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Scotland's Bird Club Ayrshire Branch

We are always on the look-out for more articles, cartoons and photographs to include in the future editions of **Stonechat**. Please think about contributing and send any work for publication to me: Tony Scott / Editor, at 4 Hilltop Place, AYR KA7 3PB - or e-mail me at: da.scott@tiscali.co.uk

Sightings to: Ayrshire Bird Recorder Fraser Simpson. E-mail: recorder@ayrshire-birding.org.uk

For all local birding info: please go to www.ayrshire-birding.org.uk Thanks go to Kevin Waite for his excellent work in keeping this superb website on the go.

February 2016

One of over 400 jays seen on migration from Scandinavia at Darsser Ort, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 03. October 2015



The Stone chat

Photo: Angus Hogg

Hello and welcome to our new year edition of Stonechat. We have numerous notices for you to read, along with an update of all upcoming and current events for the second half of our 2015/16 season. David Rackham, our local branch chair, has written an introduction. The rest of the newsletter is taken up with a jointly written trip report (from Angus Hogg and myself) about last October's crane migration holiday to the former East Germany. The photographs were taken by Angus, and by Gerda and me, and also a couple from Jim Thomson. We had hoped to receive other articles for inclusion, but - as none were forthcoming we extended the 'story of the cranes' as there was so much to tell in any case. The holiday was enjoyed by many SOC and RSPB local group members - nineteen of us in total. We do hope you also enjoy reading about the many wonderful sightings and experienced over these eleven days.

Tony Scott newsletter editor

Notes from the Chair

David Rackham



Whatever the origin of the mid-winter break, be it Christian or pagan, there is no doubt that it provides a very effective punctuation mark in the cycle of the year to which I referred in the last edition of Stonechat. As I write this, in early January, the shortest day has passed. Already there is some evidence of the coming year in nature: shoots emerging from the soil, robins eager to sing at the slightest brightness in the grey skies. By the time you read this, the mornings and the evenings will be noticeably lighter, and we'll be looking out for the first spring migrants - or perhaps waiting for Angus to tell us what's arrived!

The Christmas break neatly divides into two our programme of evening meetings. We finished the first half on a high, with an inspirational talk by wildlife artist Chris Rose. Chris showed us how his superficially photographic style of painting goes beyond photography. Of course, our speaker in March, Chas Moonie, may try to demonstrate otherwise by showing us a selection of his more recent images, which are always stunningly beautiful.

Closer in the future, don't forget our annual meal out on Friday 12 February. This is a strictly informal gathering (though advance booking is required - to make sure we get a room of the right size). Further details appear in this newsletter. Hopefully, see you at the Carrick Lodge Hotel on the 12th!

David

The Crane Migration in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern & the Müritz National Park October 2015

A joint report on the Ayrshire Birders holiday in the former East Germany by *Angus Hogg* and *Tony Scott*



Our hotel in Zingst



The ten-day holiday started at Glasgow Airport on Friday the 2nd of October, when our group met for the easyJet flight to Berlin. We left on time at 10.20 and after a comfortable and uneventful flight, arrived at Berlin Schönefeld Airport at 13.35. Our driver, Jan Dzarowsky, was awaiting us with a 19-seater Mercedes Benz mini-coach. Perfect - as there were exactly 19 of us in the group. Angus was our bird leader and both Tony & Gerda were involved in the day-to-day management of the holiday, having made all the hotel bookings and destination planning - together with Gabriele Kratzsch and her daughter Änne Kratzsch who head the groups team at the Mecklenburg-Pommersche Touristen Büro. After loading our luggage in the attached trailer, Jan set off along the Autobahn which cuts through the city. After welcoming us and introducing himself, his next task was to find another way through Berlin, as there had been multiple accidents on the main route this afternoon! He opted to drive directly through the city centre, which gave everyone the opportunity to see some of the main sights. Jan was able to point out the last remaining parts of the infamous Wall, as well as the official residence of Kanzlerin Merkel, and the area known as Museumsinsel. It took a good hour to follow this route, but we did make up some time once back on the Autobahn. After stopping for a comfort break and a coffee (as well as Apfelkuchen and Käsekuchen for some....) we were off again in the direction of Rostock and Zingst. Over to Angus now: *“Tony’s latest overseas extravaganza involved a spectacular autumn trip to the north and east of Germany. Our arrival on October 2nd at Berlin Schönefeld was followed by a drive to the north coast, past a low, rolling countryside with a mixture of large woodland areas and huge arable fields. As expected, the number of species seen from the bus was a wee bit low, but it did include a few red kites and our first white-tailed eagle, seen lumbering off into the distance. It wasn’t long before we arrived at Zingst - (our HQ for a week) - and this was, perhaps, the kind of introductory episode which left you wondering just what this part of the country could provide once we got out into it!”*

