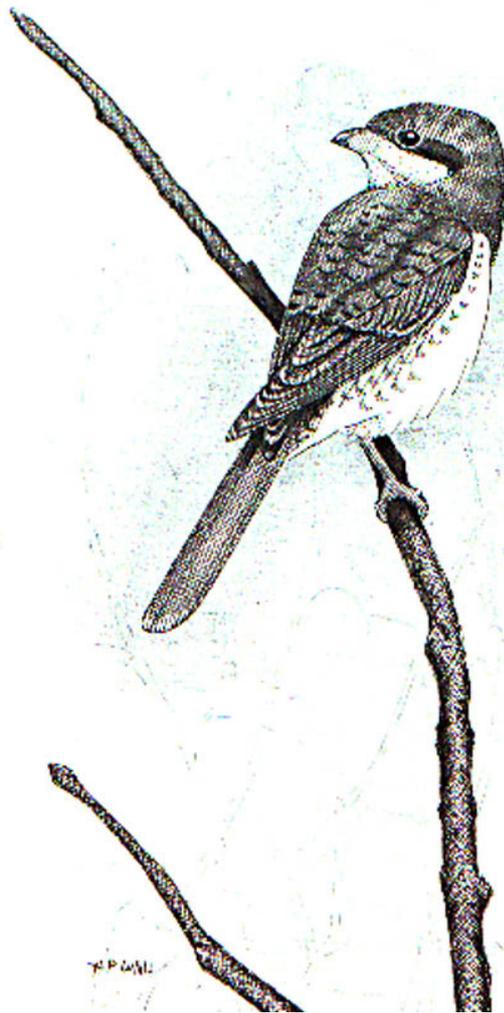


**SOUTH WALES WETLANDS
AUTUMN MIGRATION
17TH – 21ST SEPTEMBER
2003**



CELTIC BIRD TOURS

Participants

Carole Taylor

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Tour Leader

Neil Donaghy

17th

We met at lunchtime and were soon at Kenfig National Nature Reserve on a scorching afternoon. An easterly breeze was blowing as we made our way down the track to the northern dunes. Before long, we had our target bird in the bag – a superb juvenile Red-backed Shrike that gave prolonged and close views as it sat atop a perch and caught caterpillars and bees. At one stage it was also seen on the floor panting in the heat. A few Stonechats were also in this area and a Common Buzzard soared on a thermal. Tearing ourselves away, we took lunch in the cool north pool hide. A Kingfisher perched on top of the post, but was soon gone as a Grey Heron flew in. Dabchick, Coot and Mallards were seen in the north pool inlet and a Cetti's Warbler sang from somewhere behind the hide.

A steady stream of Swallows were passing over the pool and were later seen on wires, along with a fair sized Starling flock. A few Goldfinches and Meadow Pipits continued to pass over and a couple of Yellow Wagtails were on the east pool fields, along with Linnets and small numbers of Pied Wagtails. On the pool itself, Great Crested Grebe, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck and Wigeon were all present and a second winter Mediterranean Gull bearing a Dutch ring was amongst a small flock of Black-headed Gulls. We later also saw a first winter bird. A Common Sandpiper flew in and landed on the shore and a couple of Cormorants were on the boathouse.

En route back to the car, we stopped for more views of the shrike and also noted a couple of Robins and a female Kestrel flew over. We enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon overall and some good birds to start the tour.

18th

A more overcast day with a gusty southerly wind, but still quite warm. What a day it turned out to be and we didn't manage to leave the Kenfig reserve at all.

We began in the car park, where after scanning the starling flock, we soon had a juvenile Rose-coloured Starling perched on wires and then later at close range in the east pool fields. Whilst we were watching this bird a juvenile Black Tern flew in and allowed scope filling views as it rested on a stone on the shoreline – superb! Good numbers of House Martins were passing through, joined by the odd Sand Martin and a Kingfisher again perched up well. A few Teal had arrived on the pool, but otherwise the wildfowl remained as yesterday. In the east pool fields a couple of male Pheasants were feeding and a Stock Dove flew in and joined them – never an easy bird to see at this site and we also saw the Red-backed Shrike in the same bush that we had left it yesterday afternoon!

As we took breakfast in the north pool hide, a Greenshank flew over calling before landing on the shoreline.

We walked out to Kenfig Sands for the high tide and had extremely good views of 150+ Sanderling, 50+ Ringed Plover, 100+ Oystercatcher and a couple of Dunlin. We walked to Sker Point, where we took lunch and scanned the sea and the rocks. A Knot was amongst more Oystercatchers and a small group of Curlew were also present. A couple of Great Black-backed Gulls and Rock Pipits were on the rocks and a few Turnstones loafed around.

