



# Isle of Wight Ornithological Group Newsletter



Number 86

July 2020

## Recent Reports - The Island News Roundup

Compiled by Jon Sparshott

*The reports of national or local rarities, included below, have not all been reviewed by the BBRC or the Joint Local Rarities Committee. Observers of the species in these categories are encouraged to submit description details as necessary, and to submit all their records to the Bird Recorder, ideally by the end of January 2021.*

### Overview March '20 – June '20:

With the Covid-19 pandemic taking precedence in all our lives, this period was far from usual as the nation went into 'Lockdown' and practising social distancing became a necessary way of life. Though restrictive measures were put in place, no doubt at times most of us could find some solace outdoors, be it in the garden or when locally exercising, especially as it coincided with many fine and sunny days. As always, it was the time to welcome back a rich variety of avian spring migrants and enjoy the resident species too. We extend our best wishes and good health to all our members and here are the reports from the last 16 weeks.

### Ducks, Geese, and Swans:

**Dark-bellied Brent geese** main counts were 250 at Newtown NNR on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 210 at Ryde Sands on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 96 and 92 at SCP on respectively March 25<sup>th</sup> and April 11<sup>th</sup>, and lastly 12 at Wheelers Bay on April 29<sup>th</sup>. A male **Mandarin Duck** was at Ryde Canoe Lake on May 19<sup>th</sup>. **Eurasian Wigeon** numbers dwindled to two at the Western Yar on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The peak count of **Gadwall** was 23 at Bembridge Harbour on March 15<sup>th</sup>. A drake **Pintail** passed SCP and Ventnor on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Two **Northern Shoveler** passed Ventnor on March 21<sup>st</sup> and a further seven went by SCP on April 5<sup>th</sup>. A lone female **Red-crested Pochard** was at Ryde Canoe Lake on March 4<sup>th</sup>. A small movement of four **Eider** was

seen from SCP on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Noteworthy **Common Scoter** passage counts at SCP were all in April: 540 on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 257 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and 256 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. More latterly there was a count of 15 at Ventnor on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The only report of **Velvet Scoter** was two at Ventnor on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Seabirds and Herons (and their relatives):

In March, numbers of **Red-breasted Merganser** reduced to eight at Thorness Bay on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and finally six at Newtown NNR on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A lone **Goosander** passed Ventnor on April 20<sup>th</sup> was notable. **Red-throated Diver** counts from SCP were 21 on March 24<sup>th</sup> and 14 on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Mostly singles of **Black-throated Diver** were seen along the South coast, save two at SCP on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Singles of **Great Northern Diver** were mostly attributable to Ventnor, (April through to early May). Notable **Manx Shearwater** counts were: 85 at SCP on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 130 at Ventnor on June 4<sup>th</sup>, and 94 at Ventnor on June 5<sup>th</sup>. One **Balearic Shearwater** was at Ventnor on June 27<sup>th</sup>. Two **European Storm Petrel** were at sea and south of SCP on June 13<sup>th</sup>. The peak count of **Northern Gannet** was 684 at Ventnor on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The most exotic find was a **Brown Booby** aboard a ship at sea and off the Bembridge coast on May 9<sup>th</sup>. There were encouraging signs that **Bitterns** were doing well at Brading Marsh with numerous sightings and 'booming' heard; two were seen on both May 31<sup>st</sup> and June 26<sup>th</sup>. A **Night Heron** was

