



Chair's Welcome! Croeso'r Cadeirydd!



Spring has gone by in a flash and summer is here. All that anticipation of migrants arriving and the dawn chorus has turned into a fledging fest – to quote *Springwatch*. For many of our birds, particularly the resident species, it looks like 2025 will be a good breeding year. So far clutch sizes appear to have been at the upper end of the spectrum and fledging success has been good and the breeding season isn't over. All this indicates that there has been plenty of food around. This will go some way to making up for the poor season in 2024. However, it is not all good news. The populations of some of our special species, notably Curlew, are at such a critical level that any

factor that reduces breeding success can push a species to extinction. We will hear about how another special species, the Little Tern, is faring at Gronant later in the newsletter. Our offshore islands hold internationally important populations of seabirds and the thriving Puffin population on Skomer hit the national news this month, but we need to keep vigilant. RSPB Cymru's article on biosecurity highlights the need for all visitors to our special sites to abide by the guidance provided, and this has never been more important than right now when visitor numbers are at their peak.

In this newsletter we have articles from all four corners of Wales. As usual there is a lot of wonderful local work being done to help our birdlife and it is always difficult to choose what amazing stories to impart. It is so important for all the organisations, bird clubs and individuals to work together for birds in Wales. WOS tries to bring information together and raise awareness of ongoing conservation monitoring and action. This year bird recording, which is one of WOS's main constitutional aims, is the theme of our annual conference, which is being held at Aberystwyth University on 25 October. Bird recording is an activity that everyone can do and we've invited a number of passionate bird recorders to tell us their stories on how they got into bird recording and what it is that motivates them to collect information to be used for bird conservation.

Over the past six months we have recruited three new co-opted members of Council: Simon Boyes, Josh Pedley and Glyn Roberts. This is great news and we have been introducing these new volunteers to you via the newsletter but sadly my letter to members highlighting the need to recruit to key roles such as Secretary, Treasurer and Webmaster elicited not a single offer of help. Since its inception in 1988, WOS has made an important contribution to bird conservation in Wales. For that to continue, we must fill these key roles. Our President, Iolo Williams will be emphasising this plea for help and we really look forward to hearing from you.

In the meantime, I hope we have some lovely summer weather over the coming months and that you have time to get out there and enjoy our wonderful Welsh wildlife.

Anne Brenchley chair@birds.wales

Come and join me on WOS Council



It has been my privilege to be WOS' President since 2009 and I can honestly say that the Society has never been in a stronger position than it is now. Membership is growing steadily and is at its highest ever. A record number of people attended our 2024 Annual Conference and it was great for an old fogey like me to see so many young faces in the audience. In 2022-23, for the first time in our history, we led on organising a national survey: the *Wales Rook Survey*. In 2023, we worked alongside RSPB Cymru to arrange a Sustainable Farming Scheme Roadshow around Wales to get more people to respond to the SFS public consultation. Hundreds of people joined us at those events. On top of all this we continue to offer grants to students, conservation and community projects and we produce the *Welsh Bird Report*, the *Scarce and Rare Birds in Wales Report* and our journal, *Milvus*, every year. Not too shabby!

But, despite all this, as things stand, the future of WOS is very uncertain. Six of our twelve trustees will be standing down at the end of the year. Four of them have come to the end of their terms and new commitments have sadly led to the early departure of the other two. As a registered charity **if we don't recruit enough trustees WOS will not be able to continue.** It's as simple as that.

There is some good news! Via appeals in previous newsletters and an email to all members we've co-opted three new members of Council, who I sincerely hope will stand for election as trustees at the next AGM. But we need more. In particular we need someone to fill the soon to be vacant Secretary and Treasurer roles.

Now, don't be put off by terms such as 'Council' and 'trustee'. They sound very grand but, at the end of the day, they're just terms for a great group of people who spend a few hours every month managing the day to day running of WOS. Don't be put off either by the Secretary and Treasurer job titles. You don't have to have previous experience in either of these roles, but you do have to have good organisational skills. That's why they haven't offered them to me!

So, how about it? Can you help us secure WOS' future by joining me on Council? Please contact Anne, our Chair, chair@birdsin.wales for a no-obligation chat. She'll be able to tell you all you need to know, including how the trustees work together and the time commitments involved. Please help us build on our current success. Now is a great time to be joining us!

Contents of this issue

p3-5: News

p6: 2025 Conference update

p7-9: A life changing visit to Enlli

p9-10: Hoopoes in Pembrokeshire and Wales

p11-13: North Wales' Little Terns

p13-14: Spotlight on the Deeside Naturalists Society

p15: The Rob Bradshaw Award

p16-19: Protecting Wales' seabirds

p19-21: Ian Bullock – a tribute

p22: RSPB Environment Bill e-Action

News

WOS Lifetime Achievement Award 2025

If you know of someone who you think has made a lasting contribution to ornithology in Wales and who deserves our Lifetime Achievement Award you need to get your skates on! **The closing date is 30 June.**

Time is tight, but the good news is that the nomination itself shouldn't be more than 500 words long. We'd love to hear from you so that we can celebrate individuals who've given so much of their time to birds in Wales. Yes, that could be on a national level, but we'd also like to receive nominations for 'local heroes'. People who have given years of service to the birding scene where you live.

For more information, including previous recipients and guidelines for submitting your nomination, please visit this webpage: <https://birdsin.wales/lifetime-achievement-awards/>



Dr Steph Tyler receiving her WOS Lifetime Achievement Award from Iolo Williams at our annual conference in 2015

WOS Photo competition 2025

The 2025 photo competition is under way and the first entries have been submitted. It largely follows the same pattern as in previous years, but there are two important changes from the 2024 competition:

1. The closing date has been brought forward to **31st August**. Photos taken between 1st Oct 2024 and the new closing date will be accepted.
2. The Flocks category is being replaced by a **Mobile Phone Category**.

The **Main Section** – open to everyone, with first prize of a week's accommodation on Ynys Enlli/Bardsey Island (travel to the island is not included). The second and third prizes are £100 and £75 of NHBS vouchers.

Mobile Phone Section – open to everyone, with first, second and third prizes of £100, £75 and £50 of NHBS vouchers.

Young Photographers Section – open to anyone 21 years old or under on 31st August 2025, with prizes as per the phone section above.

How to enter

- Please visit our Photo Competition webpage [here](#) where you can find more information and download entry forms.
- Download an application form for each entry (Word and PDF versions below).
- Email your photos, each accompanied by a separate entry form, to photocomp@birdsin.wales by midnight on 31st August 2025.
- All entries will be acknowledged. Please make sure you follow the entry instructions.

