Autumn Newsletter 2026

Cylchlythyr yr Hydref 2026



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Welsh Ornithological Society

Cymdeithas Adaryddol Cymru

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Chair's Welcome! Croeso'r Cadeirydd!

The hot weather this summer has been unprecedented and the long-term impacts on our bird populations will be the subject of much research and monitoring. Although the wildfires across large swathes of Wales came after the peak of the breeding season, the damage to the habitat, in many cases, will take years to recover. Whilst birds may be able to fly out of danger, most of their food sources and breeding sites were burnt, disrupting lifecycles and leaving scars on the landscape. Some much-needed rain has now arrived, but our land needs to be able to retain water throughout the year so perhaps the focus on re-wilding should change to re-wetting?

The summer has also brought more changes on WOS Council. We have been fortunate that Ian Spence has agreed to temporarily replace our retiring Membership Secretary, until a new website and new membership systems come into place. It isn't until key individuals step down from their roles do, we truly realise how much vital voluntary work was undertaken in the name of birds. We are still without a Secretary, and this is having an impact on our ways of working. Even if you can only give a little time to WOS, we would love to hear from you. Training and support are always available. In the meantime, WOS now has a co-opted Youth member of Council and Saffron Forester joined in her first Council meeting in July. Joshua Brown has also been co-opted, and you will read more about Joshua, Saffron and Ian later in the newsletter.

Throughout the summer, WOS and BTO Youth have been putting together the plans for the forthcoming annual conference and we hope that many of you have already booked your place and are looking forward to hearing the variety of migration stories at Aberystwyth in October.

Soon, you will all be receiving notice of our Annual General Meeting (AGM). As we have done most years since the pandemic, the AGM will be undertaken via Survey Monkey so do look out for those emails and not treat them as junk or spam. Your vote really counts so please take part as it only takes a few minutes once you have read the accompanying papers. Your views are important and more votes give Council the confidence to continue its work for the birds of Wales.

Finally, my 200 Challenge has seriously stalled. The heatwaves sapped my energy and I just didn't get out birding as much as I would have wanted. I have only reached 163 and can only be very envious of the sightings posted on social media that yet again I have failed to see myself. However, birding still gives me a lot of joy and listing is only one aspect of this activity. I have done a small amount of ringing and handling a brood of Kestrels was a delight. And only this past week I was involved in releasing a stranded Manx Shearwater that had lost its way and turned up in a building on an industrial estate. Seeing the bird fly away, very strongly, over the sea was a great relief. If you have any birdwatching stories to share, then we would love to hear from you.



Happy birding.
Anne Brenchley
woschair@gmail.com

NEWS

Changes on WOS Council

We are delighted to welcome Joshua Brown, Saffron Forrester and Ian Spence onto WOS Council. See page 6 for more details.

2026 Annual Conference

When: Saturday 31st October.

Where: Aberystwyth University.

How to book: Click here.

See page 5 for more details.

2026 Photo Competition

Entry for the 2026 WOS Photography Competition has now closed and judging is currently taking place. The successful entrants will be notified in due course. There have been some fantastic entries, and we look forward to announcing the winners at our Annual Conference in October.

Membership Database - Membermojo

I have been reorganising the WOS membership database, moving it from an Excel spreadsheet into Membermojo, a membership management database. When the migration is complete it will make the role of Membership Secretary much easier, with fewer chances of errors. If you see emails from a Membermojo address, please do not delete them as spam. They probably contain useful and interesting information. This should include, I hope, this Newsletter. If you have any queries about Membermojo, please get in touch with me.

Ian M. Spence
Acting Membership Secretary

Bird Sightings News

Mega Rare:

- Barolo-type Shearwater (*Puffinus baroli/lherminieri/boydi).* Offshore Skomer Island, Pembrokeshire on September 6th.

Rare:

- Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*). Kenfig NNR, Glamorgan on September 20th. One trapped and ringed.

- Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*). Black Pill, Gower, Glamorgan from September 7th to 13th. Other individuals have been present at Dale and Newport, Pembrokeshire.

- Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*). Over Chepstow, Gwent on July 30th.

Scarce:

- Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*). Lisvane Resevoir, Glamorgan from September 4th to 15th.

- Ortolan Bunting (*Emberiza hortulana*). Two individuals off Bogey Road, Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan on August 28th.

- Melodious Warbler (*Hippolais polyglotta*). Trapped and ringed on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire on August 26th.

- Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*). Briefly at Garreglwyd, Rhoscolyn, Anglesey on September 1st.

Milvus

Rachel Taylor, the Editor of *Milvus* is looking to increase the pool of reviewers for our publications. If you or someone you know has experience of publishing scientific papers and could review the occasional paper, then Rachel would love to hear from you. We need to know a bit about your area of expertise and your availability. *Milvus,* the journal is only published once a year, so this should be a relatively small-time commitment.



Red-eyed Vireo (Vireo olivaceus). Photo credit: Shaun Evans.



Ortolan Bunting (Emberiza hortulana). Photo credit: Shaun Evans.



Grey Phalarope (Phalaropus fulicarius). Photo credit: Shaun Evans.

Got an idea for our *Milvus* journal?

If you have an idea for an original research paper (up to 5000 words) or a short communication (up to 2500 words) for the journal, the editor, Dr Rachel Taylor, would be delighted to hear from you. Rachel is also keen to include more short articles which could be interesting notes, intriguing negative (or non-significant?) results; perhaps observations from local studies and certainly more pieces by citizen scientists. *Milvus* should be a journal that brings scientists, both professionals and citizen scientists, together through our shared interest in Welsh birds. Rachel and the Editorial Board are here to help and advise you through every step of the process. You can find out more about submissions to Milvus here: www.birdsin.wales/milvus-submissions/ Rachel's email address is: milvuseditor@birdsin.wales Bring us your best ideas!

Articles for our Winter Newsletter

If you have any ideas for articles about birds or birding in your local area which you would like to bring to the attention of the wider birding in community in Wales, we'd love to hear from you.