We arrived at our imposing hotel for 19.20 hrs. - (the IV Jahreszeiten Hotel) in the seaside town of Zingst - at the very heart of the Pomeranian Boddenland National Park. The hotel was rebuilt in 2004 - an amazing and successful conversion from a former automobile factory to a four-star luxury hotel. Our first impressions were of a spacious and open-plan reception combined with a massive lounge and cafe-bar area. We were soon checked into our comfortable rooms and met again at 20.15 for dinner at "Zur Gallerie" - the buffet restaurant we would use for breakfast and dinner each day. The choice of food was wide-ranging and of an excellent standard. Our drinks server was Frau Astrid Kühn (and 'cool' she was - in the most positive sense).



Wagon train - or (the East German name) - Kremser-Wagen!

One of many migrating jays seen

Saturday 03 October

[A day in the heart of the Pomeranian-Boddenlandschaft Nationalpark](#)

We were up around 06.30 and meeting for breakfast at 07.30. The day dawned grey and foggy - not what we were expecting. Jan was not available today - so we had another driver from another bus company - Kofahl Reisen from Rostock. The driver was a little agitated as he had arrived at 08.00 hrs to go over the day's events with the organiser. We were not aware he was looking for us until around 08.45 when we had to placate him somewhat. However, he was soon made aware of our requirements and they had to change a little because of the heavy mist which eventually gave way to a day of sunshine and some cloud with temperatures at 17 celsius. We passed our first stopping point and made straight for Bernsteinweg at Prerow - another (smaller) resort around 25 minutes drive from Zingst. After a short woodland birdwatch, our carriage arrived to take us to the lighthouse and the protected reserve area out at the Darsser Ort peninsula. Angus: *"OK, it's well known that our supreme leader is keen on all modes of transport - but a horse-drawn trailer was verging on the bizarre - shades of Wagon Train (for those of you whose memory goes back that far!). However strange the transport proved, the birding at the coastal locality of Darsser Ort turned out to be excellent, with a strong visible migration much in evidence while we walked around the reserve. Perhaps most obvious were the large numbers of **jays** flying about, having just arrived from Scandinavia. With birds coming in all the time, a small flock of **starlings** suddenly became a small flock of **waxwings**, and the **great spotted woodpeckers** calling from the pines on the dunes were also birds on the move. A great shame to leave this area, but the afternoon promised even more!"*

We arrived at the lighthouse around 11.00 and had time for a circular walk through the reserve for about two hours and 30 minutes. Apart from birds, we had some great views of wild boar 'Frischlinge' (young animals) and the sounds of rutting red deer stags was both a surprise and a pleasure to hear and see. We had not realised that this area is one of the most heavily populated for red deer in eastern Germany. We took our Kremserwagen back to the coach. Mike decided to walk and was back a mere five minutes after us - such was the speed at which we were travelling. Wagons Rooo!!!! The coach did not move faster - and returned us to our hotel for around 14.30 and enough time to relax and eat before our next excursion at 16.00 hrs.



*"An afternoon journey by train sounded appealing - well, maybe, but if this was the only way to access the Pommeranian-Boddenlandschaft National Park, it would seem to prove that Germans **do** have a sense of humour after all!! Accompanied by a ranger, the trip round this coastal wetland produced some spectacular birds: **Middle spotted woodpecker, a young white-tailed eagle, our first Eurasian white-fronted geese andstill no cranes!** A good mix of wildfowl and waders included a small group of spotted redshanks - always a treat!".* Yes indeed, our Italian-built 'road-train' got us to where we wanted to go - Sundische Wiesen - where the National Park centre and ranger offices are located. We arrived here for 16.40 and our walk lasted from 17.00 to 19.00 hrs - accessing one of the protected areas of the reserve. We were lucky to see a whole family of wild boar wading through the wetlands - eight of them - maw, paw and the weans! We were back in our hotel for another superb dinner by 19.40 hrs, and one of the gastronomic highlights tonight was a huge selection of the finest smoked and cured fish, straight from the Rostocker Fish Market. The roast beef was pretty good too.....