Judging

For the 2025 competition we will have the same four Welsh-based judges as in 2024. They will be responsible for shortlisting and the final decisions on winners will be made by WOS President, Iolo Williams. Good luck!

Many thanks Mike and Julian!

We'd like to say 'diolch yn fawr iawn' to both Mike Raine and Julian Hughes for a very generous donation we received recently. Julian, from RSPB Cymru and our Annual Welsh Bird Report editor, recently ran a *Birds in the Mountains* course for Mike, for which Mike made a donation to WOS in lieu of Julian's fee.



Mike Raine in his natural habitat

Mike has kindly supported us of many years. He's runs an [outdoor training company](#) and is the author of *Nature of Snowdonia – a guide to the uplands for hillwalkers and climbers*. His [blog](#), which largely focuses on environmental matters, is definitely worth a read.

WBRC now on BlueSky

The Welsh Birds Rarities Committee is no longer active on X/Twitter and all its decisions are now posted on BlueSky. You can follow them here: [@welshbirdsrarities.bsky.social](#)

WBRC is a subcommittee of WOS and assesses records of scarce and rare birds in Wales. It also produces our *Annual Report of Scarce & Rare Birds in Wales* and maintains the list of all the birds seen in Wales, which can be downloaded [here](#).

Got an idea for our *Milvus* journal?

If you have an idea for an original research paper (up to 5000 words) or a short communication (up to 2500 words) for the journal, the editor, Dr Rachel Taylor, would be delighted to hear from you. Rachel is also keen to include more short articles which could be interesting notes, intriguing negative (or non-significant?) results; perhaps observations from local studies and certainly more pieces by citizen scientists. *Milvus* should be a journal that brings scientists, both professionals and citizen scientists, together through our shared interest in Welsh birds. Rachel and the Editorial Board are here to help and advise you through every step of the process. You can find out more about submissions to *Milvus* on the [website](#) and Rachel's email address is: milvuseditor@birdsin.wales Bring us your best ideas!

Alan Williams

WOS sadly has to announce the death of Alan Williams. Alan was for many years a WOS trustee, latterly its Treasurer until 2018. Alan was a stalwart of the Gwent Ornithological Society, holding several roles including Chairman. Alan was also an active member of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME) and committed much of his life to birding. A more detailed memorial piece will appear on our website and in our journal, *Milvus*, in due course.

Sustainable Farming Scheme

More information will be announced by Welsh Government about the Sustainable Farming Scheme in July. But, it's not too late to ask our government to increase and secure the budget for climate and nature-friendly farming in Wales, enabling farmers to produce food sustainably while restoring nature and tackling climate change. RSPB Cymru has an e-Action which you can sign in [Welsh](#) and in [English](#). Please sign as soon as possible.

Croeso Josh and Glyn!

We're delighted to introduce Josh and Glyn to you who were recently coopted onto WOS' Council. Croeso Josh and Glyn!

Originally from Windsor, Josh (below) has found his adopted home in Wales, living and working in New Quay, Ceredigion, since 2019.

He spent 6 years working as a wildlife guide on the dolphin boats operating from New Quay. While most people would take these trips for the dolphins, Josh would always be sure to tell the passengers about all the fantastic seabirds encountered.



Now, Josh is opening up an ecofriendly B&B on the outskirts on New Quay, located amongst six acres of woodland, paddock, and river. The land will be nurtured for the local wildlife and, in the years to come, will be used as a base for running his own wildlife tours of West Wales.

In his spare time, Josh is an avid amateur wildlife photographer who has had his images published across the UK and even further afield on a few occasions. He posts his photos on social media under the alias of 'The Wildlife Man'.

Josh has already volunteered to be the editor of our next newsletter!



Born and brought up in Caernarfon, Glyn (above) is a fluent Welsh speaker. A qualified fabrication engineer until OU undergraduate studies took him to the world of financial services where for many years he worked in senior and national manager roles.

A keen fly fisherman and passionate wildlife watcher Glyn has, for the last 26 years, spent a lot of time handling birds of prey. A member of the Woodland Trust, the North Wales Wildlife Trust, Wrexham Bird Watchers and he now volunteers with the [Maes Y Pant Action Group](#) charity at the 72-acre Marford quarry woodland.

Articles for our Autumn Newsletter

If you have any ideas for articles about birds or birding in your local area which you would like to bring to the attention of the wider birding in community in Wales, we'd love to hear from you.

They can be any length, from snippets of news to three-page articles and anything in between. Some images to accompany your piece would be very nice too. If you have any ideas, please drop Josh an email to: newsletter@birdsin.wales

WOS Conference 2025 – ‘Hear it! See it! Record it!’

The 2025 WOS Annual Conference will be held once again at Aberystwyth University on Saturday 25th October, a week earlier than the usual date. The theme will be ‘Making your birding count’, focusing on the importance of recording and its value in supporting bird conservation.



The conference is just as much about socialising and making new friends as it is about the talks

We have a packed programme, full of speakers from across Wales (including two WOS Lifetime Achievement Award winners – Andy King and Stephanie Tyler) talking about their involvement in bird recording and surveys: how they became involved, what they get out of it and the fun they have doing it. Other speakers will be sharing with us the ins and outs, and the ups and downs of their experiences conducting their own bird survey initiatives or taking part in some of the BTO’s most popular surveys: Garden BirdWatch, Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), BirdTrack, nest recording and ringing. Everything will be pulled together towards the end of the day by Julian Hughes (RSPB Cymru), Richard Facey (NRW) and Ieuan Evans (BTO), each one showing how recording your birding supports conservation programmes and biodiversity.

Booking will open towards the end of the second week in July, with full details of the programme and speakers on the website, together with ticket prices, concessions and booking details. There’ll be the usual side events, including lots of stalls, poster displays, the traditional WOS raffle (great prizes, as ever!) and a summary (or call to arms!) from our president, Iolo Williams.

Unfortunately, we’ve had to increase ticket prices slightly this year. The cost will be £40 for WOS members and £50 for non-members, which includes lunch and refreshments. [WOS Young Birder Members](#) will be able to apply for [WOS Young Conservationist Bursaries](#) to help with the costs of tickets and transport. We shall limit numbers to 165 delegates. This was the attendance in 2024 and with a very full programme of presentations, stalls and displays as well as ensuring you have time for your excellent lunch and other refreshments, we can’t really accommodate more if we’re to keep it as an enjoyable and manageable day.