They can be any length, from snippets of news to three-page articles and anything in between. Some images to accompany you piece would be very nice too. If you have any ideas, please drop Josh an email to: newsletter@birdsin.wales.

Conference 2026 - Migration

Saturday 31 October – Aberystwyth University

General booking is now open. The emphasis this year will be on species that regularly migrate, sometimes, quite long distances, to make Wales their home for part of their annual cycle.

The conference will be jointly organised by WOS and BTO Youth and we are particularly encouraging younger birders (aged 18-25) to attend the conference because we are putting on an afternoon session for those people called Conservation Conversations where experts/speakers will be able to have a short chat to the younger generation about specific topics or their individual journeys into bird conservation.

This year, we are looking for enhanced sponsorship for this conference because we do not want the costs of a conference ticket plus travel to inhibit any Young Birder member from attending. If any WOS members would like to sponsor someone to attend or just help with general costs, we would love to hear from you – there is an extra button on the Eventbrite booking site to enable you to give an extra £10 and this will go towards our Young Conservationist Conference bursaries. If you are a WOS Young Birder and would like financial support to enable you to come to Aberystwyth, then do apply for a Young Conservationist Bursary here. We are grateful to BSG Ecology and Gower Ornithological Society for their continued sponsorship and to the Ceredigion Nature Partnership for new sponsorship. If you know of anyone that you could approach for sponsorship or we could contact, please get in touch.





Welcome to WOS Council

Joshua Brown was co-opted as a Trustee in 2026. Following a move to West Wales a few years ago he became an active member of the Teifi Ringing Group. He is currently completing a research Master's on bird sound recording for conservation, after a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology. He has worked and volunteered with a variety of bird- and wildlife-related jobs, including time at Spurn and Long Point Bird Observatories, the RSPB in Northern Ireland, and BSG Ecology and has many years of experience with bird surveys, ringing, and photography, as well as an interest in sound recording. He is the eBird reviewer for Wales.



Joshua is seeking to encourage more youth participation in WOS and in birding across Wales. Examples might include bird events for youth and helping young people make more connections, like day or weekend-long birding trips or a youth bird race. Events like these greatly inspired his own passion for birds.

Saffron Forrester was co-opted to Council as a Youth Trustee in 2026. Sponsored by WOS, she went on a Bardsey Bird Observatory university-week in 2024 and has helped to organise multiple university-weeks on Bardsey Island, introducing 20 more students to the island in the hopes of inspiring them like she was. She has helped to run the Bangor University Birdwatching Society for over two years across multiple roles including Communication's Officer and Chair and has spent the last year as the Inclusivity Officer for the Entomology Society. While birds are her main focus, she also has an interest in invertebrates and marine biology. She is currently studying a Master's by research at Bangor University, investigating the presence of microplastics in the pellets of Barn Owls.



Ian Spence has been co-opted as Membership Secretary in 2026. He was Secretary of WOS from July 2006 until October 2020 and has been a bird ringer and nest recorder for over 40 years. He has been a BBS surveyor for over 20 years, currently contributing data for four Flintshire squares. He played a lead role in the Atlas project that led to publication of "The Breeding Birds of North Wales" in 2013 and was later one of the editors of "*The Birds of Wales/Adar Cymru*" in 2021.



Bird Atlas 2027–31 – our preparations

There is just over a year before the fieldwork for this project begins and WOS would love to have every member help in some way. The sheer enjoyment and satisfaction of taking part can be enormously rewarding.

Many UK-wide projects are based on sample surveys, and survey areas are not always close to home, but this survey is different. You can survey close to home, keep the travel miles to a minimum and maybe do more than one tetrad (2x2 km square) if you have the time. However, it is also a chance to explore new places a bit further afield. If you are a reasonably fit birder and can give at least four hours of survey time in addition to travel time, then we want to hear from you.

If your skills extend to identifying birds by sound as well as sight (the use of auto-ID apps such as Merlin as not permitted) then you can do what is called a Timed Tetrad Visit (TTV). TTVs contribute information that enables us to calculate relative abundance. Although the formal booking system will not be open until September 2027, it is never too early to start thinking about where you would like to survey and get in contact with your Atlas Regional Organiser.

But this project is more than just doing a TTV. Anyone can contribute Roving Records and Pinpoint Records, which are not time-limited and will help us put together maps of wintering or breeding distribution for all species. Just standing or sitting still, observing and recording what you see and hear can reveal quite a list of species. Quiet observation is a great means of gathering breeding evidence, which does not mean finding nests but observing behaviour such as courtship, carrying nesting material or food, nest-building or seeing recently fledged young. We will discuss how to gather breeding evidence and the different levels of evidence (Possible, Probable or Confirmed) next year.

Members can help in other ways too. If you are a driver then could you take a surveyor, without transport, particularly a Young Birder perhaps, to point A and collect them at Point B, twice in a season? Sharing your own knowledge of bird ID, particularly bird songs and calls is going to be much needed. There will be other tasks, such as offering to research any suitable locations (e.g., community centres), which we can hire as venues for training courses. Could you help to set up a room for a training course and maybe serve refreshments? In this way birders can meet other people interested in Welsh birds and learn more about the project and the birds in your area.



The process of appointing local an Atlas Regional Organiser is underway, and we will let you know more information in the Winter newsletter. In the meantime, there is plenty of time to consider what you might be able to do to help, and any suggestions and offers are welcome. Wouldn't it be great if we could say that all our members took part in some way – what an achievement that would be.

Mrs G, an iconic osprey: A story of Osprey recovery across Britain

An overview of the life of Mrs G. Written by Gwenan Williams and Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn Wildlife.

There are birds that become well known because they are rare, birds that become famous because of where they live and then there are birds that become renowned because they touch people's lives.

For almost two decades, one un-ringed female osprey did exactly that in the Glaslyn Valley. Known affectionately as Mrs G, she became one of Britain's best-known individual ospreys and, ultimately, one of the most successful breeding females in the modern UK osprey population.

