



## NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER – January 2017

Dear Member

A very Happy New Year to you!

The traditional Owl Prowl around Portbury Wharf Reserve with Chris Sperring was fairly quiet. For the first time for many years, no barn owls bred on the reserve and nationally, the tawny owl population is down by about 25%, so to have seen either we would have had to have been very lucky. Sadly, even the little owls didn't respond to Chris' calling. However, Chris was able to point out the presence of some birds, mainly waders, on the mud flats. Afterwards, it was back to The Albion for refreshments and mincepies, and to meet the new very special little person in Chris' life!

This month we are delighted to welcome back wildlife film-maker and photographer **Nick Upton**. Since agreeing to speak to us Nick has been awarded the Documentary Series prize in the highly prestigious **Wildlife Photographer of the Year** competition organised by the Natural History Museum. The exhibition of 100 winning photographs is on display at '**M**' **Shed in Bristol until 5<sup>th</sup> March** – selected from nearly 50,000 entries. His work also regularly appears in the BBC Wildlife magazine, amongst others. The talk is on Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> January, starting at 7.45pm at The Star at Tickenham. It is called '**A Pot Pourri of Projects**' and Nick has a packed photographic presentation about his work with the Devon beavers, the pine marten recovery programme (to re-establish a healthy population in rural Wales), tracking harvest mice and grey seal rescue in Cornwall, plus a little about kestrel and owl nest box surveys with a HOT team, Nigel Lewis and Emily Joachim if time permits! A selection of his lovely cards will also be available.

On **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February** Roger Moses has kindly offered to lead a walk at Bridgewater Bay NNR. The rising tide (high at 12.30) should push large flocks of waders up the beach, attracting raptors – peregrine and merlin - if we are in luck. On the way back, weather and time permitting, we may call in at WWW Steart Marsh. Meet at 10.30am at Natural England car park ST275459. Dress for the cold, bring hot drinks and sustenance! Please let me know if you plan to come.

### *Kestrel Highways Project*

To become involved with this year's monitoring team, for more information or to report kestrel sightings – please contact Barry: [baz.gray@btinternet.com](mailto:baz.gray@btinternet.com)

### *News from Shapwick Reserve:*

The work store is now secure, cleared of rubbish, fully painted with preservative outside and floor paint inside and ready for action. The December work day saw the final emptying of the container of tools which have now been sorted and allocated new homes in the work store. There are work benches and storage areas – still no loo, but we have funding for it! And of course, no December work day would be complete without champagne to celebrate the achievements of 2016, home-made apple strudel and mincepies (would have been better warm – anyone with a small pot stove...?!). The new dam is maintaining a good water level in the ditches, as Phil Holms can testify.

The next work day will be Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January – at the time of writing, I don't know what Simon has in store for the volunteers, but there will always be something to do! For more information on

volunteering, please contact : [simon.beard@hawkandowl.org](mailto:simon.beard@hawkandowl.org) Tel 01300 320008 or Barry:  
[baz.gray@btinternet.com](mailto:baz.gray@btinternet.com)



*Happy Christmas one and all! Here's to 2017.*



*Fitting out, sorting out and bow saw maintenance*

*Other dates and items which may be of interest:*

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January – 'RENEWABLE DOMINATION!'** The speaker for Abbots Leigh Wildlife Group will be Oliver Marler who built up Sunlight Future, a company fitting renewable energy systems that has recently won national awards. 7pm for 7.30pm at Abbots Leigh Village Hall, tickets £5, to include a glass of wine or juice. <http://www.abbotsleighwildlife.com/events/>

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January** – the talk for the South Gloucestershire Group will be by Jim Almond and entitled '**Shropshire Peregrines – Living on the Edge**' Iron Acton Parish Hall at 7.30 pm.

**Lethal control of buzzards** There is increasing concern about the number of applications for lethal control of buzzards near pheasant shoots. The Trust feels such control is unwarranted and has written to Defra. A more detailed statement is on the website.

**H&OT job vacancies** – details of three are on the website.

**2018 Photographic Calendar Competition** – sponsored by **Wex Photographic** in support of the work of the Trust, you are invited to submit images of flora & fauna, wildlife or landscape taken on one of the Trust's four reserves. The closing date is 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017. Full details can be found at <http://hawkandowl.org/2018-photographic-calendar-competition/>

**Sky or Chinese lanterns** - Over 200,000 sky lanterns are sold in the UK each year. However most people have no idea of the harmful and often deadly consequences of their release. Wildlife can become entangled in the wire or bamboo frames or ingest lantern parts leading to injury or death. RSPCA campaign at <https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/skylanterns>.

A reminder that although it is a more limited menu on Monday evenings, it is possible to have supper at the pub before the talk.

**We hope we will see you at Nick Upton's talk on 16<sup>th</sup> January. Good numbers at our talks ensures good speakers next winter!**

**Carrie Riches**

**Hawk and Owl Trust**

**North Somerset and Bristol Group**

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[www.hawkandowl.org](http://www.hawkandowl.org)

*Working to conserve all Birds of Prey and their habitats*

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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.*