In order to make sure that as many members as possible can attend, we’re giving you priority booking: tickets will be available for WOS members only until 31st August and general booking for everyone (still including WOS members) will open on 1st September. Booking will then be available until 18th October, unless we’ve reached the maximum attendance beforehand.

Please visit our [website](#) and our social media channels and make sure you can join us for a great day!

A life changing visit to Ynys Enlli

A WOS sponsored visit to Ynys Enlli/Bardsey Island appears to have helped lead Ewan Turner towards a successful career in conservation. All photos: Steve Stansfield.

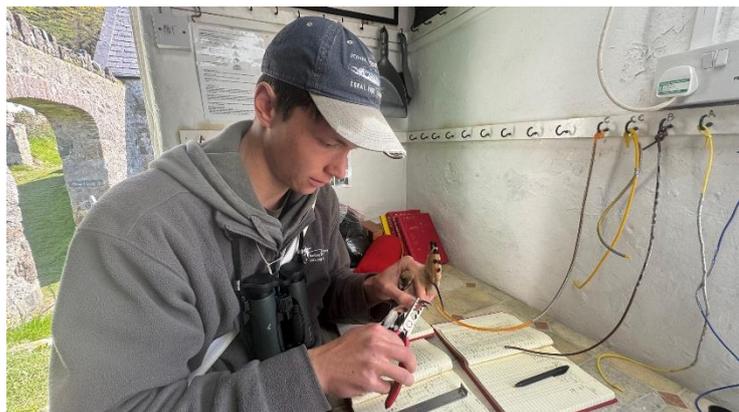


Ewan with a Bardsey Razorbill

I first heard about Ynys Enlli/Bardsey when I was quite young. I remember my Grandad speaking of how he used to visit and his memories of seeing Guillemots and Razorbills on cliffs around the island. As an enthusiastic young naturalist and birder, I was always keen to gather experience in the world of conservation and ornithology, so when the opportunity came up to visit Bardsey Bird Observatory a few years ago, I jumped at it! I was studying Zoology at Aberystwyth University at the time, and I got the chance to join a young birder's university week at the observatory in 2022. My place on the trip to Bardsey was very kindly sponsored by WOS. This was my first time visiting the island and it took absolutely no time at all for me to be completely hooked. The week was full of birding, ringing, surveys, rock pooling, cetacean watching and much more, including witnessing the awe-inspiring spectacle of thousands of Manx Shearwaters coming to land each night during the week. It was upon leaving the island at the end of the week when I decided that the work I had witnessed being carried out by the bird observatory staff in the past week, is exactly the sort of work that I wanted to do. I had to get back to Bardsey!

I remember during the week asking Steve Stansfield, the warden of Bardsey Bird Obs, how do I get a job like this? His reply was to start by volunteering. So that is exactly what I intended to do. I went back to university to finish the year, followed by going straight into a placement year with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) to learn practical reserve management.

Towards the end of a fantastic year with WWT I got in contact with Steve and asked if I could return to Bardsey as a volunteer, and to my delight, I secured a place to volunteer for five weeks on the island in the autumn of 2023! So off I went with five weeks' worth of food, and after some stormy weather and a rather lively boat ride over, I had my feet back on Bardsey soil. I remember being met by friendly and familiar face of staff I had met on the university week the previous year, and I remember the excitement of being shown my accommodation – a small hut on the outside of the lighthouse compound on the south end of the island. Surrounded by the sea, birds and seals.



Ewan with Hoopoe in hand. Possibly the same one as on p9 below?!

My first few days on the island were stormy, with strong south westerly winds. My mornings consisted of contributing to the daily census of birds on the island which took the form of

seawatching. It was a brilliant start to my time on the island with hundreds of terns streaming past, auks, Manxies and Arctic Skuas! By the end of my second morning, I had already had one of the highlights of my trip, when I locked eyes on the floppy wing beat of my first ever Cory's Shearwater as it circled off the south end of the island before shearing southeast in front of the south end hide!

At this point I knew that volunteering here was going to be fantastic. The rest of my time on the island consisted of helping with monitoring Manx Shearwater productivity and growth rate, checking Storm Petrel nest boxes, helping with ringing, monitoring Grey Seal pups, leading guided walks and carrying out practical jobs such as fixing stiles and brushcutting. I learnt all about what it takes to work at a bird observatory and how an observatory is run. I also got to see a few good birds like a Melodious Warbler, Wryneck, Leach's Petrels and to top it all off.... the first of the three Black and White Warblers. I felt incredibly lucky to have been present for that event in particular!

I left the island at the end of September, both inspired and excited at the thought of what a career in conservation could look like. I headed back to university to complete my final year and already started planning my next trip to Bardsey, to learn more and gather some more great experience in this fantastic place. So, after working hard and finishing my degree at the end of May, I travelled back



Ewan (left) captaining a team of students during the 2025 Bangor Student Uni Week on Enlli.

to Bardsey for a second stint of volunteering. I got involved with the general running and maintenance of the observatory, but the main focus at this time of year was seabirds. When I arrived the seabird season was in full swing and just hours after setting foot on the island, I found myself sat on the east side of the island with a Guillemot on my lap! I gained loads of seabird ringing experience which is something I was really keen to add to my ringing permit. I learnt all about how to operate in a seabird colony and how to monitor their breeding success and growth rates (in the case of Manx Shearwaters). We made a trip to the neighbouring Gwylan islands, also to monitor seabirds, it was an incredible experience and a privilege to be amongst Puffins and Razorbills and to see Kittiwake and Shag nests close up! The month went by very quickly, with valuable new skills and knowledge gained which helped lead me onto my next adventure.

After seeing an advert for a research assistant position, working on Storm Petrels, I thought I may have chance after everything I had learnt working with seabirds on Bardsey. I applied, and soon after was over the moon to find out that I had got the position! So, I was soon on a plane out to Nolsoy, in

the Faroe Islands, to assist Ben Porter with his PhD research on Storm Petrels. As a fantastic naturalist and role model, I learnt a lot from Ben and gained many new skills which I will take forward in my career. I helped with Storm Petrel nest monitoring, lighting experiments, thermal imaging surveys and learnt how to deploy and retrieve GPS tags on the Stormies!



Recycling in action: an innovative use of a soft drinks bottle to weigh larger birds after ringing!