Her story is not simply the story of one bird; Mrs G's importance does not lie only in the 44 chicks she successfully fledged. It is the story of how a single breeding female helped shape the wider recovery of ospreys across Britain, connecting the Glaslyn Valley with Northumberland, Dumfries and Galloway, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Perthshire and, eventually, back home to Wales.



Origins at Glaslyn

The Glaslyn osprey story began to take shape in the early 2000s. In the summer of 2003, birdwatchers saw a male osprey displaying in the Glaslyn Valley and suspected that a second bird was present. It was too late for breeding that year, but there was hope that the valley might be witnessing the beginning of something important.

In 2004, that hope became reality. A Scottish-born male, Ochre 11(98), bred at the Glaslyn nest with a dark un-ringed female and she was the bird who would later become known as Mrs G.

The first season was far from straightforward. The nest was blown down during an unseasonal storm and both chicks were killed. Yet, in 2005 the pair returned after the nest was repaired and they continued breeding.

At the time, nobody could have known how important she would become. Very little was known about her, but she was probably around three years old when she first bred at Glaslyn in 2004.

Why Mrs G mattered to people

For many years she was simply the un-ringed Glaslyn female but as the Glaslyn Osprey Project developed, supporters and online followers began calling her 'Mrs G' — short for 'Mrs Glaslyn'. The project adopted the name, and it became significant because then people related to her as an individual rather than simply as a breeding female. They noticed when she arrived, learned her behaviour, worried when she was late and celebrated her return.

That personal connection became one of the most powerful features of the Glaslyn project.

The first dynasty: eleven years with 11(98)

For eleven seasons Mrs G bred with Ochre 11(98), and together they became an extraordinarily productive pair. 11(98) was himself a remarkable bird: born in Scotland in 1998, later part of the successful Rutland Water osprey translocation programme and eventually settling at Glaslyn. With Mrs G, he helped create the Glaslyn dynasty.

Then, in spring 2015, everything changed. Mrs G returned to Glaslyn on 19 March, but her long-term partner did not. As the weeks passed, the Glaslyn community gradually accepted that 11(98) would not return to the valley. During their years together, the pair had raised 26 chicks to fledging, some of them returning to Britain as adults to contribute to breeding populations at sites including Kielder Forest in England and Threave Castle in Scotland.

This is central to Mrs G's story. She was not merely producing chicks that dispersed and disappeared; over time her offspring returned, established territories and produced further generations. At Kielder Forest, where ospreys had not bred for more than two centuries, two Glaslyn-born males — Yellow 37 (2005) and White YA (2007) — became long-term breeding birds, demonstrating how one Welsh nest contributed directly to the recolonisation of northern England. Over time, these two Glaslyn brothers raised 54 chicks between them, extending the influence of the Glaslyn line well beyond the valley where Mrs G first bred.

Black 80 (2006) is arguably the most historically significant of Mrs G's sons. From 2009 onwards, he has established an extraordinarily successful breeding story at Threave Castle, in Dumfries and Galloway and is an iconic male in his own right, fathering 44 chicks, equalling his mother's record.

Within only a few years, three siblings from the same Glaslyn nest had established themselves as breeding males at important osprey sites — clear evidence of the geographical influence of a single breeding pair.

However, Mrs G's influence was not confined to Kielder and Threave. Another son, White YC (2008) continues to breed at Roudsea Wood in South Cumbria, he has raised 28 chicks to date. Blue 9C (2014) a male from Mrs G and 11(98)'s final brood, returned to breed in the South Lakes, and has just raised his 28th chick this year. Whilst a Glaslyn daughter, White 91 (2009), bred in Perthshire for a brief time and raised six un-ringed chicks between 2014 and 2017.

A family tree as a recovery map

The descendants of the Glaslyn family tree could now be traced across the British landscape, linking one female osprey to the recovery of an entire national population. Ultimately her offspring and later descendants would establish breeding territories in England, Scotland and Wales, spreading the Glaslyn legacy across Britain.

One of the most exciting moments came in 2013, when Blue 38, the youngest chick from Kielder's Yellow 37's 2011 brood, was photographed on the North Yorkshire Moors. He was the first known grandchild of the Glaslyn pair to return from migration, showing that the family was no longer simply dispersing from Glaslyn but reproducing across Britain. The evidence is tangible: individually identified birds, ring records, nest records and sightings would allow us to follow the family through successive generations.

Another striking example is Blue 414 (2020) hatched in Cumbria daughter of Blue 9C (Glaslyn, 2014). In 2023, she visited the Glaslyn nest twice — a granddaughter of Mrs G, born hundreds of miles away, coming back to the place where her grandmother had raised her father.

Yet for many years, none of the Glaslyn birds appeared to be contributing directly to the recovery of the Welsh osprey population. As far as records showed, by 2015 only one of Mrs G and 11(98)'s chicks, Blue 80 from 2012, had visited Wales. Things were about to change!

The second dynasty: Eight years with Aran

In 2015, after 11(98) failed to return from migration, Mrs G spent several weeks without a mate. Several males visited the Glaslyn nest, including her son Blue 80 (Glaslyn 2012), but none became her breeding partner. Then, on 30 April, an un-ringed young male arrived. Mrs G eventually accepted him, the Glaslyn Osprey Project named him Aran after the well-known Eryri mountain, and despite the late start to the breeding season the pair raised two chicks.

Their first season together became one of the most memorable episodes in the history of the Glaslyn nest. One egg was accidentally knocked from the nest and remained unincubated for approximately eleven hours. The watching team and online audience feared the worst, but the egg survived, both chicks hatched, and the season ended successfully. That displaced chick, W0, also survived migration and later returned to Kielder in 2017 and is now thought to breed in Dumfries and Galloway.



Thus began the second chapter of Mrs G's long breeding career. Aran and Mrs G quickly established themselves as an exceptionally successful pair, and their partnership lasted until Mrs G failed to return from migration in 2023.

The importance of both 11(98) and Aran should not be underestimated. A successful osprey population requires more than productive females; it also needs strong males that can establish territories, provide fish, defend nests and raise young successfully. Like 11(98) before him, Aran proved to be an outstanding breeding partner.