Our road train

Below: Sundische Wiesen Reserve



Eurasian white-fronted geese

Sunday 04 October [Bad Doberan and the steam train 'Molli', a visit to Conventer See and some crane spotting!](#)

After breakfast at 07.15, Jan was with us again and collected us at 08.30 for a drive west via Löbnitz and Ribnitz-Damngarten to **Rostock**. Jan drove us through the centre of this Hanseatic town and pointed out the highlights. This is his home town and he is very proud of it and the local football club - F.C.Hansa Rostock (a pennant was on display in the coach!). From here it was only a short drive to **Bad Doberan**, where we first had a view of the imposing **Doberan Abbey-Church (Klosterkirche)**, a former Cistercian monastery founded in 1171 and one of the most important **brick gothic** buildings in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. A brief visit to the centre of this spa town followed, before arriving at the railway station which serves the main line and **the narrow-gauge steam railway - Molli**. Our train arrived at 10.15 with a departure to the other end of the line at Kühlungsborn West at 10.36. The large steam tank engines have amazing power, and together with a rake of at least nine coaches - make an impressive sight as they steam down the main street of the town, ringing the warning bell incessantly! Quite something. As we left the built-up area, the regulator was opened up to tackle the steep incline up to the town of Heiligendamm, where Angela Merkel hosted a G8 conference at the five-star Kempinski Grand Hotel a few years ago. From here it was a fast run downhill through woods and meadows to our destination of Kühlungsborn, where Jan was waiting to take us to the seafront **Hotel Polarstern**, where lunch was booked. Angus: *"Sunday 4th October and, now for a real train trip. There can't be many better ways to pass the time than watching birds from a train (especially from the open-ended balconies of these historic coaches), and a trip on the Molli express was just that! Some common buzzards and a marsh harrier were seen on route to Kühlungsborn where two lucky members of our group saw a lesser spotted woodpecker, having sneaked out of lunch early! An afternoon visit to Conventer See was both frustrating and rewarding.. Frustrating because we couldn't get close enough to the lake, but rewarding in producing more migrants even more jays!"* From Conventer See, Jan drove us to the arable fields around **Blankenhagen** - where we had our very first view of **common crane flocks** - around 600 birds in all. *"A (further) stop at the Drehbrücke (Swing bridge) near Zingst, was billed as a crane-roost opportunity but, as often happens, other birds stole the show. Low water levels had resulted in one lagoon being crammed with waders - lapwings, golden plovers (over 2,000), dunlins, common snipe and some ruff. A few white-tailed eagles haunted the outer parts of the reedbed, while some bearded reedlings entertained us nearby."* Rather later than expected - it was 19.00 hrs before we arrived back at the hotel, followed by dinner at 19.30. A local speciality tonight was the Krustenbraten - a crispy pork roast with a wide variety of accompaniments - plus great salads, soup, cheeses and wide selection of desserts.



Monday 05 October**The islands of Rügen and Ummanz with local wildlife expert Kirsten Wiktor**

Today we left at 08.30 again. It was a very misty morning and just about clear enough to see the town of Stralsund and its associated Sound (Sund) as we crossed over the elegant new road bridge to the island of Rügen. Our first stop was just outside the town of Bergen-auf-Rügen where we were meeting Kirsten Wiktor and her birding friends Ecki and Netti. We parked our coach at the **Nonnensee**, a reserve saved almost single-handedly by local birder Joachim Klenk, tirelessly working on government agencies and politicians to get their approval since the days of the DDR regime. Joachim was also here to check on 'his' white-tailed eagles this morning. Angus: *"October 5th saw us on our way to Rügen, where our first stop was the Nonnensee. Scores of ducks on this picturesque lake included shoveler, gadwall and pochard while our daily kingfisher sat obligingly on a low branch for over ten minutes to let everyone see it. Patience also provided some members with brief views of water rail, while nearby raptors included red kite, hen harrier and, of course, white-tailed eagle. Our guide for the day, Kirsten, took us around some beautiful spots including Ummanz, where more marsh harriers were seen. We were now beginning to see some cranes."* From the Nonnensee we headed north-west to the attached island of **Ummanz**, where Kirsten suddenly reacted to a flock of cranes coming down into a nearby field. Jan also reacted to her directions and we were suddenly swerving left across the road onto a rough field track! Well worth it - as there was one family of two adult cranes and two youngsters on arrival, but to be joined in the next few minutes by massive flocks of around 1,500 to 1,800 birds. The calls were haunting and the experience breathtaking. It was then time to visit an area known as **Udarser Wiek** which normally is awash with birds, but not today. It happens. So now lunch beckoned us to **the fish restaurant "Am Fokker Strom"** where the weather was by now sunny and warm enough for a number of our group to eat al fresco. After lunch we crossed the Wittower Ferry to bring us back to Rügen again. We circled through the small town of Breege before turning south to park close to the **Spyker See** where we did a little more birding. **White wagtails, marsh tits, whinchat** and **tree sparrows** were added to today's list - and even **more cranes** as we drove back to Bergen to say goodbye to Kirsten and friends.