When my time on the Faroes ended, I was still keen to carry on volunteering and pushing towards a career in conservation. So back to Bardsey I went! This stint of volunteering lasted for six weeks at the end of the 2023 season. At this point I felt as though I knew the island well and had made good friends with staff members. Again, I was assisting with the day to day running of the Obs along with sorting out old seabird breeding records, catching and colour-ringing Yellow-browed Warblers, finishing off the years Manxie productivity monitoring and carrying out daily census.

We did lots of ringing and had some more nice birds such as a Little Bunting, Pallas's Warbler and Richard's Pipit. The end of the season came quickly and it was time to begin closing down the observatory for the winter. It had been very enjoyable to volunteer on Bardsey for lengthy periods of time at different times of the year. I felt as though I had gotten to know the island well and felt familiar with the in workings of the observatory. I learnt a great deal from the welcoming and passionate staff who were always keen to share their knowledge and allowed me to get involved in anything and everything!

As you can tell from these past few paragraphs, I love spending time on Bardsey and at the Observatory, so when there was an opening for an Assistant Warden position for the 2025 season, you can imagine my delight when I was offered the role! So, I am now writing as a member of staff at Bardsey Bird Obs., where we are having a brilliant season with lots of rare and scarce birds, Choughs, Manxies and all the other seabirds! I would like to say a big thank you to WOS, for their sponsorship on my first visit to Bardsey. That trip acted as a catalyst for a lot of the events leading to me working here! I would also like to say a big thank you to Steve and Emma Stansfield for mentoring me in my time as both volunteer and as a staff member, and for having me back again and again and again!

Hoopoes in Pembrokeshire and Wales – Clare Ryland

The 2025 spring migration brought more than a hint of the exotic to Pembrokeshire with a major influx of Eurasian Hoopoes. A bird overwintering in Tenby was relegated to old news as the [Pembs Bird Blog](#) became inundated with reports of birds being seen all over the county. "Another Hoopoe!" was the rallying cry on the local WhatsApp group, once even "Make that 2 Hoopoes!"



Enlli/Bardsey also joined in on this spring's Hoopoe action. Here's one that was ringed on the island. Photo: Steve Stansfield.

The mass arrival began mid-March with as many as 80 birds reported in the UK and Ireland between 17th and 23rd of the month. This is very likely the largest March arrival on record ([BirdGuides](#)). More birds continued to arrive during the last week of March and on 2nd April another major arrival hit south-west Ireland, with at least 25 birds found in Co Cork.

An exact figure for the number of individual birds in Pembrokeshire is difficult to establish. There are 37 entries in BirdTrack for Hoopoes seen in the county between 6th February and 1st May. However, 18 of these would appear to refer to 2 individuals, one being the Tenby bird and a second being a bird seen in the Marloes area for at least a week at the beginning of April. Making allowances for these and other likely repeat sightings, and then cross-referencing with data from the [Pembs Bird Blog](#) and our local WhatsApp group gives a figure of around 22 different 'sightings' (as opposed to individuals).

Consistent high pressure is likely to have been a factor behind such a major influx. During their northward migration from wintering grounds in Africa to breeding territories in southern Europe, Hoopoes can be influenced by prevailing winds and atmospheric conditions. A combination of high-pressure systems and strong southerly winds may explain why so many of these birds overshot their intended destinations.

The first record of a Hoopoe in Wales was a bird shot in Fishguard in 1811, and more than 1/3 of Welsh records have come from Pembrokeshire.

The bird in the image below was donated to Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales in 1927 having been caught in Bosherton (date unknown). The donor was J.D. Beddoe, who is listed as running an 'Ironmongers, Furnishers and Implement agents' on Main Street in Pembroke.



Some birds have been recorded arriving as early as February but most are seen between March and May, with nearly half arriving in April. There is also a small autumn contingent arriving between August and late October. Occasional birds have been recorded in December, with 2 birds over-wintering in Tenby (1963-64 and 2024-25).

There is only one record of Hoopoes breeding in Wales with a pair breeding on a farm in Montgomeryshire in 1996, rearing 3 young, where it fed on worms from the farm manure heap (*Welsh Birds 1996*).

This could be a species we see more of in the coming decades as the population moves northwards although we lack the abundance of grasshoppers, crickets and small lizards that are the favoured prey within its core breeding range (BTO).

Many thanks to Bob Haycock and Jen Gallichan for their help with this article.

North Wales' Little Terns

Little Terns have a precarious toe hold in Wales with only two colonies remaining here. But, thanks to the support of the local council and the efforts of local volunteers they've been very productive colonies in recent years. Christine Maresma Pares of the North Wales Little Tern Group tells us more.

The North Wales Little Tern Group (NWLTG) was established in 2015 with the aim of helping to ensure the long-term future of Little Terns in North Wales and to raise public awareness of Little Terns and their nesting sites in North Wales. At present there are about 150 members.



The Welsh name for the Little Tern, Mor-wennol Fach means the 'little sea swallow'. It usually arrives back in North Wales in the second half of April and nests in a shallow scrape between the dunes and the shore on a narrow and vulnerable strip of land a few metres wide. It tends to forage close to the breeding site so it needs a shallow sheltered feeding site nearby where it can find small fish such as sand eel and crustaceans. The chicks fledge after about three weeks after which they gather on the shoreline before leaving sometime in early or mid-August.

It is thought that in the late 19th and early 20th century it was a common breeding species in North Wales. There are records of a colony at Point of Ayr in 1916 holding 200 pairs and another large colony about three miles away towards Prestatyn probably in the Gronant area. Although there are records of colonies in Caernarfonshire and Anglesey in the 1970s and 1980s but by 1989 only one regular colony remained in Wales, namely the one at Gronant.



Little Tern at Gronant. Can you spot the beautifully camouflaged eggs? Photo: NWLTG.

The cause of the decline includes habitat loss, human disturbance and predators. There is too much human disturbance on most beaches to allow breeding attempts and this coupled with predators such as Kestrel, Carrion Crow and Fox has led to the drastic decline. The Gronant colony itself almost died out in the 1960s with only a few pairs remaining in 1967.

Volunteers from the Clwyd Ornithological Society started a protection scheme. The RSPB then managed the site from 1975 to 2004 with Denbighshire County Council taking over in 2005. Gronant, along with a small colony a few miles away at Point of Ayr, constitute the only remaining breeding sites in Wales and so are of local and national significance. Through careful management Gronant has become one of the most productive Little Tern colonies in Britain. In 2024 we had 166 live nests and a fledgling count of 158 individuals.