Over the eight seasons together, Mrs G and Aran raised 18 chicks becoming one of Britain's most watched osprey pairs. Their lives unfolded in front of thousands of people through the Glaslyn nest cameras, visitor centre and social media. Every spring brought the same question. Would Mrs G come home? And year after year, she did.

The difficult years

Mrs G's story was not one of uninterrupted success. There were failures and losses.

Her first two chicks died when the nest collapsed in 2004. Chicks were subsequently lost in 2006, 2007 and 2019. Then came 2021. Aran was injured during a storm just as the chicks were hatching. Unable to provide the fish they needed during the critical early days, all three chicks perished. It was the first time since 2005 that no chicks fledged from the Glaslyn nest. For the people watching, it was devastating. Yet Mrs G returned the following spring and in 2022, she and Aran successfully raised a remarkable final brood. Nobody watching her that summer knew that they were witnessing the end of an era.

The return that never was

In spring 2023, the Glaslyn community waited for Mrs G. Aran returned. But Mrs G did not. She had migrated south on 8 September the previous autumn and had failed to return. Had she survived, 2023 would have been her twentieth breeding season in the Glaslyn Valley.

The Glaslyn records document her arrival dates across the years, demonstrating just how consistent her return migration was. She bred for nineteen incredible seasons – and by the time she disappeared from the Glaslyn landscape her breeding record was exceptional: at least 60 eggs laid, 52 chicks hatched and 44 chicks fledged, whilst the 175 known grand-chicks and 14 great-grand chicks are increasing exponentially every year.

There was no dramatic ending. No confirmed final sighting. No certainty about what happened to her. For a species that crosses thousands of miles between Britain and Africa, this is one of the uncomfortable realities of osprey conservation. Migration is an extraordinary feat, but it is also a journey full of hazards.

The above figures alone make Mrs G remarkable. But numbers do not tell the whole story. Perhaps one of the most celebrated examples is Blue KS1, (Glaslyn in 2018). In 2022, KS1 and an un-ringed male successfully bred at the Bolton Estate in Wensleydale. Their two chicks represented the first recorded successful breeding of ospreys in Yorkshire in modern times. KS1 was not simply an osprey establishing a new territory; she was carrying on Mrs G and Aran's genetic legacy. So far, KS1 has raised 12 chicks, including 7C4, who intruded at the Glaslyn nest in 2026.

A Welsh return

Poignantly, Mrs G and Aran's final brood of three chicks provides a remarkable link to the wider family story: all three survived to adulthood and, unlike almost all their older siblings, they returned to Wales. It is difficult to imagine a more fitting final chapter to Mrs G's breeding life.

The story of Blue 497, the eldest chick is particularly significant. In 2025 he became the first Glaslyn-hatched osprey known to breed in Wales when he paired with the Rutland-hatched female Blue 2H4 in Monmouthshire. Despite the 2025 fledglings not surviving, 497's return and attempt to breed in South Wales marked a remarkable extension of the Glaslyn story. This year three chicks successfully fledged from the Monmouthshire nest, heralding the first of Mrs G and Aran's grand chicks to hatch in Wales.

Blue 498, the middle chick, returned to the Glaslyn nest in 2024 and 2025, on one occasion being challenged by his own father, Aran. In 2026, he intruded on the adjacent Friends of the Ospreys Pont Croesor nest. His return is significant – a Glaslyn male offspring is revisiting his natal nest landscape regularly after fledging. The hope is that 498 will breed in the Glaslyn valley in 2027.



Blue 499, Mrs G and Aran's youngest and final chick, has also returned to Wales. This year, he bonded with Scottish-born two-year-old female Blue 3C2 at a private nest on Ynys Môn (Anglesey) and raised two

chicks successfully. Another breeding pair with a direct Glaslyn connection! At last, the Glaslyn dynasty is dispersing across Wales, from Ynys Môn in the north to Monmouthshire in the south.

What about Aran? Well, he also continues to play his part in the Glaslyn story. After being displaced from the Glaslyn nest in 2025 by KC6, a young Dyfi male, he returned in 2026 to breed successfully on a Friends of the Ospreys nest in Cwmystradllyn, raising one female chick. His partner is no other than Blue 7C1, daughter of Blue 9C (Glaslyn 2014) one of Mrs G and 11(98)'s final brood. History in the making. Not only has the Cumbria connection come full circle but Aran is now breeding with one of Mrs G's granddaughters and has raised Mrs G's first great-granddaughter to be hatched in Wales!

More than an osprey

Mrs G's genetic and demographic influence on the British osprey population cannot be overstated, and it would be easy to measure her importance entirely through her breeding statistics. But perhaps her greatest legacy cannot be measured. For nearly twenty years, people watched her life unfold. They waited for her return each spring. They watched her lay eggs. They watched chicks hatch, grow and fledge. They learned to recognise her behaviour and followed the fortunes of her offspring. Through live cameras, the visitor centre, volunteers, social media and the wider osprey community, Mrs G became a bridge between people and ospreys. People who had never watched an osprey before became deeply invested in the fate of one bird. That was the extraordinary power of Mrs G.

From one bird to a conservation movement

The Glaslyn Osprey Project has always been about more than a nest. The birds have encouraged people to learn about migration, wetlands, fish, habitat, climate and the challenges faced by birds along the African European flyway. Mrs G embodied that connection. She linked the Glaslyn Valley to Africa through her migrations, she linked generations of ospreys through her descendants, and she linked people to nature through the remarkable visibility of her life.

In 2023, in memory of Mrs G, the Glaslyn Ospreys project started supporting the Osprey Leadership Foundation established by Dr Tim Mackrill, with annual donations to help conservation work with children and young people in The Gambia — one of the African countries our British ospreys travel to during their winter migration. It was a fitting tribute; Mrs G had spent her life connecting Wales with Africa, and her legacy would continue to connect people across the same flyway.

Today, there is no Mrs G sitting on the Glaslyn nest. But in a sense, she is still there: in her sons and daughters, in her grandchildren now holding territories elsewhere in England and Scotland, and in the growing Welsh osprey population. She is also in the memories of thousands of people across the world who waited each spring for one un-ringed female to return to North Wales. Her story shows how one visible, individual bird can connect scientific recovery, public engagement and long-term conservation impact.