White-tailed eagle



Our group at the Nonnensee reserve

Tony,
Joachim
& Kirsten

Crane flocks on Rügen

Tuesday 06 October [A cruise from Zingst to the island of Hiddensee](#)

"A cruise from Zingst to Hiddensee on the 6th of October was to prove sensational! The first part of the three-hour trip produced at least **24 white-tailed eagles** - they were almost everywhere you looked! Further into the journey we found some huge rafts of **coot** and diving ducks (mostly **scaup, tufted duck and pochard**) - several thousand birds in all. A photograph of one such group revealed a **woodlark** migrating across open water: what next? A single **Arctic tern** and some **little gulls** appeared: and all of this before we got off the boat! **Hiddensee** held some groups of **barnacle geese** among the **greylags**, a few **dark-bellied Brent geese** offshore and a few more **spotted redshanks**. The trip back to Zingst ran into the same birds but, as we reached halfway with evening approaching, the sky was filled with the sight and sound of thousands of **cranes** coming in to roost. What an end to a great day!" Onboard MS "Schapode" a good 20 minutes before casting off at 09.00 hrs, calls had already gone up about a few **white-tailed eagles** on the nearby shore of the island of **Grosser Kir**. A strong wind was blowing today which made it chilly up on deck, and a few of our group had remained in the comfortable and warm fore observation lounge. It was, however, well worth seeking out a sheltered spot behind the bulkead which gave three-quarter views of the passing birds and landscape. We passed the island of Oie, then the Barther Bodden to the east and Pramort (where huge numbers of cranes roost each night) to the west. **The island of Hiddensee** came into view and arrival at the small harbour of **Vitte** (on Hiddensee) was at 12.30. Our plan was to access the bund which looks down on to the Baltic to the left and the brackish waters of the Bodden landscape to the right, with fields and brackish lagoons between. We walked as far as the township of **Kloster** with its unmade streets, giving an air of other-worldliness. It was here we had lunch at the Café-Imbiss Neubauer, sitting outside with warm Backfischbrötchen (Fried fish on rolls) with a remoulade sauce and maybe a mug of hot sanddorn grog (Sanddorn is sea buckthorn and the fruits are used for all manner of things including jams, sweets and various liqueurs). The hot grog was a mixture of buckthorn juice and rum with hot water. Warmingly alcoholic! We were back in Vitte for the 15.45 sailing to Zingst. Some numbers: Today we notched up over 6,000 **mute swans**, three **whooper swans**, 400+ **white-fronted geese**, 2,000 or more **coot**, 60 **golden plover**, around 30 **common snipe**, 80 or more **jays, goldeneye, herons, great egrets, scaup, great-crested grebes, common gulls** and many more species. As Angus already mentioned, the masses of **common cranes** coming in to roost around Pramort was pure theatre - a spectacle - with **at least 8,000 cranes** counted. Back in Zingst for 19.00 hrs and dinner to follow at 20.15. We had a great bird list today, which we completed with great enthusiasm after dinner.



Photos clockwise from top left: White-tailed eagles on Grosse Kir; Bob enjoys a light lunch at Kloster (Hiddensee); Masses of coot.



Photos clockwise from top left: Barnacle geese on Hiddensee; Our ship - the MS "Schapode" at Vitte; Eleanora has attracted a little green friend on the way from Vitte to Kloster; Group members relax in the observation lounge of the ship; Hot fried fish rolls and sanddorn grog - lunch at Kloster on the 6th of October.