The role of the NWLTG includes supporting the work of the Denbighshire County Council wardens and staff on the site at Gronant. Together with other volunteers, members help set up the fencing and temporary buildings at the beginning of each season. This involves installing a boundary rope around the colony, constructing about 11 electrified pens using poultry netting and protecting two other areas using electrified strap fencing. The visitor hut and hide also have to be transported onto the site and erected, so the whole undertaking relies heavily on volunteer support. A total of 320 volunteer hours contributed to setting up the site in April and May 2025. During the season volunteers assist in ongoing maintenance, predator control and in engaging with visitors to the site and members of the public on the beach. Under the supervision of staff, volunteers carry out nest and egg counts and colour ring re-sighting. In past years the group have purchased and installed equipment which enables live streaming of Little Terns on nests to a wider audience.



Pens with electric fences help protect the breeding colony from predators. Photo: NWLTG.

Throughout the year members of the group help raise public awareness of Little Terns in North Wales by giving talks to interested groups, having a stall at local events and by means of social media. One of the additional roles of the NWLTG has been to raise funds from events, membership subscriptions, donations and by applying for grants from organisations such as the National Lottery Fund. Over the past 10 years the group has purchased the wardens' hut and hide, telescopes, tripods and binoculars to be used by visitors, volunteers and staff and provided equipment to enable live streaming. There are occasions when additional equipment is needed urgently such as fencing, batteries and energisers to power the electrified pens and boundary rope and the group has been able to step in and purchase it and get it onto the site at short notice.

The success of the colony at Gronant has depended heavily on Denbighshire County Council being in a position to fund the employment of seasonal wardens. A presence on site during daylight hours throughout the breeding season is crucial. Because of pressure on Council budgets this can no longer be taken for granted. In the past the Council has employed a public engagement officer for the season whose role has included arranging school visits. Sadly, there are no longer the funds

available for this post. It has been uncertain in the last few years whether the council will continue to fund the three seasonal wardens' jobs. The NWLTG is working with Denbighshire County Council and other partners to ensure funding of the colony is secured by applying for grants. The group has pledged to match fund by contributing at least £10,000 over three years.

Every season is different and 2025 has been very challenging so far. As with some other Irish Sea colonies numbers of birds are lower than usual. High tides accompanied by a big swell washed out many nests at in May and there has been heavy predation of eggs by Carrion Crows. Experience has shown however that Little Terns are resilient little birds and a walk of the breeding pens on 18th June resulted in 84 Little Tern nests being found compared to the 44 active nests which were found on 4th June. So, the birds have been very busy and made up for lost time and previous effort. They've also chosen safety in numbers this time and have decided to nest close together, concentrating mostly in one specific pen. We are still hopeful that there will be a good number of fledglings this year.

Gronant is enjoyed by many visitors, both experienced birdwatchers and beachgoers wanting to learn more about the birds. Visitors are encouraged to come to the hut and engage with the wardens and volunteers, and the hide, where they can enjoy the Little Terns with minimal disturbance. This encourages birders and photographers not to linger for long periods of time on the beach front causing prolonged disturbance. Visitors are engaged in conversation about the threats the Little Tern face, the conservation efforts the project is undertaking, the importance of the site and the ongoing success of the project. We hope to share this special place with you and welcome you here soon.

For more information on the work of NWLTG and, of course, up to date news on the Little Terns themselves, please visit their [Facebook](#) and [X/Twitter](#) accounts.

Deeside Naturalists' Society

Staying in the old county of Clwyd, the spotlight on WOS' affiliate members this time falls on the Deeside Naturalists Society. Giles Pepler has been one of its members for many years.

Formed in 1973, the aim of the Deeside Naturalists' Society is 'to stimulate interest in natural history and to play a part in the conservation of flora and fauna on Deeside and in the surrounding area'.



Twite, lots of Twite, at the Deeside Naturalists' reserve. Photo: Giles Pepler.

In 1974 the Society approached the C.E.G.B. (now Uniper) at Connah's Quay Power Station, Flintshire, to ask if a hide could be located on their land overlooking the River Dee. They agreed, and it was from such humble beginnings that a fine Reserve was established. Now, the Reserve benefits from the protection provided under SSSI status, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, as well as enjoying Special Protection Area (SPA) status.

The Reserve is situated on a strip of land approximately one mile long on the south side of the Dee estuary just inside the Welsh border. Bounded by the Uniper Power Station at one end and the RSPB Oakenholt saltmarsh reserve at the other the Reserve is an excellent example of how industry and nature can work together. There are four hides and a Field Centre.

Entry to the reserve is restricted to DNS members only, though with notice, they may bring guests.



Rainbow over the saltmarsh and west hide. Photo: Mike Pollard.

The total number of bird species seen on the reserve stands at 247 (including 18 escapes). Notable records in 2023 included White-fronted Goose, Golden Pheasant, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Eider, Green Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Black and Arctic Terns, Spoonbill, Little Stint, Water Rail, Emperor Goose, Hobby, Long-tailed Duck and Waxwing and up to four pairs of Avocets have bred successfully since 2021. The

neighbouring Oakenholt Marsh RSPB reserve, overlooked by the DNS West Hide, is probably the best place in Wales for the majestic spectacle of wintering Pink-footed Geese, with up to 10,000 feeding there in recent years and also for up to 2,000 Teal: the Dee estuary is internationally important for these. Up until recent winters the west end of the reserve regularly hosted a wintering flock of up to 200 Twite and ringing showed that this flock included the small Eryri breeding population, many birds from western Scotland and occasional birds from the Pennines.

Most of the records from the site (all collected on BirdTrack) are of water birds: geese, ducks and waders. It's still a good site for wintering Curlew, though unsurprisingly numbers are diminishing: in March 2025 a tagged bird was present, which had been originally ringed as an adult male on the River Severn near Caersws in 2021. The 2024 north Wales Hudsonian Godwit was first seen on the reserve, subsequently commuting frequently to Flint Castle.

The Society is a registered charity and has a membership of well over 400. In addition to bird recording and photography, DNS manages WeBS counts, organises monthly field outings and includes an Art Group.

Although the Society's lease of the site is secure until 2030, there are currently plans out for public consultation for the development of a carbon capture plant adjacent to the existing power station. If this was built, it would remove most of the grassland, which is used by many wintering waders, especially Curlew, significantly reduce the size and change the character of the reserve.



Whooper and Black Swans on the reserve. Photo: Mike Pollard

For more information about the Deeside Naturalists, including how to become a member, please visit their [website](#).