She was not just part of the recovery of the osprey in Britain; through the visibility of her life and the reach of her descendants, she became one of its most powerful symbols.

Her greatest legacy may ultimately be that she showed how one bird can make people care about an entire species — and once people care, conservation has a greater chance of success.

2026 Glaslyn Family Tree: Family Tree – Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn Wildlife

Birding notebooks: a treasure trove

A very interesting look to the past as Julian Hughes looks through old records from Peter Hope Jones.

For the last few months, I have been time-travelling. Three boxes of index cards, carefully inscribed with the neat, tiny handwriting of Peter Hope Jones have taken me all over North and Mid Wales. To places I've yet to visit for real, experiencing birds vicariously, some before I was born. I discovered them when RSPB's Bangor office was cleared. PHJ had given the cards to the RSPB before his death, requesting they be archived at Amgueddfa Cymru after those of value had been digitised.

For those who don't know, Peter Hope Jones was a legend of 20th century Welsh ornithology, working for the Nature Conservancy (a forerunner of NRW) on Anglesey and Meirionnydd, writing the first avifauna of Meirionnydd and co-authoring the first for Caernarfonshire and Anglesey, editing the annual Bardsey Bird Observatory report for 30 years, and chairing WOS when it formed in 1988. He was a deserved first recipient of the WOS Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012.

But back to the cards. I have recorded and checked almost 10,000 records into a spreadsheet that has been uploaded to BirdTrack and shared with the relevant Local Environmental Record Centres, now available for historic analysis. The originals are archived at the National Museum. They mostly cover the period from 1965, when PHJ moved to Meirionnydd, until 1976 when he moved to Orkney to work on seabirds for the RSPB. As well as his own notes, he collated reports from other birdwatchers – some dating back to 1935 – that informed his *Birds of Merioneth* book, published by Cambrian Ornithological Society. His correspondents included no fewer than five other WOS Lifetime Achievement recipients: Roger Lovegrove, Graham Williams, John Lawton Roberts, Peter Davis and Geoff Gibbs. Other luminaries whose initials appear on the cards include Derek Ratcliffe and Bill Condry.

Most of the significant records were almost certainly published in his 1974 book or the 2012 sequel, *Adar Meirionnydd*, by Rhion Pritchard, but reading the contemporary written records – and locating places on the map to find the grid reference – made them seem more real. They took me high into the Rhinogydd, the least visited Eryri mountain range, where Black Grouse and Red Grouse were widespread; into riparian woodlands from the Dwyryd to the Dyfi where Willow Tits were regular and a dozen sites still held Lesser Spotted Woodpecker; and to wetlands where three-figure counts of Pochard were annual. Other species now rare in Meirionnydd include Bewick's Swan (104 on a calm sea at Llandanwg in March 1968 feels almost inconceivable now) and Shore Lark, averaging one every other year.

There were, of course, rarities. He documents the first Meirionnydd record of Little Egret on the Dyfi estuary in 1970; a Surf Scoter off Pen-y-chain in 1972; and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Morfa Harlech in 1975 that was jointly the first in Wales (remarkably, another was found in Flintshire on the same day). There are no mentions of Great White Egret, Cetti's Warbler or Avocet, and only a handful of Canada Geese, including the first Meirionnydd record on the Dwyryd estuary in March 1963. Of Goshawk, he noted "11 released to date" in Coed y Brenin at the start of 1970, acknowledging the (re)introduction by falconers.

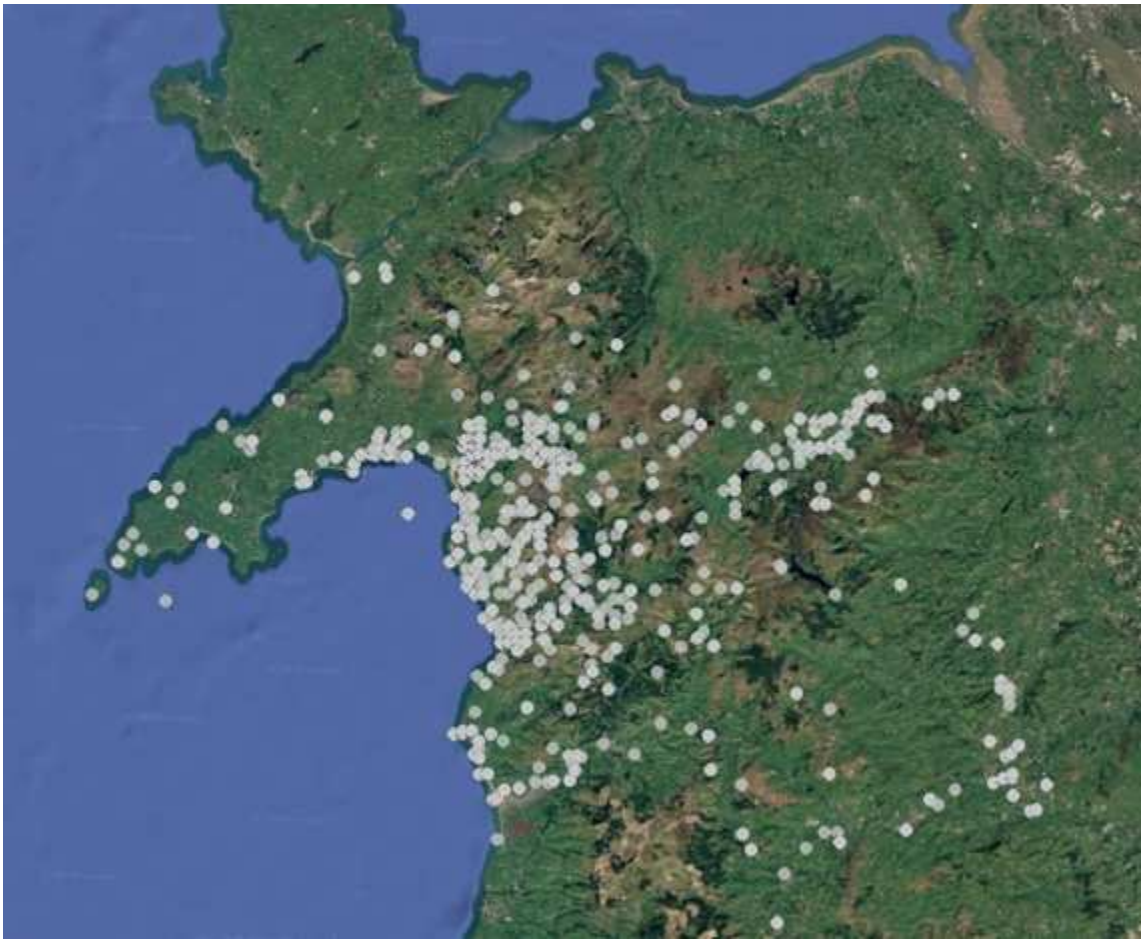
It was a time of the last breeding attempts by Corncrake, including a "nest shown by a roadman on south side of Bryncrug" in 1968. While apparently not abundant, Tree Sparrow nests remained widespread across the county. And there is an intriguing possible breeding attempt by a pair of Common Gulls on the north bank of the Dyfi estuary in April-July 1969 that seems to have escaped both county avifauna.