Wednesday 07 October

Cranes, raptors and seabirds at Gross Mohrdorf and an evening crane cruise

*"If the 6th had been good for cranes, the following day was to blow it out of the water! Starting at the **Gross-Mohrdorf Crane Conservation Centre**, we headed out to a nearby reserve area where a few **cranes** fed in the wet meadows along with parties of **bean geese**. A **common buzzard** appeared, but the larger bird above it was of much greater interest - our only **rough-legged buzzard** of the trip, and a fine adult at that! Back to Zingst and lunch - which was to be followed by an evening cruise. Prior to departure, a few of us at the back of the boat were lucky enough to see a **bittern** fly across the channel and crash into the reeds. Getting under way and heading past the usual **white-tailed eagles**, we were lucky to spot a small party of **Bewick's swans** which had just arrived from the north, This was a fine lead-in to what was to come next - the sight of **17,000 common cranes** coming into roost. The sky was almost black with birds at times - it must be one of the most moving sights on the planet!"*

Arriving at **Gross Mohrdorf** for 09.20, the Crane Conservation Centre was just opening its doors and we were welcomed in by a young 'Kranich Ranger' who spoke immaculate English. She gave us an introductory talk before running a short film about the life of cranes throughout the calendar year which included many breathtaking images. After perusing the well stocked shop, our ranger accompanied us to the crane feeding area out at **Günzensee** (where a new state-of-the-art hide was under construction and due to open in around 14 days' time). We climbed the stairs of the old, draughty hide to get a better perspective of what was arriving and departing in the nearby woods, fields and the lake itself. Apart from a few hundred cranes (and more in the surrounding areas), we had **bean geese, lapwings, golden plover** and more. We left earlier than expected due to the biting cold wind, despite a temperature of around 12 celsius. We returned to the crane centre to drop off our ranger and thanked her for her excellent interpretation and help.

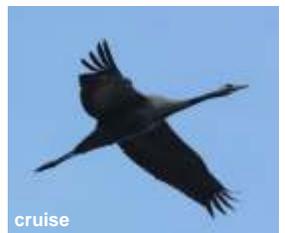
Our next port of call - suggested by both the ranger and Jan, was the small village of **Barhöft**, and its idyllic small harbour with a track leading through woodland (where sculptors were at work creating large wood carvings for outdoor exhibition) and up to **the viewpoint of Barhöfter Kliff**. On the way we saw a flock of **long-tailed tits**, and in the pines, **ten common crossbills**. A viewing tower tempted many to climb the flights of stairs for a view of the surrounding countryside and the inlets, the Baltic itself and the island of Hiddensee in the distance. Before leaving, a flock of **cranes** flew noisily but majestically overhead. We then drove through some lovely rural landscapes and small villages which appeared to be lost in the mists of time, before returning to the harbour at **Zingst for 13.45 and lunch**. Our group dispersed to various establishments, ranging from an Italian restaurant recommended by Jan, to stalls selling fresh and smoked fish rolls and a rather nice fish restaurant - appropriately named "Kranichhaus" (The Crane House) where Gerda and I, John and Bob had an excellent lunch. Our Knurrhahnfilet in Kürbissosse (Gurnard fillets with a pumpkin sauce - very seasonal!) was delicious. **At 15.30 we were all assembling on the quayside for the evening crane cruise out to Pramort**. We were also awaiting Gerda's cousin Ingrid and her husband Hans, who were staying in nearby Prerow for a week's holiday and had managed to join us on this cruise. We raised anchor at 16.00 hrs and headed off towards the crane roost. It would take us a little over two hours to get close to our destination for tonight, leaving us plenty of time to see the first few strings of **common cranes** flying in - followed by thousands more; **great clouds of calling cranes** creating a hair-raising and eerie sound which is one of the most wonderful experiences imaginable. What an evening and what a variety of other birds with huge numbers of **mute swans** and a few **Bewick swans, shelduck, black-throated diver, great crested grebes, red kites, marsh harriers, white-tailed eagles, sparrowhawks, common buzzards, kestrel, peregrine, curlews** and more. After this terrific wildlife experience and as darkness fell, we went below to finish off the evening with dinner on board MS "Schaprode." The end of a perfect day, arriving back in Zingst for 20.00hrs..



Common crane flocks, Günzersee



and from the evening



cruise



Barhöfter Kliff



Lunch in Zingst (Bob)



Dinner with Gerda, Tony, Hans & Ingrid on board ship

Thursday 08 October

The islands of Rügen and Vilm - and the Mönchgut Peninsula on Rügen

"After the excitement of the roost, the 8th of October was a bit more relaxing, with a trip to the island of Vilm. (This was reached from the harbour at Lauterbach on Rügen) Here we saw a couple of "close-up" white-tailed eagles, and some more migrants: this time, whooper swans, redwings and song thrushes. Perhaps the show-stealer here, though, was a small group of northern-race long-tailed tits, with their gleaming white heads. Our afternoon was largely taken up with a stroll around the headland of Klein Zicker (on Rügen), where migrants continued to appear on an easterly wind. Best of the bunch were the numerous goldcrests, a single, late osprey, a cracking male black redstart and a great grey shrike spotted by Mike."