at Brading Marsh on May 3<sup>rd</sup> followed by one (possibly two) there on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Four **Cattle Egret** were at the latter site on June 9<sup>th</sup>. **Great White Egret**, often seen at Brading Marsh in singles and twos, increased to a record count of five on May 4<sup>th</sup>. **Spoonbill** reports were: two at Yarmouth on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, two at Newtown NNR on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and two at Brading Marsh on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers of **Great Crested Grebe** were mostly seen in March; however, nine were at Brading Marsh on April 24<sup>th</sup>. The last sightings of both **Slavonian Grebe** and **Black-necked Grebe** were singles respectively at Newtown NNR on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and Ryde on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Both the first and main count of **Pomarine Skua** was a flock of eight at SCP on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Low numbers followed till the last three at SCP on May 8<sup>th</sup>. The first **Arctic Skua** passed SCP on March 25<sup>th</sup> followed in April by two peak counts of 10 on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 11 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. **Great Skua** passage began with a single at Wheelers Bay on March 19<sup>th</sup> and the most substantive day count was 16 at SCP on April 25<sup>th</sup>. **Puffin** sightings started with a single at SCP on March 24<sup>th</sup> followed by two there on April 15<sup>th</sup>, and finally three in Sandown Bay on May 7<sup>th</sup>. **Razorbill** reports were very few with just four at Wheelers Bay on June 6<sup>th</sup>. A single **Little Tern** was at SCP on April 17<sup>th</sup> and followed with six there on April 25<sup>th</sup>; elsewhere, five were at Fort Victoria on June 6<sup>th</sup>. **Black Tern** at SCP: a single on the 17<sup>th</sup> and six on 25<sup>th</sup>. The high count of **Sandwich Tern** was 150 at SCP on April 5<sup>th</sup>. **Common Tern** counts never surpassed 20 at SCP on April 5<sup>th</sup>. At least one **Arctic Tern** was at Rocken End on April 5<sup>th</sup>. **Kittiwake** numbers peaked with 90 at SCP on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Passage of **Little Gull** began with 17 at SCP on March 24<sup>th</sup>, which was soon eclipsed at the same site by an exceptional day count of 200 on April 5<sup>th</sup>. **Mediterranean Gull** numbers had amassed to 500 at Newtown NNR on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Gamebirds, Raptors, and Owls:**

A **Spotted Crake** was at Brading Marsh from May 12<sup>th</sup>. **Short-eared Owl** singles were noted at Culver on March 19<sup>th</sup>, Brading Old Sea Wall on March 26<sup>th</sup>, the Military Road on April 27<sup>th</sup>, and a deceased individual was found at an unspecified location on May 24<sup>th</sup>. A lone **Common Swift** went over Ventnor on April 17<sup>th</sup> started proceedings and over 1000 were collectively recorded across various island-wide sites on June 4<sup>th</sup>. An **Alpine**

**Swift** went over Lake April 24<sup>th</sup>. The one and only **Honey Buzzard** went over Upper Ventnor on May 30<sup>th</sup>. However, there were two **Black Kite** sightings: one at Niton on May 7<sup>th</sup> and another at Bembridge Windmill on June 6<sup>th</sup>. **Red Kite** reports were typically numerous and widespread, as well as some suggestion of a pair nesting. Recent news concerning the **White-tailed Eagle** project still involves the four juveniles: whereas two remain ever faithful to the island, the other two have wandered much further afield. Though they had been seen separately at various mainland locations, by the end of June they were seen together in and around North Yorkshire. Aside from Brading Marsh population, **Marsh Harrier** singles were at Beacon Alley on March 20<sup>th</sup> and one came in off at SCP on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. A **Hen Harrier** was at Niton on March 7<sup>th</sup> and April 8<sup>th</sup> and followed with a **Montagu's Harrier** at Compton on April 13<sup>th</sup>. An **Osprey** went over Tennyson Down on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and many widespread singles ensued, the most latterly over Gander Down on May 29<sup>th</sup>. Singles of **Merlin** were at Brading Marsh on March 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and finally a single at SCP on April 5<sup>th</sup>. An early **Hobby** appeared at Ventnor on March 27<sup>th</sup> and numbers were gradually seen to build up to 15 at Brading Marsh on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Waders:**