Starting his cards in the mid-1960s meant that PHJ documented the spread of Collared Doves following the first Meirionnydd record in 1961, and within six years there was a “colony” of 32 birds in Tywyn. He noted occasional wintering by Blackcaps, the earliest in Barmouth in February 1969, and judging by the fastidious recording of seemingly every Stonechat, this was a species hit hard by the winter of 1962/63. There are just two records of Osprey, both in spring 1974, illustrating how scarce the species was in the half century before the area became the beating heart of the Welsh breeding population.

Some cards report the unusual, such as three Tawny Owl nests on the ground (including “a brood in a rabbit hole” at Caegwernog in 1967), but others contain every bird seen on a site visit, ‘complete lists’ that are so valuable to BirdTrack. They also capture a moment in social history, with records from rural railway halts on lines that would be axed by Dr Beeching in the 1960s, and references to Swallows and Starlings nesting in recently abandoned station buildings. The one non-avian entry is a Grey Squirrel at Minffordd in September 1973, which presumably reflects its rarity in the locale.

Birders’ notebooks from the pre-digital era are a treasure trove, often lost in house moves or destroyed in clearances. We probably don’t appreciate that our own notes can contribute to future understanding of changes in an area’s birdlife. How much is already lost? Entering your own records into BirdTrack could be a project for winter evenings and will almost certainly cause you to relive you early days of birding. PHJ’s are banked; now I ought to do my own…

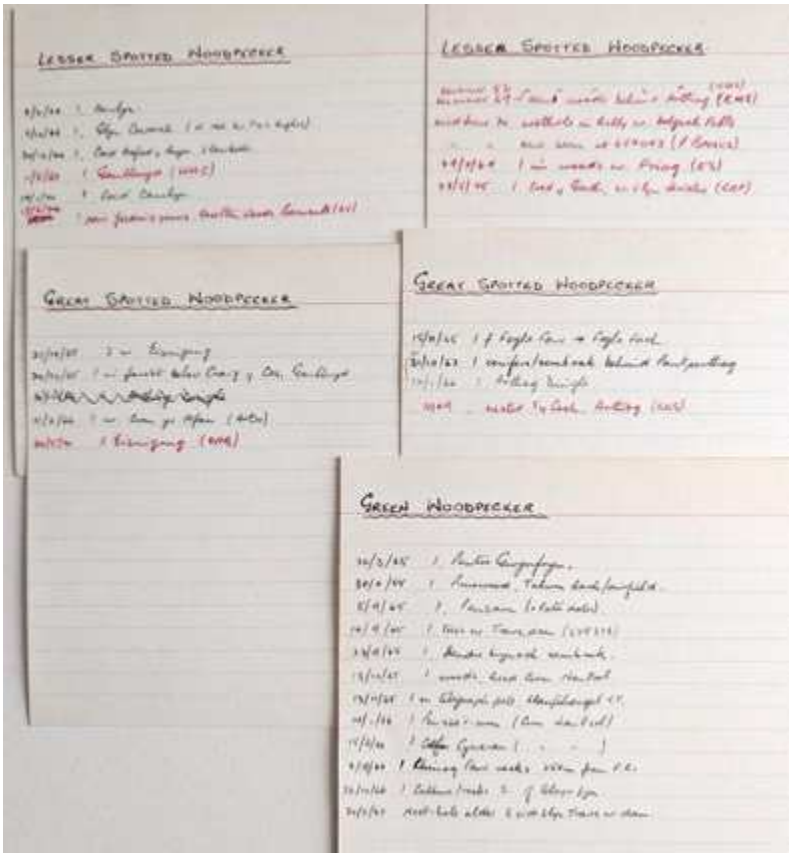
If anyone wants any advice about how to prepare a spreadsheet of records for archiving in BirdTrack, please contact wbr@birdsin.wales.



Map of sites from which records originate in Peter Hope Jones’ index cards, 1935-79.



One of the three boxes, and a card of Woodlark records, documenting some of the last territories in North Wales before they ceased to breed.



Today, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker records in Meirionnydd are now less than annual and Green Woodpeckers are quite localised, despite there being far more birdwatchers. In the mid 1960s, Peter Hope Jones considered it worth noting every Great Spotted Woodpecker that he saw.

Fish Eating Birds Position Statement

Our current position on fish eating birds. Photo credit: Joshua Pedley.

Many of our Welsh rivers, formerly a rich habitat for a wide range of plants and animals, are degraded and depleted in species. We believe that there are multiple factors driving this decline, the balance of these probably varying between river catchments. They include pollution from sewage treatment installations, septic tanks and farm fertiliser and manure runoff; changes in river flow rates; changes in water temperature caused by climate warming and drought frequency among others.