On board MS "Julchen"



White-tailed eagle

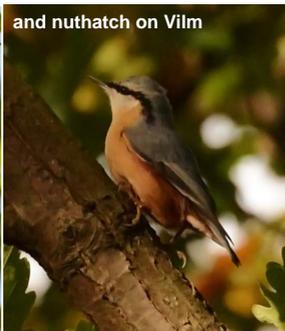


Black redstart, Klein Zicker



When we reached the **island of Rügen** today, we took the southern route which passes through the lovely 'white town' of Putbus and the village of Vilmnitz (which was our base on the crane migration trip in 2010). From here it is only a short drive to **Lauterbach** and its harbour where we boarded the diminutive motor vessel "**Julchen**" for our short crossing to the **island of Vilm**. The island was declared a nature reserve in 1936 and since October 1990, has been part of the biosphere reserve of south-west Rügen. It is 2.5 kilometres in length and around 94 hectares overall. Birdlife is rich, with all five species of woodpecker present and they use the many holes and hollow trees to nest and roost. Gulls and terns abound and the area is a breeding place for **Caspian terns**. A full range of woodland birds may be seen and highlights include **goldcrest, short-toed treecreeper and nuthatch**. Following a circular walk around Grosser Vilm, we were back in Lauterbach for **lunch at the Fisch & Steakhaus Eichdamm** - a most friendly little restaurant where we had some great choices of smoked fish soup and specialities such as smoked eel. We then drove round to the most southerly tip of Rügen and a walk around the headland at **Klein Zicker** - a wonderful spot for migrants. On the way home and on the approach to Zingst, a family of wild boar ambled slowly across the road in front of us - quite a surprise in an urban area! We were meeting Gabriele and Anne Kratzsch from the tourist office tonight and they joined our group for dinner. Everyone enjoyed chatting with the mother and daughter team who had gone to great lengths to make our holiday such a success. A most pleasant and convivial evening.

Short-toed treecreeper and nuthatch on Vilm



Hooded crow



John enjoys smoked eel





Almost all our group with Gabriele and Anne Kratzsch (in the centre) at the IV Jahreszeiten Hotel, Zingst on 08. October - the missing three were Anne Dick, Jean and Geoff Sheppard. (Pictured below)



Friday 09 October **Plauer See and our transfer to Hotel Harmonie, Waren (Müritz)**

"On the 9th we moved to another location - Waren on Lake Müritz. Many of the usual suspects were seen from the bus - more **common cranes, bean geese and Eurasian white-fronts**, but a stop at **Plauer See** provided a few folk with the chance to do some woodland birding at lunchtime. Apart from the **chiffchaffs** and numerous **nuthatches**, a nearby patch of mature woodland turned up some **marsh tits, treecreepers** and a **splendid firecrest**. A late afternoon walk near our new hotel that day produced lots more **chiffchaffs** and a five-year old, colour-ringed **black-headed gull** which had arrived from Poland." So it was **goodbye to Zingst** and **hello to our new hotel in Waren**. The **Hotel Harmonie** had quite a different character altogether - a very traditional building with high-ceilinged and spacious rooms and very well appointed throughout. On the way, we stopped off at the Plauer See - first at the superb **nature centre of Karower Meiler**. Lunch was at the small village of Lenz on the shores of the Plauer See - excellent food was served in **the luxurious ambience of the 'Lenzer Krug'**. It was a sunny day and this tempted a few of the group to forego lunch for a bird walk which brought a fair bit of success. I'm afraid that the temptation of wild boar in red wine and herbs on the menu was too great for some of us!