Reports of **Avocet** were six by Fort Victoria on April 4<sup>th</sup>, three individuals sound recorded (nocturnal) over Shanklin on May 4<sup>th</sup>, and two at Yarmouth on May 9<sup>th</sup>. A **Little Ringed Plover** returned to Brading Marsh on March 16<sup>th</sup> followed by two at Rofford Marsh on March 26<sup>th</sup>; recently a single was at Brading Marsh on June 18<sup>th</sup>. At SCP the largest day count of **Whimbrel** was 91 on April 17<sup>th</sup> and **Bar-tailed Godwit** totalled 550 on April 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Knot** gathering of 16 at Newtown NNR on May 13<sup>th</sup> was interesting. The lone **Purple Sandpiper** at East Cowes made it into April till the 2<sup>nd</sup>. **Common Sandpiper** mostly singles save two at Monks Bay on April 27<sup>th</sup> and two at St. Helen's on May 7<sup>th</sup>. A few singles of **Green Sandpiper** arrived after one at Brading Marsh on April 10<sup>th</sup>. At Yarmouth, the lone **Spotted Redshank** seemingly remained faithful to that spot, whilst another single was at Newtown NNR on March 31<sup>st</sup>. A **Wood Sandpiper** went over Ventnor on April 19<sup>th</sup>. Numbers of **Common Snipe** peaked to 50 at Brading Marsh on March

18<sup>th</sup> and followed with ‘drumming’ sound recorded on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### Near passerines and passerines:

**Hoopoe** singles were at Brighstone on April 6<sup>th</sup> and Ventnor on April 21<sup>st</sup>. The **Golden Oriole** at Blacklands on April 20<sup>th</sup> presumably lingered there till May 3<sup>rd</sup>. A **Woodchat Shrike** at Chale on May 11<sup>th</sup>. There were a few individuals of **Bee-eater**, at Ventnor on April 20<sup>th</sup>, Nansen Hill on May 27<sup>th</sup>, and Sandown the following day. A lone **Wryneck** visited a garden at Ventnor of April 21<sup>st</sup>. **Goldcrest** at Bonchurch numbered seven on March 9<sup>th</sup>. There was no obvious passage of **Firecrest** but along the south coast there were encouraging signs of nesting. A **Marsh Tit** was at Ventnor Botanic Gardens on June 21<sup>st</sup>. **Sand Martin** returned to Brading Marsh, initially with 10 on March 17<sup>th</sup> and increased to 50 the following day. Otherwise, 31 came in off at SCP on April 8<sup>th</sup>. A single **Barn Swallow** appeared at Rew Down on the early date of March 15<sup>th</sup>. The most notable counts were 75 at SCP on April 18<sup>th</sup> and 85 at the same site on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The first **House Martin** was at Brading Marsh on March 21<sup>st</sup> and the highest single day count was 36 at SCP on May 4<sup>th</sup>. In April there were three singles of **Wood Warbler**: firstly, at Upper Ventnor on the 18<sup>th</sup>, then Bonchurch Landslip on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and another at Ventnor on an unspecified date. **Chiffchaff** counts were modest, save a day count of 125 along the Undercliff on March 16<sup>th</sup>. The first **Willow Warbler** was at St. Lawrence on March 19<sup>th</sup>. **Garden Warbler** numbers were low beyond the first arrival at St. Lawrence on April 24<sup>th</sup>. A single **Grasshopper Warbler** at Niton on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Another highlight was a singing **Savi’s Warbler** at Brading Marsh April 18<sup>th</sup> – May 5<sup>th</sup>. An early **Sedge Warbler** arrived back on March 19<sup>th</sup> at St. Lawrence. Late May produced a **Blyth’s Reed Warbler** at Ventnor on the 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup>, which followed with another one at Haddon’s Pits on June 15<sup>th</sup>. A **Marsh Warbler** was at Brading Marsh May 27<sup>th</sup> – June 16<sup>th</sup>. The first **Reed Warbler** at Brading Marsh on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Sightings of **Ring Ouzel** were all confined to the month of April, with singles at SCP on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Sandford on the 5<sup>th</sup>, WHD on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and finally three at the latter site on 26<sup>th</sup>. The last flock of **Fieldfare** totalled 20 at Thorness Bay on March 24<sup>th</sup>. **Redwing** reports ceased after five were nocturnally recorded over Shanklin on April 7<sup>th</sup>. A