The Glamorgan Bird Club's new Robert Bradshaw Award

We wanted to share news with you about another of WOS' affiliate members, the Glamorgan Bird Club, and a very special award of theirs. **Alan Rosney**, GBC's Membership Secretary, was at the inaugural award ceremony.

The Glamorgan Bird Club has recently set up an award in honour of our former trustee, Rob Bradshaw, who sadly passed away last year. Rob was a very decent man. Quiet and unassuming, he always greeted people with a smile and expressed a genuine interest in others. He was never heard to say a bad word about anyone and was a true gentleman. A long-time birder, living in Pontlliw, Swansea, Rob was also a member of Gower Ornithological Society and a regular contributor to the Carmarthenshire Bird Club. GBC was very fortunate when he decided to become a trustee a few years ago.



Rob Bradshaw always had a smile on his face.

Rob used his accounting and auditing skills whilst a member of the GBC Donations and Sponsorship Group. As part of this group, he focused particularly on youth membership. In recognition of his work, the trustees decided to set up an award, aimed at younger birders. The award recognises the contribution of a young birder (under 24 years of age) to birding in the East of Glamorgan.

The Robert Bradshaw Award will be in the form of a £250 voucher or bursary. Either might be used by a young birder to enhance their birding experience or support their conservation work. This could be by purchasing birding resources or to help with the costs of attending a birding trip or event within Wales.

The very worthy recipient for 2024/5 was Tate Lloyd. Tate has been a member of the Club for many years. Initially he came along to Club outings with his mum and younger sister, and he quickly showed a great aptitude for birding and his knowledge, even at a young age, impressed many of our more experienced members. Going on to study at Bridgend College, his list of achievements is impressive. For example, he has taken part in numerous surveys, helped erect bird boxes, is the photographic editor of the annual East Glamorgan Bird Report, led two of our annual reviews and much, much more. Tate received his award from GBC trustee, and WOS Lifetime Achievement Award winner, John Wilson. Many congratulations, Tate!



Tate Lloyd receiving his award from John Wilson. Photo GBC.

Many congratulations Tate from all of us at WOS too. Details of the award and how to nominate someone can be found on [the Club website](#). The closing date for the 2025-26 award is 1st October.

Protecting Wales' seabirds

Visiting Wales' fantastic islands is a popular pastime amongst us birders and the general public in the summer months. The birds that inhabit them are internationally important and need to be protected from all potential risks. We asked **Olivia Pargeter** from RSPB Cymru about how her work with Biosecurity for Wales tries to eliminate one of those risks.

Biosecurity for Wales aims to **PREVENT** invasive predators reaching seabird islands, but if this fails, we **DETECT** an incursion quickly and **RESPOND** before an eradication is needed.

Rats, mice, mink & other mammalian predators can reach islands as stowaways on boats and in cargo. These invasive non-native predators can quickly devastate the native breeding seabird populations by eating eggs, chicks and adult birds.



Puffin and chick. Photo: Olivia Pargeter

While “Biosecurity” may sound complicated, all it really means in the context of our project is ensuring that you take precautions to avoid accidentally or intentionally introducing any non-native predators to these islands. Precautions include checking your bags, boat and cargo for signs of stowaways before heading off, never landing on a seabird island if you have a stowaway on board and never pushing a stowaway overboard – many mammals are strong swimmers.

“Biosecurity incursion” describes a range of threats, from signs or sightings of rats to shipwrecks and groundings on seabird islands. Over 40 biosecurity incursions have been reported on islands designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) for breeding seabirds around the UK since 2018 alone. One island was discovered to have been invaded by rats before our project started and a population established. An eradication has been underway over the last two

years, but it will be a long process of checks and surveillance before we know whether this eradication was successful.

Welsh islands are globally important for breeding seabirds.

Over half the world's population of Manx Shearwaters nest underground in burrows on just a handful of Welsh islands, with over 350,000 pairs on Skomer alone. The third largest gannetry in the world can be found off the Pembrokeshire coast on Grassholm, we also host important numbers of Arctic Tern, Herring Gull and Cormorant to name a few.

Biosecurity for Wales is working to implement and improve long-term biosecurity practice across all 13 Welsh islands with a Special Protection Area (SPA) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation for breeding seabirds.

Seabird chicks, eggs and many adults are defenceless against rats.

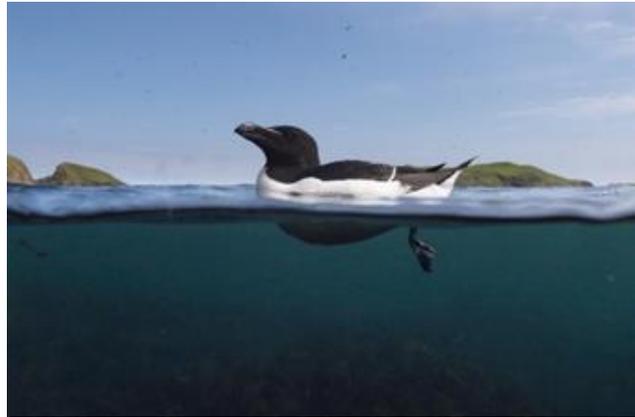
These islands are havens for seabirds thanks to the natural absence of predators such as rats, cats, stoats, hedgehogs and mink. Seabirds are perfectly adapted to a life at sea but are vulnerable on

land. Puffins, Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels use burrows and crevices to keep their eggs and chicks safe from their natural island predators, such as large gulls and skuas.

Rats, however, are not a natural predator for seabirds having only arrived in the UK within the last 300 years, assisted by the global shipping industry and can easily access burrows and crevices to take eggs and chicks. One pregnant female rat can produce a colony of over 300 in just 8 months, rats are adaptable, omnivorous, and able to thrive in almost any environment. With no competition or predators on these islands and a huge amount of food available during the seabirds' breeding season, rat populations can explode.

In contrast, seabirds are long lived and breed slowly – most laying just one egg a year, meaning populations are slow to recover from declines. Because they are so long lived – the oldest recorded Manx Shearwater is 50 years, 11 months, 21 days - it can be hard to notice that populations are declining because adults will keep returning to nesting sites despite not fledging any chicks. Declines only become obvious when older birds die off and no new adults return to start breeding.

Puffins, Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels are generally monogamous and site faithful, returning every year to the same partner in the same burrow, meaning they are unlikely to react quickly to the presence of rats.