WOS wants to see all our rivers, streams and lakes returned to their previous, species-rich condition. Many bird species are dependent on this habitat and are a natural component of river and other freshwater habitats.

WOS is equally aware that most of our native freshwater fish, both resident and migratory species – for which many of our rivers are of international importance – are in decline and that some are seriously depleted. And we are aware that the decline in our native fish populations has often centred on the possible impact of some fish-eating birds, especially Cormorant and Goosander. We understand such concerns.

But we have concluded, after a thorough review of the most up to date science, that it is impossible to quantify the impact of any one of the many factors contributing to this decline in river species richness. And we are unaware of any scientific evidence which directly links fish declines in our rivers and lakes to predation by fish eating birds. Consequently, WOS has concluded that we do not support any lethal control of fish-eating birds. Instead, we consider that a variety of scaring methods should be used at stillwater fisheries and hatcheries and on lakes and identified stretches of rivers where large numbers of fish-eating birds concentrate.

We do, though, want to see measures taken urgently by NRW and Water Companies to substantially reduce pollution incidents from sewage treatment plants, septic tanks and other sources into rivers and by Welsh Government's Rural Affairs Department and NRW to reduce fertiliser and manure runoff from farms into rivers.



40 years of surveying birds on Pumlumon – Mick Green

Mick Green is a professional ecologist and was WOS Chair from 2015 to 2020. Photo credits: Ben Porter

In 1984 I was working for the 'Wales Field Unit' of the Nature Conservancy Council (imagine – an official body with a 'field unit!) which included a survey of the birds of Pumlumon SSSI.

The site designation states 'most of the bird's characteristic of upland Wales are found on the Pumlumon range, either feeding there or also breeding. Birds of prey include Peregrine Falcon, Red Kite, Merlin, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Kestrel and Buzzard. Ring Ouzel, Golden Plover, Red Grouse, Common Sandpiper, Wheatear, Whinchat and Teal breed there.'



That survey was the first, and only, 'official' monitoring of the avian features of the designation. We secured funding to re-survey it in 2011 as part of a PhD study with Aberystwyth University, and again in 2024. All surveys followed the original NCC Upland bird survey line transect methodology.

The results showed widespread declines. The total number of breeding birds declined from 527 pairs to 269. Many characteristic upland species declined markedly over the study period, including Golden Plover, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Ring Ouzel, Whinchat and Wheatear. Several have disappeared as breeding species or now persist only in very small numbers. In contrast, a few more-widespread species, such as Stonechat and Reed Bunting, increased. Of the species recorded during the surveys, almost two-thirds are now classified as Red- or Amber-listed in Wales. The causes of these changes remain uncertain. Vegetation and land use have changed little at a broad scale, although grazing pressure has declined in

parts of the site and some heathland habitats have recovered. The absence of corresponding increases in most upland birds suggests that wider factors, including changes in prey availability and climate, are likely to be important. The trends recorded at Pumlumon closely mirror those documented at other upland sites in Wales, such as Ruabon moor and Y Berwyn, and elsewhere in Britain, such as the Mar Lodge Estate in Scotland. These other studies also show declines in upland specialists, with more generalist species doing better. In Wales, Ruabon moor is still managed as a shooting estate, and large parts of Y Berwyn were until the 1990's. In contract most of Pumlumon has not, so game management seems not to be a factor. Grazing has also fluctuated over the years on Pumlumon, as on most uplands, but is much reduced now, with no grazing on parts for the last 18 years. While vegetation has recovered, with the re-discovery of several rare species such as Dwarf Willow, there has been no corresponding recovery of birds.



The 40-year dataset (which includes my own records and many from the county recorders, and individual species surveys, such as Merlin, Hen Harrier and Ring Ouzel) provides an important baseline for future monitoring and conservation planning. I have recommended that surveys every 10 years should be undertaken to keep a record and inform management. However, as the survey involves a couple of hundred miles of transects, I'm not sure I'll be up for it. Younger WOS members please step forward!

Reference: Green, M. 2026. Changes in the breeding bird assemblage of the Pumlumon uplands 1984 – 2024. *British birds*, 119.

Manx Shearwater Rescue

Now is the time of year to keep your eyes peeled for lost Manx Shearwaters.

At this time of year, young Manx Shearwaters are leaving their Welsh Island homes for the very first time. While most birds will be okay, some individuals will inevitably encounter some struggles, particularly during periods of strong winds. This can lead to the Manx Shearwaters becoming grounded in land and without intervention, they will not be able to get back to the safety of the sea. If you encounter a grounded Manx Shearwater, you should place the bird carefully into a well-ventilated cardboard box, close the lid and place it some quiet. Please do not try to feed the bird or attempt to release it yourself without seeking professional guidance first. Once the bird is secure, contact 01437723193 for advice. Please note that this is a Pembrokeshire based project, but advice will be given for other locations too.

Thank you for looking out for these iconic Welsh birds!



Wrexham Birdwatchers

An article by Trevor Britton on the happenings of Wrexham Birdwatchers.

Wrexham Birdwatchers were founded in 1974 as a branch of the Cambrian Ornithological Society. It was formed as an independent society with a constitution in 1981. 1983 was the first year a bird report was published by the club. Currently we have a membership of between 40 and 50 people. The club is still very active and has a programme which has been well honed over the years. We have a day outing every month alternating between Saturday and Sunday, except in recent years we have dropped the August outing. We feel fortunate to have access to such a variety of habitats close by but do spread further into Anglesey and across the borders into Cheshire and Shropshire. In Spring and Summer, we also have a Friday evening visit to a local site. These visits usually attract 8-10 people – weather plays a part here – and usually it is different people on these walks. Annually we publish a report of visits for all members. In addition to these walks, we also have a programme of talks from guest speakers on a Friday evening once a month from September to March. We meet in the Memorial Trust Hall in Gresford on the first Friday of the month. These are almost invariably of a high standard thanks to the work of our vice chairman, Kevin Smith, who has many contacts locally.



