



## NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER – July 2016

Dear Member

The day-time walk from Sea Walls to Ashton Court was deemed to have achieved its objectives – sightings of peregrines, buzzards and kestrels, rounded off with lunch at The Ashton in the sunshine! We were pleased to identify the nest site area of the kestrel nesting in the rocks visible from the Suspension Bridge tower – one had brought in a small mammal and after having a few mouthfuls, took the rest to the nest, the actual location of which was concealed by ivy. Thanks again to Barry for sharing his knowledge of the area.

Dundry Slopes is one of the few remaining truly wild areas around Bristol, where nature is still definitely in charge! We are grateful to Keith, Brendan and the team of local volunteers who guided us through the maze of paths bordered by flower-rich meadows that they are working hard to restore, huge banks of bramble with briar roses running through them, soft tickly mare's tail, woodland and old hazel coppices with lots of bird song in the background, up to the official source of the Malago River. As the top of the Dundry ridge is the watershed between the Bristol rivers and the Chew Valley system there are several little issues of water and rivulets on the slopes. At the top we left Bristol and entered North Somerset briefly to enjoy spectacular, but very different, views over Bristol in one direction and towards Chew Valley Lake in the other.



The dates for this summer's walks are a bit erratic – this month's will be **on Monday, 11th July to Crook Peak**, again led by Barry, meeting at the carpark at Rackley (ST393551) at 6.30pm. Barry hopes we will see young kestrels learning to hunt. Although the first part of the 3 mile walk will be a bit steep, the pace will be leisurely, returning via Compton Combe by about 8.45pm.

### ***Kestrel Highways Project***

This year, the kestrels are a bit late nesting and chicks have hatched at the same time as the barn owls which means our ringers, Colin Morris and Chris Perry, are much in demand. There was a bit of a rush to ring the six chicks at Highbridge before they were too big. Since then there have been more leisurely checks on boxes thought to be occupied. Five chicks were ringed at Pawlett, a first for this box, and four at Barrow Gurney. In another box there were four eggs which it is hoped were just late and not deserted and at Huntspill the box was unoccupied in spite of activity reported earlier in the year, though the farmer is still hearing kestrels near the farm. It is hoped that there are two other boxes that will have chicks. All in all, a rather mixed picture. Many thanks to all involved, and especially to Barry for co-ordinating.

The purpose of ringing is to try to build on knowledge of kestrel life, though recovering or spotting rings on birds is always difficult. Peregrines are that bit bigger and the rings are easier to see.

The BTO recently reported to Ed Drewitt that a chick ringed at Sandford in 2011 is now breeding successfully in Wiltshire. And we do know that the intruding female at Norwich came from Bath!

For more information or to report kestrel sightings - Barry: [baz.gray@btinternet.com](mailto:baz.gray@btinternet.com)

### **News from Shapwick Reserve:**

The concrete base for the permanent building on the reserve was being poured on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Once it has hardened, work on the structure will be able to start in earnest in a couple of weeks.

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)

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

There is a new 12-page pull-out guide **FSC Species Guide** to Shapwick Heath NNR with illustrations of some of the most common and iconic species plus information about the history of Shapwick Heath, its habitats, and what you can expect to see at different times of year. At £3.80, it is available from the Natural England office and Eco-Friendly Bites Café at the Avalon Marshes Centre.



**Norwich peregrines** - If you have been following the peregrine webcam at Norwich Cathedral you will know that following the fatal attacks by the intruding female on two of the fledging juveniles and a serious injury inflicted on the third, the difficult decision was taken by the Trust staff to remove the remaining ones for rehabilitation. They will be returned to the Norfolk area once fit and well. Meanwhile the new female has clearly taken possession of the nesting ledge. Whilst peregrines will defend territory, it is considered unusual for an adult to attack fledglings in juvenile plumage – but we are learning more by having webcams watching round the clock.

**Thursday 14th July at 7.30 pm, at Somerset Hall, Portishead.** - Friends of Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve have organised a meeting to discuss the setting up of a community group to run Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve. One of the speakers will be Chris Sperring MBE, H&OT Conservation Officer, well-known local conservationist, broadcaster and writer. If you are unable to attend the meeting but are interested in finding out more or would like to be involved, please contact the Friends via email: [friendspwnr@gmail.com](mailto:friendspwnr@gmail.com)

**8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> October** - a reminder of the Trust's Members Weekend and AGM, which this year is to be held at Shapwick Moor. The programme includes some excellent speakers and is also a great opportunity to find out what the Trust has been involved in during the year in other parts of the country. More details nearer the time!

We hope to see you for the walk on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July.

Best wishes **Carrie Riches**

**Hawk and Owl Trust**

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