lone **Spotted Flycatcher** was at SCP on April 28<sup>th</sup>. The first **Nightingale** was at Carpenters Farm on April 12<sup>th</sup> and later three were at Walter’s Copse on May 7<sup>th</sup>. **Black Redstart** reports were many and widespread. **Redstart** returned firstly at West High Down on April 10<sup>th</sup>; followed by three at the latter site on April 19<sup>th</sup>. A **Whinchat** was at Thorness Bay on April 18<sup>th</sup> and two at Laundry Lane on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Wheatear** returned to WHD on March 6<sup>th</sup> and the highest count was 25 at the latter site on March 16<sup>th</sup>. **Pied Flycatcher** passed through singly at Whitwell on April 10<sup>th</sup>, Ventnor on April 18<sup>th</sup>, and Alum Bay on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. A single **Yellow Wagtail** went over Ventnor on April 6<sup>th</sup> followed by eight at SCP on May 6<sup>th</sup>. A surprise Spring highlight was an **Ashy-headed Wagtail** at Brading Marsh on April 17<sup>th</sup>. A **White Wagtail** was at Whale Chine on March 6<sup>th</sup> followed by six at Brading Marsh on March 21<sup>st</sup>. The first **Tree Pipit** went over SCP on April 9<sup>th</sup>, followed by nine there on May 4<sup>th</sup>, and a final single over Mottistone Down on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Two singles of **Brambling** went separately over Culver and Castlehaven on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Two **Lesser Redpoll** were at Firestone Copse on March 29<sup>th</sup>. From March onwards, and presumably as part of a major irruption, **Crossbill** sightings along the south coast were practically daily, as highlighted by two peak counts of 137 at Ventnor on June 24<sup>th</sup> and 99 at Haddon’s Pits on June 24<sup>th</sup>. Singles of **Serin** were at SCP on March 24<sup>th</sup>, Rocken End on March 25<sup>th</sup>, Ventnor on April 1<sup>st</sup>, SCP on May 5<sup>th</sup>, and finally Wheelers Bay on May 7<sup>th</sup>.



Ashy-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*) at Brading Marsh on April 17<sup>th</sup>.  
Photo © Alan Brown.

## Bird Recorder and Rarities Committee updates July 2020

### Robin Attrill

In lieu of the annual updates that the Bird Recorder typically delivers at the IWOG AGM in April, which this year was cancelled due to the Covid-19 situation, here is a summary update of the various recording, and related, activities:-

#### Bird Report Editorship update:

Due to pressure of other commitments Jim Baldwin has recently resigned his role as the bird report editor and Martin Hunnybun has stepped back in to reassume the role. The 2017 draft is with Martin, and the 2018 sections, drafted by the section writers, are being collated by myself prior to passing on to Martin for progression. Please see the separate article by Martin in this newsletter for more details.

#### Rarities Committee updates:

A summary of British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) and Joint Local Rarities Committee (JLRC) activities is detailed below. When submitting reports to either of these committees the value of photo/video and, where relevant, audio supporting materials cannot be overestimated.

#### BBRC update:

Here is a summary of some more recent BBRC decisions relating to island reported sightings:-

- 2016
  - Whiskered Tern – Brading Marsh, 6<sup>th</sup> June -ACCEPTED
- 2017
  - Eastern Subalpine Warbler (species group) – St Lawrence, 13<sup>th</sup> April - ACCEPTED
  - Lesser Grey Shrike – Brading Marsh, 22<sup>nd</sup> June -ACCEPTED

- 2018
  - Frigatebird Sp. – Seaview, 13<sup>th</sup> October - Not submitted
  - Snowy Owl – near Burnt Wood, 20<sup>th</sup> February - Not submitted
- 2019
  - Great Spotted Cuckoo – Wheelers Bay 21<sup>st</sup> March – 18<sup>th</sup> April - ACCEPTED
  - Dark-eyed Junco – Ventnor, 21<sup>st</sup> April - ACCEPTED
  - Siberian /Stejneger's Stonechat (species group) – Culver 24<sup>th</sup> October - Submitted (in circulation)
  - Pied/Eastern Black-eared Wheatear – Shanklin, 5<sup>th</sup> July (photographed) - Submitted
- 2020
  - Brown Booby – off Bembridge, 9<sup>th</sup> May (photographed) - to be submitted
  - Savi's Warbler – location/date withheld - to be submitted

In one of my previous updates I mentioned that the historic Isle of Wight BBRC archive records on paper were being disposed of by BBRC to save space. I am pleased to report that these were retrieved prior to destruction!

