



NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER – December 2016

Dear Member

It was most disappointing that the weather was so awful for our November talk. Understandably many folk were reluctant or unable to venture out so only a few stalwarts were able to enjoy Roger White's excellent talk about his experiences of bird life in the DDR. It is an area with amazing birdlife and lots of nature reserves of which most folk know very little. Roger has written two books which are the only guides to the local bird life published in English.

December is the month for our Owl Prowl with Chris Sperring, MBE which will be on Monday, 19th December. Possible areas are being assessed, and a decision as to the most promising location will be taken nearer the date. However, a pub in which to gather later will be on the agenda! As usual numbers are limited and booking with me is essential.

Following the demise of the Hen Harrier (Rowan) in October, the update on the second satellite tagged HH is that: '*We can confirm that the remaining HOT satellite tagged Hen Harrier (Sorrel) is alive and mobile, and in a recognised roost / hunting ground in Scotland.*' For further information, please see the website.

Kestrel Highways Project

Five replacement boxes have recently been put up as part of the annual maintenance programme. We hope that they will be appreciated by their intended occupants.

For more information or to report kestrel sightings - Barry:
baz.gray@btinternet.com



News from Shapwick Reserve:

On Saturday 26th the reserve was a hive of activity. The young wardens team did a wonderful job levelling the area outside the new building and planting some hedging before moving on to burning brash arising from a recently cleared ditch and new dam installation. The volunteers made short work of painting the new cladding on the building while inside, Jay was working on the shelving. The doors have been fitted and the building is now secure. As it was a lovely sunny afternoon we took the opportunity to spend some time in the Barbara Handley Hide and later to take a walk around the reserve to see the new field gutters that our group has funded.



The new COO, Adrian Blumfield, visited the reserve last week – apparently he was suitably impressed by all the work that is being done.

Just a little bit more to finish!

The next volunteers day will be Sunday 18th December. If the field is dry enough, the plan is to complete the removal of brash on the border with Shapwick Heath. If too wet, Simon always has a list of other jobs! For more information on volunteering, please contact : simon.beard@hawkandowl.org Tel 01300 320008 or Barry: baz.gray@btinternet.com

Other dates and items which may be of interest:

Friday 9th December – The speaker for Abbots Leigh Wildlife Group will be John Sparks, former head of the Natural History Unit, who will talk about his travels in " Wild Ethiopia". 7pm for 7.30pm at Abbots Leigh Villlage Hall, tickets £5, to include a glass of wine or juice.
<http://www.abbotsleighwildlife.com/events/>

Tuesday 13th December – the speaker for the South Glos Group will be Chris Sperring, MBE. Iron Acton Parish Hall at 7.30 pm.

A reminder that the speaker on 16th January will be award winning photographer, Nick Upton. We look forward to seeing you then.

In the meantime we hope you enjoy the celebrations over the festive period. A cautionary note from the RSPCA about sharing your leftover Christmas fare – their advice is **'that birds will happily polish off Christmas cake or crumbs of biscuit and mince pie, but cooked turkey fat and anything too salty can be dangerous.**

Fat in roasting tins can quickly go rancid if it is left in a warm kitchen. It forms an ideal breeding ground for salmonella and other food poisoning bacteria which can be fatal to both people and birds.

The cooled fat can easily smear onto birds' feathers and interfere with their waterproofing and insulation. Birds need to keep their feathers clean and dry if they are to survive the cold winter weather, and a layer of grease makes this virtually impossible'

With all good wishes for Christmas and the coming year.

Carrie Riches

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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.