Out to sea, three adult Gannets flew up channel, as did six Manx Shearwaters – a good record for the time of year. Sadly, a Great Skua was only seen distantly, but showed

enough to give away its identity. As we were ready to move on, six Golden Plover flew in – the first of the autumn. At Sker farm, a couple of Ravens flew over “cronking” loudly, nine Lapwings were in a grassy field and small numbers of Wheatears, Stonechats, Goldfinches and Linnets were around the farm buildings.

A return to Kenfig Pool proved a good move, as we added Chiffchaff, Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Coal, Blue and Great Tits to the tour list. In addition, a male Yellowhammer, Greenfinch and an adult Yellow-legged Gull all gave brief views before we left at the end of a very rewarding day.

19th

Another overcast day with a cool southerly breeze saw us once again begin our day at Kenfig. Before long, we had the Black tern in view, though it soon disappeared out towards the sea. A male Sparrowhawk made a dash for a flock of Pied Wagtails, but didn't manage a kill and we also later saw a female. A Peregrine flew quickly over the pool, heading north and out of sight and a Snipe flew high south. The Red-backed Shrike once again gave stunning views, though we didn't linger on this bird today and a Kingfisher also perched up during our regular north pool hide breakfast. Once again, we heard Cetti's Warblers, but did not see any and two calling Reed Warblers also managed to escape our view. We did manage to see a couple of Goldcrests, a male Yellowhammer and a Reed Bunting, but other than a few calling Long-tailed Tits and Blackbirds, the bushes were again a disappointment. A Water Rail called loudly, though only the leader managed a very brief glimpse as it scuttled into cover over a newly cut area of reeds.

We decided to move to Salthouse Point on North Gower for the high tide. This proved to be a popular decision, as despite the tide falling well short of the marsh, we enjoyed prolonged views of thousands of shorebirds and gulls. The predominant species was as ever here Oystercatcher with over 5000 estimated. Good numbers of Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit and Knot were also present and a flock of fifteen or so mostly breeding plumaged Grey Plover were a welcome bonus. Little Egrets totalled 27 and five Sandwich Terns and six Gannets were feeding well up the estuary. An adult Mediterranean Gull showed well and a few Dunlins were scattered over the shore. A lone female Pintail flew up channel and single Wheatear and Grey Wagtail were also noted.

Following lunch, we moved to nearby Penclawdd, where we spent the remainder of the afternoon, enjoying a birding treat. A small flock of Redshank held a beautifully plumaged Ruff and a few Little Egrets and a Common Sandpiper were also noted. The star bird however was an Osprey that sat on a fence post before catching a fish and then returning, allowing superb views – magic! Even after all this, we still had an additional bonus bird when a Spoonbill flew over our heads, as we were about to leave. We then waited a long time for it to reappear out of a creek, but it had presumably carried on flying out of our view, as we despite the help of some local birders, it could not be relocated.

20th

After breakfast, we decided once again to visit Kenfig and this was a good decision. Overnight drizzle had brought down good numbers of birds including a female Redstart, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat and good numbers of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs. We moved on to the west pool bushes to join in a ringing session, which yielded two Cetti's Warblers – possibly the only way to guarantee seeing this most elusive of species. We also caught a few Sedge Warblers, Reed Warblers, a Bullfinch and a couple of Reed Buntings. Six Sky Larks flew over calling, a Great Spotted Woodpecker was seen without the leader and a few Goldcrests were also noted. In the north pool, the Red-backed

Shrike showed well again and the Black Tern was also still present. A couple of Song Thrushes were also seen or heard in the south pool.

We moved away from the reserve for only the second time in the afternoon and to the coastal valley at Cwm Nash. By now, the sun was out and it was pretty hot. A couple of Spotted Flycatchers gave excellent views, and Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs were also seen in the bushes. At the bottom of the valley the pair of Chough flew in, calling, but the tide was too high to see them on the favoured ledge. Several Rock Pipits were also present and a couple of Grey Wagtails included one that flew out to sea! A pair of Ravens flew over, their calls echoing all around – very atmospheric. A Treecreeper was with two Coal Tits and a few Goldcrests, a female Sparrowhawk flew over a couple of times and a flock of 50 or so Linnet were near the farm. A Clouded Yellow was seen by the leader only, but we also noted Comma, Painted Lady and Red Admiral.

