



NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER - May 2016

Our last talk of the winter season lived up to all expectations. We had our biggest audience of the year who were treated to some excellent speakers, backed up by displays and wonderful film footage, much of which was taken by Luke Curno, one of the members of the South West Peregrine group. We are very grateful to the group for coming so far. If you would like to see more of Luke's work, the links to his websites are <http://lukecurno.wix.com/media> and <https://vimeo.com/wildtimestv>

On **Monday 16th May** we have the first of the summer walks. Please note it is around **Blagdon Lake**, not Chew Valley as was advertised in the previous newsletter. It will be led by the Reserve Warden, Nigel Milbourne. This walk has much to offer with its flora and fauna and it will be wonderful to hear about Nigel's work/involvement at the lake from birds and bats, to the insect life and wildflowers. Meet at the south end of the dam at the junction with Park Lane (ST504597) at 19.00. Stout footwear and long trousers are recommended as there are deer ticks here, like everywhere else!

We had a little flurry of excitement on 3rd May when a honeymoon couple from Aberystwyth found two very young tawny chicks for whom the bottom had fallen out of their world, or more precisely, their nest box! Fortunately we were able to contact our Conservation Officer, Chris Sperring who hot-footed it to the Strawberry Line at Congresbury. The chicks were uninjured and after some deliberation it was decided that the box was salvageable, so a ladder, hammer and nails were sent for (hubby to the rescue), a repair effected and the chicks popped back in! Chris was confident that the parent birds would return and he plans to return to ring them in a couple of weeks when they are old enough. (*Not* one of our boxes or YAGWAG's who manage some reserves on the other side of the A370!)



Kestrel Highways Project

Some of the team recently met up for lunch and a chat at a local pub. Barry reports that kestrels have been seen around several of the boxes. Barry: baz.gray@btinternet.com

News from Shapwick Reserve:

Sadly, there does not appear to be any interest in the kestrel box this year, but badgers are very much in evidence near the Badger Hide. At a recent Wednesday work day with Milfield School, much of the new hedge along Kent Drove was mulched with shredding, so hopefully this will suppress weeds and lessen the weeding task for this year! There will be another mid-week day on 11th May, and Simon is also seeking volunteers for an Avalon Marshes day on 5th June. There are still some spaces for the Bath and West Show 1st-4th June. For more information please contact: simon.beard@hawkandowl.org Tel 01300 320008 or Barry: baz.gray@btinternet.com

Other dates and items which may be of interest:

Shapwick Heath Tower Hide



Pat and Sally with Reserve Manager, Simon Clarke

The new hide was opened on 28th April by Dr Andy Clements, Director of the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) and Natural England board member. Reserve Manager Simon Clarke took the opportunity to thank all those who had contributed in so many ways to make it happen. Special thanks went to Michael Sheppard for his design and the many local companies that had helped with the build, particularly Ian and Ian from ISA Carpentry who for 10 weeks and in all weathers put their heart and soul into the project. It is amazing when you think that all this has been achieved since the launch of the Crowdfunding appeal in December! While there we were treated to excellent viewing of bar-tailed godwit, marsh harrier, great white egret and bittern.

The Avalon Marshes Landscape partnership is seeking more volunteers to help man a visitor information point at the Avalon Marshes Centre. If you would like to get involved please contact Kevin on 01458 860556 or Kevin.Anderson@somersetwildlife.org.

1st - 4th June Bath and West Show at Shepton Mallet. If you are visiting the show, do come along and say hello to the volunteers on the Hawk and Owl Trust stand.

11-12th June - Festival of Nature in Bristol – if you would like to help with this please contact Roger Moses - roger.moses@btinternet.com

Webcams and peregrine watches are in action for both Norwich Cathedral and St John's in Bath where both pairs of peregrines are now feeding chicks, 3 at Bath and 4 at Norwich.

In the May copy of 'Mendip Times', the Somerset Ornithological Society is asking for help in investigating the abundance and distribution of the **little owl** and the **kingfisher** which are in decline. Sightings can be emailed to sos.surveys@somersetbirding.org.uk. If you are out and about they are also keen to receive records of other Somerset species of conservation concern, including yellowhammer, spotted flycatcher, cuckoo and wood warbler.

We look forward to seeing you on 16th May.

Best wishes **Carrie Riches**

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