What else are we up to? Well, each year, on Early May Bank Holiday we have a bird race to see who can see (hearing is also allowed but not using Merlin without verification!) the most species in the old county of Clwyd during the day and of course celebrate with a dinner in the evening where the trophy is given to the winning team. There are normally 6 teams in the running and the winners, usually Kevin with whatever team he's in, record over a hundred species. This year there was a new winner as Kevin was on holiday! Up to recently we had a club Bird



Recorder, Neil Hughes, and the Bird race records were included with the annual findings sent to the County Bird Recorder. That proved hard work and this year one of our committee members, Heather Cartwright, has produced a check list for members to keep their personal records and submit them at the end of the year.

We also have an extended weekend away each year. This has always been in April or May and we've travelled to places such as Suffolk, Norfolk, Pembroke, West Wales, and Anglesey for a change of scene. This year we decided to be a bit different and are travelling to East Yorkshire in the Autumn in the hope of seeing interesting migrants.



The number of members is slowly decreasing and the age profile increasing. We have taken steps to become more visible and accessible. A Facebook page is managed by committee member Norma Williams. There is a regular exchange of views and comment, and Norma keeps it fresh and interesting by providing articles about the latest bird news locally and across the country. This has also generated a trickle of interest for some of our outings. As an increasing number of members are in retirement, we have changed some of the evening visits to morning visits and again to local sites and these have been well attended. All are welcome on our walks and they are free, so it is an opportunity for people to come along and meet some of the club members and get to know local sites in and around the Wrexham area. Club membership is £18 per annum and concessions £14. Children have free membership. If anybody wants to come along to our talks in Gresford then they are very welcome, but we would ask for an entrance fee of £3 which would be taken off the annual fee if you joined. Our membership year starts in September. For those of you who are interested in our visits and talks then they are given on our Facebook page and advertised in *Essentials* the local magazine free in the Wrexham area. To supplement that I also write a bimonthly article in *Essentials* giving bird news and raising the club profile.

So that is us. We are not all oldies. Our secretary is Corinne Andrews, who is a young mum and of course, she and Kevin are both at work showing that if you want a job done then give it to a busy person. It would be wrong not to mention the work done by our treasurer, Geoff Carwright, who is still young at heart, to keep our finances in order and also Jill Nicolson who is helping to organise our trip to Yorkshire, Joy Thomas, our archivist and last but not least, Marian Williams, who deals with the social events and was the signatory, as Secretary to our constitution in 1981.

Come along. We will be pleased to meet you.

Glamorgan Bird Club and BTO East Glamorgan Local Bird Conference

Sport Wales Centre, Cardiff, 24 October



It's great to hear of another local bird conference being organised in Wales this autumn. Glamorgan Bird Club, one of WOS' affiliate bird club members, and the BTO East Glamorgan region are teaming up to co-host the event. Even better news is that the event very quickly sold out.

Held at ***Sport Wales National Centre*, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff on Saturday, 24 October** delegates will enjoy a day of talks on local birding projects and birdwatching, visiting exhibitors' stands and meeting fellow birders. You can see the full programme of speakers below. It's clearly a conference that will appeal to beginners and more experienced birders alike.



Although all the event is sold out, there is a 'waiting list' for those who would like to attend should some tickets be returned. If you'd like to add your name to that list, please contact secretary@glamorganbirds.org.uk. Tickets **are available for £15 to GBC members and young birders, £20 for everyone else** and will be issued to those on the waiting list on a first come, first serve basis.

We look forward to publishing a write-up and some photos from this conference in the WOS Winter Newsletter.

Talk	**Speaker**
The return of the White-tailed Eagle to Southeast Wales and the Severn Estuary	Dr Sophie-lee Williams (Eagle Reintroduction Wales)
Skylarks, Yellowhammers and pollinators galore – farming alongside nature in the Vale of Glamorgan	Rob Parry (Wild Cymru/Cymru Wyllt)
Help us map the UK's birds – an introduction to the 2027-31 BTO National Atlas	Dr Rachel Taylor (BTO Cymru)
The ups and downs and the downright unusual – what previous BTO Atlases have shown us about birds in East Glamorgan	Daniel Jenkins-Jones (BTO East Glamorgan Regional Representative)
Birding by bike – what's (k)not to like? Local listing on two wheels	John Aggleton (local birder)
Col. H. Morrey Salmon – the father of British bird photography; preserving and sharing his work	Andy Kendall (Cardiff Naturalists Society)
Girls Go Birding! A BTO Youth initiative	Ciera Atkins (BTO Youth)

BTO Cymru update: news of the BTO's surveys in East Glamorgan	Gethin Jenkins-Jones (BTO Cymru)
The Hawfinches of Fforest Ganol and beyond – the results from a colour-ringing project	Rich Facey (Cardiff Ringing Group)
Glamorgan Bird Club - the way forward	Alan Rosney (GBC)

BTO Cymru Update

The BTO Cymru programme of autumn events is now on our webpage! Wherever you are in Wales, we hope there will be a talk, conference or in-person event nearby.



Conferences (giving updates on our progress in Wales)

- Glamorgan Bird Conference (Sofia Gardens 24/10, *Sold Out*)
- WOS Conference (Aberystwyth University, 31/10)
- COFNOD Conference (Reichel Building, Bangor 06/11)
- Pembrokeshire Bird Conference (Pembrokeshire College, 28/11)

Talks

- Wetland Birds of Wales (WWT Llanelli, 11/11)

Wetland Bird Survey Taster Days

- Menai Strait (17/10, 20/11)
- Cemlyn (18/10, 15/11)

Cudyll Cymru update
Cudyll Cymru has been focused on involving more under-25s in the project this season. Collaborations with numerous organisations dedicated to young people have been established and Charlotte will be working directly to support them in participating and developing their skillsets. We feel strongly that by ensuring a contingent of younger participants, we can secure the future of raptor monitoring in Wales.

And finally . . .

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter. We could not do it without you! And as ever, on behalf of all of us at WOS, we would like to thank all our members for your continued support. Hopefully see you in October!

Please follow us on our social media channels:

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