

Army Ornithological Society

NEWSLETTER
JULY 2012



NEWS

Introduction

The more astute will notice that the style is similar to that produced in 2010 when the previous Secretary was still clinging to the post by his fingertips despite the blows. The temporary arrangement seems to be a regular occurrence as I am back again.

AGM

The AGM was held at Leconfield at short notice due to unforeseen events at Strensall. It was an excellent weekend and Tim Cowley is to be congratulated on organising the weekend at very short notice. It started with a social on Friday evening that was curtailed when the bar shut.

On Saturday we took a bus to Flamborough Head and then onto Bempton Cliffs. It was an excellent day and for those who have never been to the area a fantastic experience. Some of the group did a circular walk at Flamborough and others a more sedate amble. The cliffs are a delight with so many breeding birds and a volunteer warden passed on his knowledge.



That evening after the AGM and dinner, Tim Cowley gave us a talk of birding in captivity. A busy AOS weekend was like a walk in the park compared to his experiences. On Sunday we explored the Leconfield training area on a very windy day. There was a ringing stand halfway round where we all were able to see a bird in the hand. Also some Turtle Doves put in an appearance and we all had good views of at least one. By lunchtime we had given all our records to Tim Cowley and everyone set off for home.

The list of birds seen on Saturday 12 May 12 during our visit is below:

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*
Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>
Red Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Black Grouse <i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Coal Tit <i>Periparus ater</i>
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	Marsh Tit <i>Poecile palustris</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>
Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>	Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Common Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>

President's Medal

Field Marshal Sir John Chapple as his last duty before retiring as President, presented the President's Medal to Andrew Bray. The citation follows:

Major Andrew Bray

A member of the Army Ornithological Society for over 20 years, Andrew Bray has contributed to the Society from the start. He has been a most proactive committee member, taking on several posts and, when required, standing in for absentee members, always in a typically enthusiastic but relaxed manner.

In particular, Andrew has organised and conducted regular visits to Ascension Island to monitor the status of Sooty Terns and other seabirds. His programmes of work have always maintained a high scientific value and in this respect he has written a number of valued papers on conservation issues on Ascension Island. With new

survey teams on every occasion, he has managed to compress exacting survey requirements into the shortest of visit periods while ensuring that every member of his team returns with a justifiable sense of having achieved their scientific goals while having a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

As Honorary Secretary, Andrew has contributed to a succession of successful AGMs, winning over Range and Mess staff in increasingly more difficult circumstances but providing entertaining and informative tours of the military estate. His ability to keep costs of AGM weekends to the barest minimum with maximum enjoyment has become legendary. In his role as Secretary, his support to Chairmen and other committee members has been exemplary. While AOS Secretary, Andrew also volunteered to become editor of the Adjutant, a post he currently holds and which followed his editorship of the AOS Bulletin and the AOS Newsletter.



It is outside the Society that Andrew's contribution to raising its profile has been particularly notable. He does not waste a chance to promote the Society, through articles, promotions, with academia, and as the AOS representative on Salisbury Plain West with his local conservation group, leading field days and giving lectures. It is Andrew's initiative that produced a revitalised AOS crest and then made

it available on clothing as another means of promoting the Society.

As the first recipient of the President's Medal, Andrew Bray epitomises the values of this award through his outstanding contribution to the promotion of the Army Ornithological Society within the fields of bird watching and Conservation.

President

Sir John announced his retirement and he will be succeeded by Lieutenant General Sir Hew Pike KCB, DSO, MBE.

After attending the RMA Sandhurst (1961-62), he was commissioned into the Parachute Regiment serving in the Persian Gulf, Oman, Aden, East Africa and Guyana during the 1960s and mainly in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland during the 1970s. He also served in Norway as an Aide-de-Camp in 1967, as an Instructor at the School of Infantry from 1970-72, and in command of the Pathfinder Company of 44 Parachute Brigade (TA) from 1973-74.