Saturday 10 October A day in the Müritz National Park

The day started well with a magnificent buffet at the 'Hotel Harmonie'. The weather was bright and sunny and the temperature rose to 15 celsius. **Ranger Wolfgang Schreiter** arrived well ahead of his appointed time of 09.30 to lead us on a day of birding in the national park. Unfortunately the bus due to collect us never materialised, so Wolfgang had to make frantic phone calls to the park office to sort things out. He was most embarrassed by this, but did his best to keep us entertained until a replacement bus arrived later on and saved the day! *"We were off wandering again on the 10th, firstly to the **Warnker See** which lies within the Müritz National Park. The cold (but sunny) weather was still throwing up migrants, with a party of **10 common buzzards** and a **marsh harrier** seen heading south - as were many **common cranes**. On arrival at the lake, we were once more treated to the spectacle of several thousand ducks - **pochards, tufted ducks** and also many **red-crested pochards** - all under the stony gaze of a family of **white-tailed eagles**."* **Lunch followed at the rustic 'Bunte Kuh' restaurant** ('Colourful Cow'), opposite the National Park office in Federow. After lunch, Wolfgang showed us a series of video clips of the **ospreys** which breed here in the spring - using the specially constructed pylons to build their nests (a base is provided on all pylons within the park). *"This was followed up by a wander around the park's HQ grounds where we found more **black redstarts** and a **goshawk** (although we learned later that one had been photographed by Jim that morning (the benefits of digital photography!!). Even more **bean geese** were seen in the afternoon (and more cranes of course) as we looked around the park, as were another **middle spotted woodpecker** and two **hawfinches** (for a lucky few)."* **Dinner was at the restaurant "Alte Tankstelle"** ('Old Filling Station') adjacent to the Hotel Harmonie and owned by them. We had a great meal here last night and it was just as good tonight. There was a party atmosphere with our server joining in and making a few jokes as she got to know us. Thus ended another superb day.



WTE's at Warnker See



Red-crested pochards



Lunch at the 'Bunte Kuh'

Sunday 11 October A cruise on the Müritz Lakes and the crane roost at Reederangsee

*"Our last full day, on October 11th, was to prove very memorable for many reasons. A morning cruise on Lake Müritz took us past another flock of **red-crested pochards** as well as even more **white-tailed eagles** and the obligatory **kingfishers**. At lunchtime, a small detachment marched along the lake promenade to a wooded park where they found two more **firecrests** and some spectacular insect life, including a beautiful **migrant hawk dragonfly**. Also on show was a fine **red squirrel**, which scattered both **jays** and **marsh tits** as it rocketed through the trees. Our finale was now all set for a still, sunny late afternoon, and we headed down a path within the Müritz reserve to the hide by the large lake - **Reederangsee**. Here we sat.....and waited. As the gloaming proceeded to turn the skies ever deepening shades of red, we could see and hear the massed ranks of **thousands of common cranes** heading in towards their overnight roost at the lake. This is an impossibility to describe adequately - the sound of cranes always sends a shiver up my spine - but this experience would have been extremely hard to improve on, especially as it came on our very last evening."*

After breakfast we assembled across the road from the hotel at the 'Steinmole' - the stone pier where **our motor vessel 'Fontane' was awaiting our arrival**. Three more birding friends joined us today - Brian Lennox and two of his chums who had been crane watching for three days from their hire car. Today they would be with us, swelling our ranks to 23. The first frost of the autumn was upon us this sunny morning and it was distinctly chilly on board ship for our two hour cruise. In the afternoon we met Wolfgang at 15.30 hrs to take the **'Kranichbus'** - a national park charter - **out to Federow** again and a 45 minute walk through meadow and woodland **to the hide on the shores of Reederangsee**. Angus has described this wonderful event which brought our holiday to a spectacular finish. It was almost dark as we wended our way back to the bus (with the sound of cranes still arriving in the darkness) and were back once again for **dinner at the 'Alte Tankstelle'** and there were 23 of us tonight to make an even bigger and better party for our last evening in Waren.



MS 'Fontane' at the Steinmole, Waren



At Federow



Cranes roosting at Reederangsee



View from the hide



Monday 12 October **From Waren to Berlin and flight home to Glasgow**

*"Ho, hum, and the 12th saw us heading back down the autobahn from Berlin and our flight home, but not without several large parties of **cranes** offering a final flypast - a fitting farewell to a wonderful trip. However, all of this wouldn't have happened had it not been for some excellent planning by Tony and Gerda, and I'd like to say a big thank you (again!) for a great trip. Finally, a big thank you to everyone who took part - if you enjoyed it half as much as I did, you'll be well pleased - even the trip on the steam train!!"* (Angus). **Especially the trip on the steam train! (Tony)**. So yes, thank you all for taking part - to Angus (for being our bird leader) & Mary (for helping him to do so) and to everyone else - Geoff & Jean Sheppard; Helen & David Rackham; Kenneth & Sheila Smith; Jim Thomson; Mike Groves; Bob Yates; John Savory; Deone Finlayson; Ingrid Swanson; Eleanora Forrester; Anne Dick; Molly Woolgar - and the two of us - Gerda & Tony.