A brief stop at Ogmores Estuary produced a Little Egret, a couple of Lapwings and a Curlew. Our final stop at Candleston Bridge gave superb views of a Dipper as it perched on a dead log and occasionally drank from the river, a Kingfisher flew quickly by and two Grey Wagtails fed on the shingle. A Great Spotted Woodpecker flew into an oak tree and up to four Mistle Thrushes underneath the oaks rounded the day off nicely.

21st

Our final morning once again began at Kenfig. A cold north easterly wind greeted our arrival and the first birds we noted were streams of Swallows and Meadow Pipits moving east, with a few Pied and Grey Wagtails amongst them. The Black Tern was once again hawking over the pool and a couple of Wheatears were on the shoreline. The Red-backed Shrike was also still present and small numbers of Goldcrests and Blackcaps included one male in song! A Whinchat perched in an elder bush, but was spooked by the shrike, though we later saw two others and small numbers of Sky Larks passed overhead. On the whole though the bushes were quiet with just a few Chiffchaffs and Long-tailed Tits moving through. Two Kingfishers were seen briefly and a Water Rail, Cetti's Warbler and a Yellow Wagtail were heard but not seen. An influx of Pochard and Teal had taken place on the pool and we also saw Shoveler and Wigeon. Nine Golden Plover flew over south east and a mini fall of Robins and Dunnock was the only other notable event. By the early afternoon, the weather had brightened and warmed up, but all too soon, it was time to say our farewells on what had been a wonderful tour.

Systematic List

- 1 Little Grebe
- 2 Great Crested Grebe
- 3 Manx Shearwater
- 4 Gannet
- 5 Cormorant
- 6 Little Egret
- 7 Grey Heron
- 8 Spoonbill
- 9 Mute Swan
- 10 Eurasian Wigeon
- 11 Common Teal
- 12 Mallard
- 13 Northern Pintail
- 14 Northern Shoveler
- 15 Common Pochard

- 16 Tufted Duck
- 17 European Sparrowhawk
- 18 18 Common Buzzard
- 19 Osprey
- 20 Common Kestrel
- 21 Peregrine
- 22 Pheasant
- 23 Water Rail
- 24 Moorhen
- 25 Coot
- 26 Oystercatcher
- 27 Ringed Plover
- 28 Golden Plover
- 29 Grey Plover
- 30 Lapwing
- 31 Knot
- 32 Sanderling
- 33 Dunlin
- 34 Ruff
- 35 Common Snipe
- 36 Black-tailed Godwit
- 37 Curlew
- 38 Redshank
- 39 Greenshank
- 40 Common Sandpiper
- 41 Turnstone
- 42 Great Skua
- 43 Mediterranean Gull
- 44 Black-headed Gull
- 45 Common Gull
- 46 Lesser Black-backed Gull
- 47 Herring Gull
- 48 Yellow-legged Gull
- 49 Great Black-backed Gull
- 50 Sandwich Tern
- 51 Black Tern
- 52 Feral Rock Dove
- 53 Stock Dove
- 54 Wood Pigeon
- 55 Collared Dove
- 56 Kingfisher
- 57 Great Spotted Woodpecker
- 58 Sky Lark
- 59 Sand Martin
- 60 Barn Swallow
- 61 House Martin
- 62 Rock Pipit
- 63 Meadow Pipit
- 64 Pied Wagtail
- 65 Grey Wagtail
- 66 Yellow Wagtail

- 67 Dipper
- 68 Wren
- 69 Dunnock
- 70 Whinchat
- 71 Stonechat
- 72 Robin
- 73 Redstart
- 74 Wheatear
- 75 Blackbird
- 76 Song Thrush
- 77 Mistle Thrush
- 78 Cetti's Warbler
- 79 Sedge Warbler
- 80 Reed Warbler
- 81 Whitethroat
- 82 Blackcap
- 83 Chiffchaff
- 84 Goldcrest
- 85 Spotted Flycatcher
- 86 Long-tailed Tit
- 87 Coal Tit
- 88 Blue Tit
- 89 Great Tit
- 90 Treecreeper
- 91 Red-backed Shrike
- 92 Magpie
- 93 Chough
- 94 Jackdaw
- 95 Rook
- 96 Carrion Crow
- 97 Raven
- 98 Starling
- 99 Rose-coloured Starling
- 100 House Sparrow
- 101 Chaffinch
- 102 Greenfinch
- 103 Goldfinch
- 104 Linnet
- 105 Bullfinch
- 106 Yellowhammer
- 107 Reed Bunting

Butterflies

Painted Lady
Comma
Clouded yellow
Small Heath
Red Admiral