#### JLRC update:

- Most reports continue to be photo-documented and are fast-track accepted.
- For non-photo documented records please submit descriptions for relevant 'asterisk' records – see list on the rear cover of the latest Bird Report.
- A few additions/deletions take place each year due to changes in the BBRC list.

- Please contact myself for a copy of the template for submissions.
- Anonymous, ex Birdguides, records in BirdTrack remain a problem which I am working to resolve.

## Bird Recording Update

### Nocturnal migration recording:

Many of you will have noticed, and perhaps taken part in, this increasingly popular activity. A draft proposal for systematic documentation of such records has been put together by the Hampshire recorder, Keith Betton, and circulated to county recorders for comment. I'll update further on this subject in future but, suffice to say, please retain any sound recordings that you take as not all species being so documented (e.g. Common Scoter) can be unambiguously identified by call by the human ear only.

### Record submission for 2019:

- Please submit any outstanding records as a matter of urgency.
- Intention is to circulate collated records to the section writers in late 3Q 2020

### Record submission for 2020:

As per usual periodic submission is encouraged to assist with newsletter summaries – you do not have to wait until the end of the year

- BirdTrack is ideal for this
- GoingBirding website is equally suitable
- Please use either BirdTrack/GoingBirding if you can, or, failing that, the preference is the templates available in MS Word and MS Excel from the bird recorder
  - If you use Excel or Word tables a reminder please to....
    - **place just one record per line**
    - **do not merge cells**
    - **put dates in just one cell**

- *Paper records, PDF submissions and text word docs are accepted but are not ideal as they require manual transcription*

- When submitting your records please continue to highlight population changes, especially any impacts of cold spells, habitat changes etc.
- As in previous years please continue to submit detailed locality information for scarce breeding birds, including....
  - Cetti's Warbler and Dartford Warbler (please be **very** specific re locations)
  - Stonechat
  - Nightingale (include grid refs)
  - Peregrine
  - Raven
- Please submit all records for key species including:-
  - summer records for Turtle Dove, Garden Warbler and Willow Warbler
  - all records for Grey Partridge
- Rare Breeding Birds - as always please be very mindful with respect to reporting breeding season records of RBB panel species, e.g. Red Kite and Little Ringed Plover, on any public social media forum

### Summary and next steps:

Obviously local recording has taken a hit this year due to the Covid-19 restrictions but thankfully we are now moving forward from that situation. Looking ahead it is particularly important that the local breeding bird surveys are run to the full in 2021, as these are our most valuable local resource regarding breeding bird population trends.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

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 07487 577 103



## **Bird Report Editor's Update July 2020**

### **Martin Hunnybun**

A few weeks ago, I learned that Jim Baldwin had resigned from the role of Bird Report Editor, due to his other commitments to the Island's natural history, so I've taken it on again for the time being. Preparing an accurate and comprehensive bird report is surprisingly time-consuming, so I fully appreciate the scale of the task he faced. This was also amplified by the desire to get back to an annual production timescale for the reports, following several years of slippage (which commenced when I was Editor). It is to Jim's credit that he accepted the role in the first place and I'd like to thank him for his considerable efforts to progress the 2017 Bird Report.

I received the 2017 Bird Report file on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and after a quick review set a target of submitting it to the printers by end July (2020). The stand-alone papers that follow the systematic list were all mostly complete, so the focus was on completion of the main text.

Thanks to everyone who had undertaken the task of preparing the species summaries. This becomes increasingly difficult with the passage of time as context becomes lost, so their efforts are very much appreciated.

I've now edited the text to page 71 (of 92) and am confident it will be completed within the next week. That will just leave the preparation of the summary of the year, the gazetteer, species index, a final proof-read and the more pleasurable task of putting together the pages of photographs. None of those tasks will push the completion date beyond end July.

