>White-bellied Heron</i> suffers further worrying declines
Major <i>Pygmy Cormorant</i> influx reaches southern & eastern Germany prompting speculation that they could reach Britain soon	<i>Goshawk</i> shot at Loch Farr in the Highlands
RSPB Otmore, Oxfordshire celebrate its first reintroduced <i>Common Crane</i> fledgling in 500 years.	

THE MIGHTY OAK

ITS IMPORTANCE FOR BRITISH WILDLIFE



NEW ROOF FOR THE RENOVATED BIRD HIDE

The upgraded Bird Hide at Sturt Pond nature reserve is already proving a major hit with visitors. There is a new access gate, welcome sign, interpretation panel, footpath and the exterior and interior of the Hide has been repainted. We have also lined the interior with plywood panelling and insulation to help keep the cold out during the winter months, making it an altogether more pleasant birding experience.



The new roof should last for 10-15 years and replaces the original roof from Feb. 2009. We have also introduced a 'second-hand' bird and wildlife book stand and honesty-box for visitors to leave a small donation when they pick up a book.

SECOND-HAND BIRD & WILDLIFE BOOKS REQUIRED

If you have any old bird books that you no longer require and would like to donate them to help us raise funds for the upgrades of the Bird Hide, please leave them in a bag inside the Hide.

Every book helps. Thank you.

'CHATS' IN THE SCRAPE AT STURT POND

A good birding session at the Bird Hide in early September saw the arrival of three different 'chat' species. Wheatear, Whinchat and Stonechat all at the same time in the 'scrape'



Wheatear



Whinchat



Stonechat

“If you go down to the woods today”

Listen and look out for deer in the forest because this is the mating season (the rut) for some of the deer. If you are lucky enough to hear the stags roaring or the clash of the antlers take care and keep your dog on a lead as the deer are full of testosterone and ready for a fight.



Just a friendly jousting match between two red deer stags



Red deer stag roaring

***SEE SEPARATE EMAIL
ATTACHMENT FOR
FULL DETAILS ABOUT
OUR WINTER CREEKS
& SALTMARSH DORY
TRIPS (36 TO 38)
WITH HURST CASTLE
FERRY***

***NOVEMBER,
DECEMBER &
JANUARY 2022***