*Razorbills are relatively long-lived birds.
Photo: Aidan McCormick (rspb-images.com)*

Seabirds are confined to coastal cliffs & islands, requiring easy access to the sea to forage for their chicks. They are under many human generated pressures, from light pollution to disease and many seabird species are already in decline. It is vitally important to prevent rats and other invasive non-native mammalian predators reaching these important islands.

Ramsey Island eradication and biosecurity



Beautiful Ramsey Island. Photo: Olivia Pargeter

In the 1990s, the RSPB Ramsey Island team embarked on a programme to remove rats from the island. The population of Manx Shearwaters on the island had suffered greatly from predation by invasive rats, and its population of puffins was lost. The results of the eradication programme were remarkable, with Manx Shearwater numbers rocketing from a few hundred to 6,225 pairs in just a few years. However, the impacts of rats on seabird islands can be long-lasting and Puffins have not yet returned to Ramsey.

Recent eradication projects on islands smaller than Skomer have cost around £1 million and relied heavily on EU funding. Planning these eradications takes years, the loss of seabirds is inevitable between discovering that rats have colonised an island and beginning an eradication, success is not guaranteed.

Biosecurity in action in Wales: Prevention. Raising awareness about biosecurity and informing people of quick, simple steps to take when travelling to or near islands is integral to preventing invasive predators reaching seabird islands. We have this handy checklist and plenty of resources on our website, we're always happy to chat or answer questions about biosecurity on seabird islands!

We work with island owners and wardens, land managers, communities, local authorities, and businesses to write biosecurity plans and establish barriers on potential incursion pathways.

Detection



*Jinx next to a biosecurity sign on Skomer.
Photo: Sarah-Kay Purdon.*

If an invasive predator does reach a seabird island, we need to know about it quickly. We continue to establish routine surveillance on islands to help with detection. Using harmless, non-toxic tools such as camera traps, footprint tracking cards and wax chew blocks. Alongside these passive surveillance methods, our amazing conservation detection dog, Jinx and his handler Greg Morgan can actively search islands as well as boats and high-risk cargo (such as building materials) heading over to the islands. Jinx is trained exactly as bomb or drug sniffer dogs, but on the scent of rats. If he smells a rat or rat droppings, he sits to indicate to Greg that he has found something, Greg will then call him back and go for a closer look himself to identify what Jinx has found. Jinx does not chase or catch rats.

Rapid Incursion Response

If an invasive predator is found on a seabird island, a rapid response is critical. We have developed two regional Rapid Incursion Response Hubs in Wales, one in Haverfordwest and one in Anglesey. These hubs hold all the kit required for detecting predators and responding if an incursion occurs. To operate these hubs, we have two large teams of fantastic volunteers who are on standby to lend a hand if we ever need to respond to an incursion.

You can find out more about the Biosecurity Team Member roles on the "Volunteer with us" page on our website. We don't expect that every volunteer will be free every time we need them, we aim to have enough volunteers on standby that we will always be able to assemble a team when needed.

Long-term protection for seabird islands

Island biosecurity is a fundamental aspect of protected site management at seabird colonies. In fact, the need for biosecurity is referenced directly in the



South Wales Hub volunteers during a training session with Skomer in the background. Photo: Olivia Pargeter.

conservation objectives of features at protected sites in Wales. However, there is currently no long-term sustainable funding for biosecurity in Wales. The *Biosecurity for Wales* project comes to an end in March 2026. To safeguard seabirds in Wales, it will be essential to continue building upon the success achieved so far.

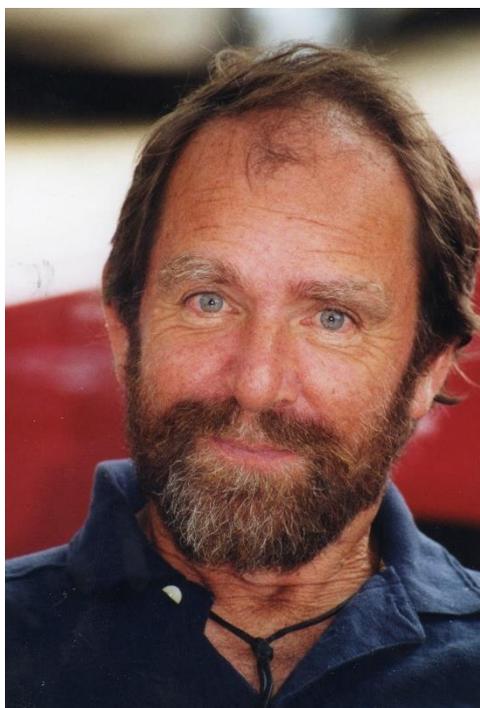
Seabirds are facing increasing human generated threats, and their populations have been declining in recent years. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (bird flu) has had a devastating impact on seabirds, but it did not replace the other pressures that seabirds were already facing. Alleviating pressures has never been more important for the surviving populations to stand a chance of recovering.

To stand a chance it is integral to ensure that surviving adults have a safe place to rear their young, biosecurity is a tangible solution that we can all do, while as individuals we can't fix the threats posed to their food sources by fishing or climate change, we absolutely can ensure that we will not cause the loss of another important breeding site!

Ian Bullock – Chough, seabirds and most things in between

*It's fitting, and yet so sad, to follow an article about biosecurity and seabirds on Welsh islands with a tribute to someone who achieved so, so much in the same, and other fields during his lifetime. **Greg Morgan**, RSPB Cymru Site Manager Ramsey and Grassholm, remembers a colleague and great friend.*

To many Ian Bullock's name is synonymous with Ramsey Island and rightly so. But there was so much more to Ian's life and career. It was only while having a coffee with his wife Gill, in the home they shared for so many happy years in St Davids, looking out over a migrant filled valley, that I discovered what an interesting and varied career Ian had enjoyed.



Ian (left) was a stalwart of the RSPB. His career with the Society began in 1978 at South Stack where he was summer warden for two years and undertook a winter research post in between. South Stack is where Chough first gripped his attention. This charismatic species has a habit of getting under the skin of all who are lucky enough to work with them and in this period, Ian undertook an MSc (*The Feeding Ecology of Chough at South Stack*).

This interest in Chough led to bigger things, with Ian coordinating a national Chough survey for the whole of Wales and Ireland (*The Chough in Britain and Ireland*, I. D. Bullock, D. R. Drewett and S. P. Mickleburgh *Brit. Birds* 76: 377-401, September 1983)

From South Stack, Ian migrated north in 1981, to Shetland. Once again with the RSPB he was now undertaking Arctic Tern monitoring. The following season he was back down south at RSPB Aylesbeare Common in Devon where Nightjars were now his species.