It is satisfying to reflect on what a good birding year 2017 was, with Lesser Grey Shrike, Blyth's Reed Warbler and 'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler added to the Island list, a supporting cast of rarities including Black-winged Stilt, Dusky Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling and Woodchat Shrike (how about three shrike species in a year that didn't include Red-backed!) and scarcities including Storm Petrel, Cory's Shearwater and Stone-curlew. Added to that there was an excellent

sea passage at the end of April, which included some record day counts, and several species did well during the breeding season, notably Mediterranean Gull and those at Brading Marsh, which continued to flourish. The 2017 Bird Report will certainly provide an enjoyable read!



As noted in Robin's update, we will push on to substantially progress the 2018 Bird Report in August and my target is for work on that to be completed by the end of September so that it is available for reference by section writers during their preparation of the 2019 summaries.

### **The Future**

Having now progressed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with all the flexibilities producing the newsletter electronically gives us including no space restrictions, coloured photos, etc. I would like members to wholly participate in supplying additional material to make the newsletter even more enjoyable. Ed.

### **Communication**

A concerted effort to ensure members are kept in contact has resulted in email addresses now on file for over 84% of the membership.

## Nocmig - overnight sound recording

### Mark Buckley

Earlier this year, I'd noticed that the recording of nocturnal migration was gaining momentum across the UK and in Europe, but I'd previously assumed that it would be quite technical, possibly expensive and, although I didn't understand how each night's recording was analysed, I'd assumed that it would be very time consuming and tedious. Then, by coincidence, I read an excellent article in British Birds (April 2019) by Mark Lewis that answered many of the questions. He explained that sound recording of birds can be achieved using a wide range of, often very simple, methods and encouraged birders to have a try at nocturnal and/or diurnal recording to add a new dimension to their birding experience.

So, having seen interesting results from elsewhere in the UK, I decided to have a go at Nocturnal Flight Recording (NFR), also known as Nocmig (Nocturnal migration). I looked into the technical options and bought some relatively inexpensive kit consisting of a microphone with a cable connection to an audio recorder which stores digital recordings from any source on an SD card. The microphone, mounted on a tripod, was to be left outside with the recorder running all night.

One of the attractions of Nocmig is that habitat is irrelevant so it can be done almost anywhere, and I began overnight recording from my garden in early March. I've lived in the same house in Shanklin for 37 years and within two months 15 species had been recorded flying over the house that I had never previously seen or heard there, day or night.

On only the second night, a Moorhen was recorded flying over, which sounds strange but is apparently a regular occurrence with a further 20 recorded during March and April. With my expectations raised, more was to follow. The expected thrush species came thick and fast with Blackbird, Song Thrush and Redwing (220 calls from an estimated 174 individuals on 15/16th March). Over the next few weeks Coot, Water Rail (a total of 12), Redshank, Grey Plover,

Dunlin, Whimbrel, Ringed Plover, Wigeon, Teal and Tree Pipit were all added to the list.

We're used to seeing Common Scoter migrating along the south coast each spring but, this year, Nocmigging in widespread UK locations has helped to document very large overnight movements across inland areas (see <https://www.birdguides.com/news/massive-common-scoter-movement-takes-place/>). In line with this I was fortunate enough to record Scoter passing over Lake on four different nights between 24/25th March and 15/16th April which I understand are the first records of overland Scoter migration for the Island.

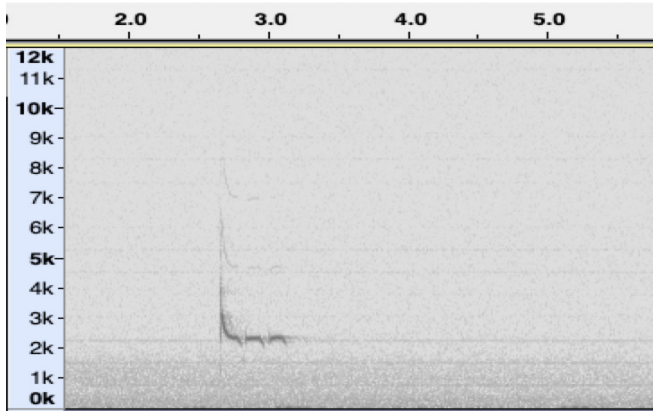
The highlight to date has been Avocets which were recorded on two occasions during the night of 4/5th May.

Not surprisingly, a significant number of recordings remain unidentified which seems to be a common experience even amongst experienced Nocmig recorders.

