



NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER – April 2017

Dear Member

The last talk of the season did not disappoint! The large audience attending enjoyed Richard Sale's talk on his trips to Arctic, many on his own. It was both highly amusing and informative with spectacular photos of the wildlife, from the unexpected butterflies to the more expected polar bears, some of which were at very close quarters – in a photo of a very inquisitive cub investigating Richard's skidoo (and him) we were invited to note "that under the white fur the skin is black and the claws are about six inches long"! Although he professes to be a writer rather than a photographer, his beautiful books belie this.

The first of the summer walks will be on **Monday 24th April** for a walk along part of the Strawberry Line with Trevor Riddle. We hope to hear recently arrived warblers, maybe see barn owls and also to have access to some of the YACWAG reserves not normally open to the public. Daylight is still a bit limited so we will meet at **6.45pm** at the mosaic seat near the footpath from the end of Chescombe Road, Yatton ST42536525.. Please park considerately.

We are delighted to hear that four new recruits have recently joined the staff of the Hawk and Owl Trust and will be based in or around the administrative offices at Sculthorpe Moor reserve. A warm welcome to them all. Two are focusing on the Urban Peregrine Project in the eastern counties, one is part-time in Accounts Administration, and the Communication and PR Officer, Su Gough who says "This marks the start of an exciting time for the Hawk and Owl Trust, as it looks to take a strong, robust and effective Trust into the future. This will enable it to meet the forthcoming challenges and opportunities that will be faced by the Trust, its reserves and, most importantly, the raptors, owls and other wildlife that live there and in the wider countryside head on."

Kestrel Highways Project

From Barry : It has been a challenging winter on the Kestrel Highways front with several site issues to resolve and a fair number of boxes needing replacement. This has meant that the team has been working right up to last week (early March) to get pre-season work done before our kestrels start breeding.

(In March) the last two boxes were replaced and a squirrel drey removed from another. All these sites were in ash trees and whilst the general consensus is that ash die back will eventually spread everywhere we decided to employ some biosecurity measures (with some splendid support from Sculthorpe) to ensure that we weren't helping it to spread to new sites too quickly. This autumn /winter we have replaced a total of 7 boxes.

Kestrels are already showing interest in five or six boxes..... I am getting the impression that there are a few more kestrels around now and that they may have benefited from a mild winter.

Barry would be pleased to have any reports in the next month or so of display, mobbing of other species and courtship feeding. To join the monitoring team contact baz.gray@btinternet.com

Urban Peregrine Project news

Both the Norwich and the Bath peregrine pairs have four eggs and the Live Webcam feed for both is running – see the Hawk and Owl Trust website, in the Urban Peregrine Project section. Bath is particularly interesting at the moment as the 2016 male juvenile KP is taking considerable interest in this year's clutch to the extent of pushing the falcon off so he can do spells of incubation. More locally, there is a watch at Black Rock Quarry near Portishead where it is thought that eggs may be laid at the beginning of April. Andrew Town would welcome more members in this team. (andrewtown3@hotmail.com)

News from Shapwick Moor Reserve:

On **Friday, 28th April**, Stephen Moss has again offered to lead a walk around Shapwick Moor starting at **7.30am**. As well as being a well known TV producer and wildlife author, he has a fantastic ear for bird song. At the end of the walk there will be bacon rolls and coffee at the Barbara Handley Hide (it would be helpful to know if you are coming). As a further adventure, some will be camping at Westhay the night before. To be part of this fun, please contact Simon on 01308861008 or simonbeard@hawkandowl.org!

If you are visiting the reserve and are in need of refreshments and facilities, these are available at the nearby **Avalon Centre** (the old Peat Moors Centre). It is undergoing some building work, but the Eco-Bites cafe (which has just won a South-West Fairtrade Business Awards) and the craft centre are open, as are the relocated public toilets.

Other dates and items which may be of interest:

Friday 21st/Saturday 22nd April – The Annual Chew Valley Bird Fair, organised by the London Camera Exchange. 10.00-4.00pm. An opportunity to try out that new bit of equipment!

Sunday 23rd April, 10am-4pm A Spring Wild Day Out at Shapwick Heath. Find out about native butterflies, bees and other pollinators with fun, hands-on games and crafts. Learn how to plant a wildlife-friendly garden, go pond-dipping, take a trailer-ride across the reserve and more. FREE drop-in family event organised by our partner organisations, no booking necessary. If you are able to help or offer any support it would be greatly appreciated by sue.habgood@rspb.org.uk.

Bank Holiday Monday, 1st May North Somerset Show at the NSAS Showground at Flax Bourton. We will have a stand there as usual and need volunteers – if you can help for a couple of hours, please let me know. carrieriches@gmail.com

Saturday 6th May, 2pm – 4pm Forest School for All the Family. An afternoon of bug-hunting, den-building & more. To book this or for more info on this or the Wild Day Out, please email julie.merrett@naturalengland.org.uk or call the Natural England Office 01458860120.

On Easter Monday, **17th April**, there is the 10th annual Shapwick Bunny Hop run which passes through both Shapwick Heath and Shapwick Moor. For more details contact Shapwickrunners.co.uk or call Teresa on 01458 210107.

The programme for the summer walks and winter talks is attached separately.

We look forward to seeing you on 24th April.

With all good wishes for Easter.

Carrie Riches

Hawk and Owl Trust

North Somerset and Bristol Group

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Working to conserve all Birds of Prey and their habitats

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Registered charity number 1058565, VAT number 681 1823 35

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This newsletter is intended to keep you up to date with this group's activities and other events which may be of interest. If you do not wish to receive this, please let me know.