1982 saw a season as Assistant Warden at RSPB Ynys-hir before taking up the Warden post at RSPB Nags Head through to 1987. Then came the call of the overseas seabirds, luring him to the RSNC

island of Aride in the Indian Ocean for the following two years. Here his main achievement was a 12-month research project on food sources for the endangered Seychelles Warbler, to enable its introduction from nearby Cousin Island.

On their return from Aride, Ian and Gill's daughter, Heulwen, was born and she began her adventurous life on Scottish reserves. Firstly, it was RSPB Glenborrodale on the west coast. Seabirds had been replaced by Wood Warblers, Redstarts and Spotted Flycatchers. But seabirds were never far from Ian's heart and a year later the call was too strong to turn down the opportunity to take up a post on Fetlar.

This was followed by two years back on the west coast of Scotland on Coll where Corncrakes became his focus, before the move to Ramsey Island in 1993. Here Ian stayed as the, then titled, Pembrokeshire Warden for the next decade. Ian and Gill spread their time between the island and a home in St Davids covering both island and mainland duties.

When Ian started on Ramsey, the RSPB had only just acquired the island. The period immediately prior to RSPB ownership had seen a red deer farm established. The island was full of old netting and telegraph poles from various handling pen constructions, so Ian's first job was to organise their dismantlement and removal. No mean feat.



Ian promoting RSPB Ramsey Island to visitors

Old barns were re-roofed and the low tide landing, formerly a scramble across seaweed covered rocks that was making H&S nervous, was transformed into a much more user-friendly series of concrete platforms and handrails. The island now had a secure, and safe, high and low tide landing area which meant more visitors could be welcomed to enjoy this special island. Derek Rees was the main contractor on this important piece of infrastructure work and he and Ian formed a strong bond as they worked together on many projects over the years



Ian sketching

Ramsey of course meant Cough and Ian made sure grazing contracts were in place to ensure optimal foraging habitat, while disturbance to nesting sites was minimised through carefully planned visitor trails. Cough and seabirds benefit from the Pembrokeshire Marine Code to this day, of which Ian played a key part in its formation.

February 1996 saw the Sea Empress oil disaster off the coast of Pembrokeshire. Ian played a key part in helping with the clean-up operation as the RSPB representative on a multi stakeholder team.

Without question the biggest achievement of Ian's time on Ramsey, something that will be his richly deserved legacy, was yet to come. Brown Rats arrived on Ramsey via shipwrecks in the late 1800s. They drove a once thriving Puffin colony to extinction and decimated the Manx Shearwater population.

After many years of planning and fundraising the RSPB, overseen by Ian as Project Manager, undertook what was, at the time, the largest island rat eradication in the UK. This was achieved over the winter of 1999/2000 working with Wildlife Management International from New Zealand alongside his RSPB Ramsey Warden, Richard Humpidge, who was very much a dynamic partner in this project.



Ian, second from the left, and the team who helped him with the rat eradication on Ramsey.

The precision with which the project was carried out meant the rats were cleared in just a single winter, and the seabirds have responded. The Manx Shearwater population has expanded from just 850 pairs in 1998 to 6,200 at the last survey in 2022. European Storm Petrels bred for the first time in 2008 and a small but well-established colony thrives today. We just await Puffins to do the honourable thing now!

It was always a pleasure to phone Ian with the latest Shearwater survey results and hear the joy in his voice. It was a sign of his modesty that he was always quick to praise the team of volunteers, fellow staff and the NZ contractors, but without his meticulous planning in the years leading up to the project, as well as guiding everyone through that harsh winter, we would not be talking about such seabird success on Ramsey today.

Biosecurity is a key part of island life now, made especially important to those of us who have worked on Ramsey since, knowing Ian's legacy is in our hands.



Ian in Antarctica

Ian left Ramsey and the RSPB in 2003 and took up a job working on the wildlife cruise ships in both Antarctica and the Arctic. Here he could share his incredible knowledge of seabirds, delivered in that unique friendly and welcoming style. This saw him bypass a lot of dark and dreary UK winters, but his summer months were spent at home carrying out survey work for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park on Skylarks as well as managing four BBS squares for the BTO.

Sadly, Ian didn't have anywhere near as much time as he deserved to enjoy his 'retirement' in his St Davids valley. He never really retired of course; writing papers, working on his wonderful paintings and carrying out survey work to the end.

Ian will mean many things to many people. To me, personally, he was the person who selflessly supported me through my early days on Ramsey. The advice and support he offered in those first weeks and months were invaluable. No phone call or email was too much trouble and that unselfish act of kindness will always live with me. From one islander to another, I salute you.



Please raise your voice for nature in Wales by supporting our colleagues in RSPB Cymru new e-action



The new Welsh Environment Bill could transform the state of nature – but only with your help.

The Bill has the potential to pave the way to a future where nature can thrive across Wales. But changes are needed. We're calling for parts of it to be made stronger and clearer. This includes:

- The need to ensure that a new environmental watchdog is fully visibly independent of the Welsh Government and clearly outlines how people can challenge failures by public bodies comply with environmental laws.
- Strengthening the requirement that all policy making should not harm, but instead benefit the environment.
- Ensuring that biodiversity targets are brought forward quickly, to set both long term and interim goals so that successive Welsh Governments have to take action.

We need you to take action now. If enough of us speak up, we can pave the way for a future where people and nature can thrive together.

Sign the e-action in [Welsh](#) here and in [English](#) here.

And finally . . .

Many thanks for your continued support for WOS. Please don't forget Iolo's plea at the beginning of the newsletter for volunteers to join him on WOS Council. We need new trustees so that we can ensure WOS's future so that we can continue to stand up for birds in Wales and continue to offer grants for conservation projects, community work and to support young conservationists in Wales. Can you also please help us grow by telling your friends about WOS and the work we do and encourage them to become members? If each member could help recruit another member our voice would be twice as loud as it is now . . . and nature needs that now more than ever. Diolch!

Please follow us on our social media channels:



We're very grateful to our corporate sponsors for their support. Please visit their websites:

Natoura Voyage <https://natouravoyage.co.uk/> and BSG Ecology www.bsg-ecology.com/



*The Welsh Ornithological Society is registered as a charity in Wales and England, no. 1037823
Mae Cymdeithas Adaryddol Cymru wedi ei chofrestru fel elusen yng Nghymru a Lloegr, rhif. 1037823*