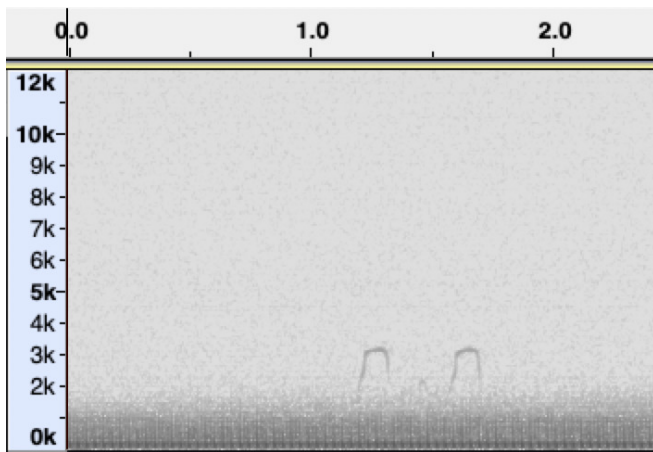
Recordings are captured on an SD card and analysed, mainly visually, using free software from the Internet. Each night's recording is downloaded and viewed as a timeline "graph" called a spectrogram (also known as a sonogram), and sounds are quickly found by visually scanning along the spectrogram. This allows quiet periods to be covered and disregarded very quickly. On average, a whole night's recording usually takes between an hour and an hour and a half to analyze.

When an interesting call is visually located on the spectrogram the next step is to identify it. This is usually done by listening to it in conjunction with assessing the spectrogram pattern. The calls of most species show a characteristic shape in the spectrogram which means that with a little practice, commonly occurring species can be counted visually rather than aurally, Redwing being the most obvious example of this.

Below are a couple of examples to illustrate how recorded calls are visually represented in the spectrogram:



*Redshank over Shanklin 18/03/20 at 23.37*



*Oystercatcher over Shanklin 11/04/20 at 23.10*

Care has to be taken though as there is a surprising amount of non-avian noise recorded all night including, barking dogs, owners calling in their barking dogs, emergency vehicle sirens, boy racers, reversing delivery vehicles, foxes, cats, hedgehogs, helicopters, trains, etc. but the spectrogram for each usually shows a distinctive pattern that quickly becomes familiar and can be passed over at a glance. A bigger local noise issue for me is a large and very vocal gull colony on the Spithead Business Centre which, particularly later in the spring, creates a lot of aural “interference”.

Call identification, even for fairly common species, can prove surprisingly difficult due to the lack of any context, ie. the bird is neither seen nor is it in its normal habitat. Also, some species use different calls at night or on migration. Fortunately online resources are developing fast with the “xeno-canto” website being the primary reference repository for 1000s of recordings which can be compared both visually and aurally.

Interest in Nocmig is growing quickly both nationally and abroad and is revealing a lot of new information regarding nocturnal movement of birds. Counts from a wide range of locations across the UK and Europe can be found on the “Trekellen” website which features a dedicated section for these records. I’ve posted a few records on Going Birding but when the autumn migration begins I hope to post records there much more regularly.

The Island’s geographical location suggests that there must be a huge amount of untapped Nocmig potential but I’m currently aware of only one other birder who is having a go (and with some very interesting results!). It would be great if we could get a network of Nocmiggers across the Island in an effort to gain a better understanding of what’s happening at night here.

If you are thinking about taking the plunge, the best advice I can give from my own experience is that Nocmig is addictive and frustrating in equal measure, but also very rewarding, so well worth a try.

## **Annual General Meeting**

With no real prospect of an AGM in the foreseeable future this Newsletter includes the Minutes of the 2019 AGM and the Financial Report.

## **Field Meetings**

Members will be advised on the recommencement of field meetings through the IWOOG text loop, the Derek Hale website or by email.

## **Going Birding Website**

Statistics for 2019 demonstrates its continued popularity with 57,309 visits (43% up) by 7,305 users (67% up) with a total of 197,270 page views (41% up). There were 123 registered users who submitted 6,282 records (69% up).