Nationalpark Bus, Federow



Sunset, Reederangsee

SOC Honorary Treasurer

Alan Fox, SOC's Treasurer for the last eight years, has indicated his intention to step down from the post at the next AGM (September 2016). SOC is therefore seeking a replacement. Obviously this is a key role in the organisation and not an undertaking to be under-estimated by anyone taking it on.

The Treasurer must be a member of the SOC, and would also be a member of SOC Council and therefore a Trustee of the charity, with the responsibilities that entails. There is no requirement for professional qualifications, and all day-to-day work is carried out by SOC's staff, mainly the Financial assistant. The Treasurer compiles the Annual Accounts of the SOC, and presents these to the AGM, normally in October. She/He also provides account updates and forecasts for SOC Council, which meets four times each year and for the SOC Management Committee, which usually has five meetings annually. The Treasurer meets with the SOC's investment managers, currently Brewin Dolphin, each year to review the performance of SOC's investments.

A more detailed job description is available - contact David Rackham by e-mail (david.racks18@gmail.com) for a copy. Our very own Dick Vernon was SOC Honorary Treasurer before Alan Fox, and I am sure he would be very happy to provide the inside line to anybody seriously contemplating putting forward their name.

The Clyde Bird Report for 2007/ 2008

is available from Val Wilson, Flat 2/1, 12 Rawcliffe Gardens, GLASGOW G41 3DA for £7.00 plus £1.50 p&p. (Cheques payable to Clyde SOC), or at Lochwinnoch RSPB Nature Centre. Both the 2007 and 2008 reports will be on offer to SOC members for the reduced combined price of £12.00 (at Lochwinnoch) or by post from Val Wilson for £14.80 including p&p.

Our own Ayrshire Bird Report

priced at only £5.00, is available from Anne Dick at all meetings, as are SOC crested tit badges and car stickers (both £1.00 each).

Please keep in touch with **SOC events** by logging on to the SOC's Twitter and Facebook pages



Upcoming events

**Evening meetings at Monkton Community Church Hall and Pioneer Café
Tuesday 19.00 for 19.30hrs.**

08 March 2016 - Chas. MOONIE - New images since the pallid harrier

12 April 2016 - AGM followed by Russell NISBET - Migration and the Isle of May

Field Trips and tours jointly with RSPB Central Ayrshire Local Group

Saturday 20 February 2016 DOONFOOT & GREENAN SHORE, AYR

Meet Greenan Castle car park at 10.00. Birding the bay and coastal strip. Finish 12 noon.

Saturday 19 March 2016 GLEN AFTON & SWT KNOCKSHINNOCH LAGOONS

Meet 10.30 at Glen Afton, then return to New Cumnock for a visit to the lagoons. Whole day trip - please bring a picnic lunch. Finish c. 15.30 hrs.

Saturday 16 April 2016 RSPB WOOD OF CREE & NEW RESERVE

Meet 11.00 hrs at the Wood of Cree car park. Whole day trip with an afternoon visit to the extension woodlands. Please bring picnic lunch. Finish around 16.00 hrs.

Saturday 21 May 2016 LOCH DOON & NESS GLEN

Meet 10.30 at The Roundhouse car park. Lunch can be purchased here or bring your own. Whole day trip to finish around 16.00 hrs.

Friday 27 May - Sunday 05 June 2016 A ten-day coach holiday

BIRDS, LANDSCAPES & HISTORY OF THE ORKNEY ISLANDS

Coach travel from Ayr. Staying at 4* Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer one night; seven nights at the 3* Standing Stones Hotel, Stenness, Orkney Mainland and one night at the 4* Nethybridge Hotel. All on a DBB basis. Ferry from Scrabster to Stromness and back with Northlink Ferries. The cost includes all coach travel, car ferries and accommodation in en-suite rooms with dinner, bed and breakfast each day. Cost £1070.00. **Fully booked.**

Friday 12 February 2016

SOC Ayrshire Branch meal out at The Carrick Lodge Hotel

46 Carrick Street, AYR KA7 2RE

Please book in advance with David Rackham, either by post to David Rackham, 18 Bathurst Drive, AYR KA7 4QN, enclosing a cheque payable to SOC Ayrshire, or in person at the evening meeting (09.02).

The cost is £14.50 per person for two courses and tea/coffee. Any extras (such as drinks or an extra course) are payable, individually, to the Carrick Lodge on the night. Note that this is £1.00 less than last year!
