

Birdlife May 2022

Great news from the BTO Cuckoo tracking project, on the 11th April 2022, Ellis was still moving north and by 18.00hrs that evening he had flown 285 km north from his last location west of Bordeaux. He was just north of the Loire, close to the village of Allonnes in western France and only a few hundred km from being back in the UK. Then yesterday, 22nd April at 11.34 am Ellis became the first BTO Cuckoo to arrive back in the UK! He left the rainforests of Central Africa in February, crossed the Sahara last month and is now back on his breeding grounds in the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. Welcome home Ellis.



Cuckoo Updates;

23 April 2022. No news on Daniel since mid-March when he was in Cameroon and assumed he had gone. However, some signals that morning from his tag showed he was in Sicily 3,780 km from his last known location, hopefully this marks the return of regular updates from Daniel's tag.

JAC is in Sierras de Cazorla, Spain
Calypso arrives in Morocco

I was Ringing at RSPB Minsmere on Thursday and one of the first birds we caught in the North Bushes was a Grasshopper warbler (*Locustella naevia*) affectionately known by the birding fraternity as a Gropper. The genus name *Locustella* is from Latin and is a diminutive of *locusta* "grasshopper". The specific *naevia* is Latin for "spotted" There are three subspecies recognised. It is a very secretive bird and seldom seen, but its presence is easily detected because of its characteristic song which is an unmusical long, high-pitched reeling trill performed with beak held wide open and the whole-body vibrating. It lasts from a few seconds to two or three minutes with hardly a pause for breath. It is performed at any time of day from early morning until after the sun has set and is constantly to be heard from the arrival of the bird in spring until late July. As for its description, this is a very typical LBJ 'little brown job'

The grasshopper warbler breeds in north-west Europe and the western Palearctic. Further east it is replaced by related species. In late summer it migrates to west Africa where it overwinters and the small number of ringing recoveries suggests a preference for coastal localities such as west Senegal and west Gambia. It is possible that conditions in the wintering grounds are more favourable than they used to be and that over-winter survival has increased. In the breeding season it's found in damp or dry places with rough grass and bushes such as the edge of fens, clearings and neglected hedgerows, reedbeds, heaths, moors and felled woodland. In its wintering grounds it is usually found in similar locations but

information is scarce. It has declined hugely in recent decades giving it a **Red List species designation**. The decline is due to loss of habitat in both its summer and winter ranges.



Grasshopper warbler



Lesser Whitethroat

Another bird caught on Thursday was a Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) It is a real introvert and even newly arrived songsters can be frustratingly difficult to see. They prefer taller, thicker hedges, often singing from deep inside hawthorns and blackthorns, remaining well hidden in the dense tangle of twigs and branches. In late summer and autumn however, juveniles and first-winter birds become quite easy to see as they fatten up prior to migrating, often roaming around with mixed flocks of tits and other warblers. Male and female lesser whitethroats are very similar. They are greyish-brown above and creamy-grey below, with grey heads, dark grey cheeks or 'masks', white throats and white chests. Lesser whitethroats are smaller than Common whitethroats, and have shorter tails and plain-coloured wing edges. They winter in Africa; they leave our shores in September and head east around the Mediterranean, rather than through Gibraltar like most of our migrating birds.

Sightings in my garden;

2 Buzzards, 5 Blackcaps, 3 Chiffchaff, Mistle thrush, Green & Great-spotted woodpeckers, Swallow and the Tawny owl box with 3 eggs.

Butterflies: Brimstone, Orange tip, Peacock, Speckled wood, small white

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