## **New Member**

We Welcome:

Keiron Vine – Shanklin



# IWOG GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

## Winter 2019/2020

### James Gloyn

A total of 49 completed forms were returned recording a total of 56 species. From these a league table has been produced. Initially bird species were ordered according to the number of gardens they were reported in. In the case of tied positions a further ordering was done according to the total number of months recorded. Equally placed species are put in Voous order.

League position	Species	No. of gardens	League position	Species	No. of gardens
1	Woodpigeon	49	29	Pheasant	13
2	Blackbird	49	30	Green Woodpecker	12
3	Robin	49	31	Pied Wagtail	11
4	Blue Tit	48	32	Redwing	11
5	Wren	48	33	Bullfinch	7
6	Dunnock	46	34	Grey Wagtail	6
7	Great Tit	46	35	Feral Pigeon	5
8	Goldfinch	46	36	Firecrest	5
9	Magpie	45	37	Stock Dove	4
10	Long-tailed Tit	41	38	Fieldfare	4
11	Jackdaw	40	39	Moorhen	3
12	House Sparrow	40	40	Grey Heron	3
13	Collared Dove	38	41	Linnet	3
14	Starling	38	42=	Mallard	3
15	Carrion Crow	37	42=	Yellowhammer	3
16	Chaffinch	35	44=	Kestrel	3
17	Greenfinch	32	44=	Mistle Thrush	3
18	Rook	28	46	Buzzard	2
19	Jay	28	47	Black Redstart	2
20	Great Spotted Woodpecker	27	48	Raven	1
21	Sparrowhawk	27	49	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1
22	Herring Gull	26	50=	Red-legged Partridge	1
23	Coal Tit	26	50=	Barn Owl	1
24	Black-headed Gull	23	52=	Little Owl	1
25	Blackcap	21	52=	Redstart	1
26	Chiffchaff	21	52=	Ring Ouzel	1
27	Goldcrest	19	52=	Willow Warbler	1
28	Song Thrush	18	52=	Siskin	1

### October passage species

A female Ring ouzel visited the Ventnor garden of Cheryl Hewins in October. Cheryl also had a visit from a Common Redstart in the same month as well as regular winter visits from Raven.

Black Redstart was recorded in October by David Biggs and Jill Fruin who also managed to record Little Owl.

A late Willow Warbler was reported by Stuart Bennett again in October.

## Selected winter visitors

	2012/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Fieldfare	13	9	7	9	5	11	3	4
Redwing	12	12	12	14	12	22	10	11
Firecrest	7	1	6	6	6	10	3	5
Brambling	10	0	0	1	2	7	1	0
Siskin	5	3	7	7	2	1	2	1
Black Redstart	3	2	3	6	2	1	0	2

A monthly breakdown showing the number of gardens visited by month.

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Fieldfare	1	2	2	1		
Redwing	1	6	6	2		
Blackcap	9	10	9	10	12	12
Chiffchaff	11	4		3	3	12
Firecrest	1	2	3	2	3	3
Brambling						
Siskin						1

Winter thrushes ( Fieldfare & Redwing) were mainly visiting during November and December with Fieldfare being particularly few in number.

Firecrest was recorded in all winter months. Roger & Jenny Burgess observed this attractive species on 33 days starting on November 1<sup>st</sup> with the late on March 9<sup>th</sup>.

Blackcap were much in evidence throughout the winter months.

### Observers' comments

“Early breeding started in February with Feral Pigeon nesting under solar panels on the roof. I have observed Feral Pigeons around solar panels in several locations and assume they find the warmth and shelter to their liking.” J Gloyn

Sue Hughes reported “I can hear the Barn Owl hunting in the garden in the early hours. Also through the wet period it was roosting in the barn and judging by the size of the pellets feeding well.”

Tom Snudden observed a Sparrowhawk taking a Grey Wagtail in October.

Although not a Garden Bird Survey record Tim Henderson mentioned “Highlight on 27/3/20 Osprey flying over garden towards the Western Yar.”

### Mammal records

The following list shows the number of gardens visited by the four mammal species recorded on the GBS winter forms.

Red Squirrel	Fox	Badger	Hedgehog	Dormouse
17	17	12	2	0

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