After the Staff College in 1975, he was Brigade Major 16 Parachute Brigade (1976-78) during which he was awarded the MBE and thereafter a Company Commander in 3 PARA (Germany/Northern Ireland). He attended the Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia, in 1980, after which he commanded 3 PARA in Tidworth and Aldershot from 1980-1983. This period included a tour in Northern Ireland and the

Falkland Campaign. His Battalion was attached to 3 Cdo Bde and was engaged in one of the fiercest encounters of the war, the battle for Mount Longdon and was awarded the DSO for his "cool example and inspiring leadership". He was subsequently on the staff of HQ 1 (BR) Corps and Commandant Tactics Wing, School of Infantry.

From 1987-89 he commanded 22 Armoured Brigade in Bergen-Hohne, Germany. After attending the Royal College of Defence Studies in 1990, he spent 1991 developing the concept for the Combined Arms Training Centre based at Warminster. He commanded the 3rd Division, on its return from Germany to UK, from 1992-94, after which he was appointed Commandant of the RMA Sandhurst, 1994-95. He became Deputy Commander in Chief Land Command and Inspector General Territorial Army in July 1995, during which time he also acted as Middle East Advisor to the Secretary of State for Defence and CDS. He was appointed KCB. He was Director of Operations (DCOMOPS) of the NATO SFOR in Bosnia from 1997. From October 1998 to 2000 he was GOC and Director of Operations in Northern Ireland. He retired in 2001. He is married to Jean and lives in Hampshire.

Forecast of Events

The forecast of events is attached.

Morocco 2013. There are still 2 vacancies on this excellent trip to Morocco, 2-12 Apr 13. This is an excellent opportunity to see the North African birds of the Western Palaearctic. The guide is one of the best in the business for Morocco and we are likely to see every key bird on the list as well as lots of others. The tour is taken at a sedate pace using comfortable hotels and transport. The cost is approximately £1,230 plus flights from Gatwick or Manchester. If you are interested please get in contact with Andrew Bray (07720 172814 or ajbray1@sky.com). We would like to fill the gaps.

Publications

It was very heartening to see that Sanctuary, the MoD Conservation magazine, was back in print this year. Lots of people and groups added their weight to the pressure on the MoD to bring back a very popular magazine. If you would like a 2012 copy please contact Andrew Bray.

World Birdwatch. The June edition has an article on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The Bird Fair at Rutland Water, 17-19 Aug is raising funds to support this very important route. The Mai Po marsh in Hong Kong is one of the important points on this flyway. This marsh achieved its protection mainly due to the efforts of Field Marshal Sir John when he was CBF Hong Kong. Those attending the Bird Fair will directly support this worthy cause.

The publication is issued by Birdlife International that has recently finished a report on the State of the world's birds. Details can be found at www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb.

Web Site

At the AGM, members voted for a major revamp of our website. You will notice that we have a new address, armybirding.org.uk, and a small team are currently working with a company to completely revamp the site to make use of modern practices and social sites. This will allow us to concentrate on the content rather than the technical. You will not be required to do anything but one day in the not too distant future you will log in and it will be different. Initial reports filtering out of the secret bunker (ex Int Corps in charge) suggest that the revamp is going very well and we will have a better interactive site.

Those who have email will now be able to read this newsletter and the AGM Record of Decisions on-line rather than waiting for a copy in the post.

Those who do log on will have been following the blog from Camp Bastion. Not everyone has electronic means of communication so a few examples of what you are missing is re-printed below.

15 Jul. Someone has turned the temperature up and I am now living in a fan assisted oven. Yesterday it was 50 odd degrees centigrade with BearskinnedBirder reporting 57 in his location. Quite how he manages the day in Osprey Body Armour is beyond me. As you'd expect birdlife is diminishing although I am still managing to bump into stuff on my travels around Bastion/Leatherneck.

Birds of note have included 3 **Rollers** over Runway's End Marsh on 1st July with another stunning male bird on the southern perimeter fence on the 3rd. I rather bizarrely completed the Danish 25km tab around camp on the 8th in full kit. Thirty minutes into it, with another three hours to go, I was beginning to wonder why I had volunteered when a flock of thirty plus **Rose-coloured Starlings** flew over heading to the south; this is a species I had seen previously here.

Sine then there has been a distinct rise in temperature and even the commoner species are finding shade and sticking to it; I now have to travel to find birds, usually to and from meetings when I see things crossing the road. On the 9th I flushed a lone **Green Sandpiper** at the new filter bed at the southern entrance and as I drove by a **Lesser Sand Plover** overflowed the Tata.

