

PERTSHIRE SOCIETY OF NATURAL SCIENCE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SECTION
NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Dear Members,

I hope you are keeping well in these strange days we are living through at the moment. We are now in winter and, having missed our summer outings we have no lectures to look forward to. Indeed many of you may be wondering, as am I, if we will ever get back to any sense of normality.

I hope you have still been able to get out on your local patch and perhaps seen some rarities among the regular wildlife. I saw some redwings recently and look forward to more sightings of winter thrushes. The birds in the garden, however, come and go as usual. Tits on the sunflower seed, sparrows on the bird table and exciting visits from collared doves and bullfinches, as well as the many skeins of pink-footed geese flying high above us.

We may not be able to get together for a while but Jeff has some news of a PSNS project which may interest you and which you may be able to contribute to.

I wish you well for the coming season, until we meet again.

Pam Reynolds, Secretary



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From the BTO

Not sure of your geese? I recently took a couple of BTO Training Courses (only 2 zoom sessions of 1.5hours each). There were excellent ID videos to view as homework. These are readily available to view on YouTube, search BTOvideo or BTO bird ID. - Jeff

PSNS Review of events in Perthshire

A proposal has been put forward that the PSNS members could prepare a review of the recent past, as a note of changes within PSNS and Perthshire society more generally. It was first suggested that this should cover the last 20 years, but this needn't be set rigid, and, indeed, for some purposes, such as ornithology, I think, 20 years may be too brief.

Data could be collected from work in different ways - studies and records already being kept by "parent organizations" such as the RSPB, SWT or BTO; studies and records kept by individual members covering local areas; interviews and conversations, either by telephone, on video conferencing, during a walk or by letter etc - and individual views and opinions could be attributable or non-attributable, depending on the informant's wishes.

The collection could be presented in written and recorded form on the web site or written in, say, an edition of the journal.

If you have ideas or want to get involved as an individual or as part of the Ornithological Section please get in touch. jeffreybanks@btinternet.com
Jeff

News snippets

In the passed week, 22nd to 30th November a large number of Whooper Swans have been in fields here, adjacent to the River Earn.

Counts of 230 on Wednesday and 216 on Saturday and 0 on Monday, 30th on the south side of the Earn

100 on the 29th and 140 on the 30th on the north side.

My counts of 230 and 216 were queried by Bird Track as unusual for Perth and Kinross. So I checked back the few records I have -

1990 - Easter Rhynd 112 (that would have been more or less the same location as my counts of 100 and 140)

2000 - small numbers in the Earn area

2006 - Up to Kinkell Bridge 264 (Dec 2nd) and 282 (Dec 9th)

They have been more usually seen on fields and small bodies of water away from the estuary. At this time they seem to prefer to forage on stubble fields of cereals and potatoes rather than going for water plants.



Confluence of Rivers Earn and Tay, February, 2019

From Anecdote to Fact

I happened to tune in to the 6 o' clock news on Radio 4 one evening in October and heard a news item about a Bar-tailed Godwit. 20 had been satellite-tagged in Auckland, NZ, the previous summer and 1 had now flown back from Alaska to NZ direct across the Pacific Ocean in 11 days, a journey of 7580mls. A quick check revealed that, in fact, this migration route had been previously recorded, so this is another little fact to add to the bigger story.

In spring most birds, once started on the return to the breeding grounds, go as quickly as possible to claim their mate and occupy the best terrain. Somewhat perversely, the godwits then take a slower, longer route round the rim of the Pacific.

I don't have a picture of a Bar-tailed Godwit - but I do have a



Black-tailed Godwit

2 September on North Ronaldsay. A worn, in-between plumage, having started its migration before moulting, a not unusual strategy, as shown by the mass of feathers in this lochan.

Not sure of distinguishing the godwits? It's more than just the tail, check the BTO ID video.