I have a garden list here – it's not a garden as you'd know it but the camp where my accommodation and work place is. I added two species to my garden list yesterday; four **Lesser Sand Plover** overflowed calling as I headed back to the tent from the outside privy. It was very windy yesterday and these birds were really being buffeted. A couple of hours later I flushed a very exhausted **Clamorous Reed Warbler** from the vehicle park. This bird really was finding it difficult to fly and I left it sheltering under an iso-container. Again, another bird I am familiar with from previous tours but one which I had, up to now, missed this time around.

This morning I added four **Crowned Sandgrouse** and two obliging **Pin-Tailed Sandgrouse** at Runway's End Marsh; I visited the site during a dog-legged route to a meeting.

27 May. The centre of gravity switched this week to Camp Leatherneck. There had been little all week with only the Omni-present **Crested Larks** and **Tree Sparrows** along with the pair of **Common Myna** near the 25m range. **Laughing Dove** numbers had increased with upwards of 10 flying around Bastion 2. **Laughing Doves** are a resident species in Afghanistan but only appear in any numbers in both MOBs Bastion and Price at the end of March/early April, perhaps wintering further south around the Helmand River and the compounds north in the Green Zone.

On Friday I was part of a March and Shoot Team and on the final leg of the race (we came 3rd by the way) we passed the Leatherneck Grey Water Lagoon and the team seemed unimpressed when I pointed out 18 **White-winged Black Terns** dipping over the lagoon. On the return an hour later from the ranges (we didn't do so well there) they had gone.

Aching the following morning I headed back to Leatherneck and picked up one drab **White-winged Black Tern** and finally a male **Red-necked Phalarope** at the edge. Three **Little Stints** were also present but very flighty; I managed some good shots of the **Phalarope**. The terns were an Afghan lifer for me and, to be honest, a species I hadn't expected to see here. Bonus!

Today, as it was quiet, it is Sunday after all, I headed back to the Lagoon and immediately clocked three more **Red-necked Phalaropes** doing what they do best and spinning for food around on the lagoon and a drive around produced two **Temminck's Stints** and half a dozen **Little Stints**. Migration is still not complete and this tour continues to surprise.

It was interesting to be interrogated by USMC MPs who clocked me with binoculars and a camera looking at an excrement filled pond with a tip as the background. I was Caucasian, wearing British Military Uniform and produced an ID Card but they were still unsure. I like the Americans, they have a can do attitude but sometimes cannot think out of the box!! Perhaps it was my accent - I don't sound like Hugh Grant or Dick Van Dyke. They have birders in the US – I have seen them and have watched 'The Big Year' so I should not have been unusual.

10 Feb. Essential Kit for a Helmand Twitch.

SA 80 Rifle

150 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition

Mark 7 Combat Helmet

First Aid Kit (in two pouches)

Webbing

Osprey Body Armour

Pelvic Protection

Day sack (incl sleeping bag, 24 hour rations, spare kit)

Old Bausch and Lomb Binoculars

Birds of the Middle East Field Guide

Note Book

3 armoured vehicles with Force Protection

Notices

Cottage for Rent. A 4 bedroom cottage (sleeping 8) in the Highlands is available for holiday lets. It is in a very beautiful part of Scotland - Reiff is near Achiltibuie, on the West Coast about an hour north of Ullapool.

The website address is www.reiffbeachcottage.co.uk also on facebook at www.facebook.com/HighlandBeachCottage.

The cottage is on the sea with a sea loch behind it, and from Achiltibuie one can take a boat around the Summer Isles. There are a good variety of birds, and otters are often in the bay. Common sightings at sea include basking shark and dolphins, and of course seals all around the islands.

AOS Car Sticker. Advertise the AOS from your car. These car stickers are available from Andrew Bray.



AOS Clothing. AOS Polo shirts are always available as now are woolly ski-hats with a modified logo. Please contact Andrew Bray if you would like a ski-hat; could be popular for those forays to North Norfolk in January or Scotland in June! Cost is £6.95 plus postage. Polo shirts are £13.14 plus postage. The logos can be applied to all sorts of clothing.

