

# Welcome to the SOC Annual Conference 2010!



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## Welcome to the SOC Annual Conference 29 - 31 October 2010

Following the success of last year's event, we return once again to the Windlestrae Hotel, Kinross. Situated just off the M90, the venue enjoys a central location as well as offering some excellent Autumn bird watching around Loch Leven & along the nearby Fife coast.

The theme of our 2010 event shines a torch on the nightlife of Scotland's birds, providing a range of illuminating talks on nocturnal species including the iconic Barn and Tawny Owl as well as the more elusive Nightjar, Woodcock and shearwaters.

The conference marks the eve of the start of the final winter season of the 2007-11 Bird Atlas and attendees will be presented with the results of fieldwork completed so far, mapping Scotland's gains and losses.

The SOC annual conference is a key event in the Club's social calendar, bringing together members from across Scotland and beyond.

Evening entertainment takes the form of the traditional Friday night quiz and a live ceilidh band after the conference dinner. Saturday morning provides free time for some local birding and/or the chance to brush up your bird recording skills in a one-hour workshop.

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For conference booking and accommodation, please post the completed form at the back of this booklet to:

SOC (Annual conf)  
Waterston House  
Aberlady, East Lothian  
EH32 0PY

Please enclose your payment (cheques made payable to 'SOC') with your booking form.

All enquiries to SOC HQ:  
Tel: 01875 871330  
Email: [mail@the-soc.org.uk](mailto:mail@the-soc.org.uk)  
[www.the-soc.org.uk](http://www.the-soc.org.uk) (for updates)

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## STALLS

**SOC Bookstall & Shop** – second hand book bargains, club merchandise, bird reports, art books, jewellery, cards...and lots more!

*We regret that we are only able to accept payment by cash or cheque for purchases made at the SOC stand.*

**Subbuteo Books** – specialists in natural history, wildlife and travel titles.

**Second Nature** – offering a wide range of quality, second-hand natural history books.

**Viking Optical Ltd** – a wide range of binoculars, telescopes, tripods and accessories. Plus friendly, expert advice.

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## SOC 74th AGM: AGENDA

**Saturday 30th October 2010 at 1700 hrs**

Full details of this year's agenda will be made available in the September mailing but will include the following items:

- 1) Apologies for absence
- 2) Minutes of the 73rd AGM held on 31 Oct 2009
- 3) Annual Report 2009/10
- 4) Annual Accounts 2009/10
- 5) Re-election of Office Bearers
- 6) Election of new Council Member
- 7) Appointment of independent examiner
- 8) AOB

*If you do not wish to book for the conference but would like to attend the AGM, it would be helpful if you could let us know in advance.*



# Weekend Programme

## Friday 29 October

- 1700 onwards Registration  
2000 **Introduction/Welcome**  
2005 **Adaptation in Birds for Night Life** (Dr Rob Thomas)  
2100 **Quiz** (Clive McKay)

## Saturday 30 October

- 0900-1200 **Free Morning/Bird Recording Workshop** Opportunity to explore the local birdlife, browse the various exhibitors' stalls or take part in a free workshop led by Clive McKay (*see back page for details*)  
1200 onwards Registration (Day delegates)  
1230-1330 Buffet Lunch  
1400 **Introduction and announcements**  
1410 **Boom and bust: Insights into the life of Tawny Owls** (Steve Petty)  
1500 **Hatched, Matched and Dispatched - The Lives of Barn Owls** (Geoff Sheppard)  
1540 Tea/Coffee  
1610 **Bird Atlas 2007-11 update** (Bob Swann)  
1630 **Nightjars in Scotland update** (Chris Rollie)  
1655 Summing up  
1700 SOC 74th AGM  
1900 for 1930 Conference Dinner & Ceilidh

## Sunday 31 October

- 0845 onwards Registration (Day delegates)  
0930 **Introduction and announcements**  
0935 **Current issues in Woodcock Conservation** (Dr Andrew Hoodless)  
1010 **Shearwaters - Trolls in the Night** (Chris Laurie)  
1045 Tea/Coffee  
1115 **The ups and downs of the Scottish Corncrake** (John Bowler)  
1150 **Breeding Habitat of the Grasshopper Warbler in the UK** (Gillian Gilbert)  
1225 Summing up  
1230 Raffle & 200 Club draw  
1245 Close of Conference  
1300 Lunch



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**John Bowler, Officer for Tiree, RSPB**

John has been employed as the RSPB Officer for Tiree since 2001, where he oversees the conservation of corncrakes, breeding waders, seabirds and their habitats on the island, working closely with the crofting community. Prior to this, he managed a seabird island nature reserve (Aride Island) in Seychelles for three years after having worked for nine years on swans and threatened wildfowl for WWT at Slimbridge where he gained a PhD on Bewick's Swan winter feeding ecology through Bristol University.

**Gillian Gilbert, Senior Conservation Scientist, RSPB**

Gillian has been working for the RSPB for the past 20 years, mostly specializing in Bittern but also looking at a wide range of other elusive species, with particular focus on wetland birds. No stranger to night shifts and always up for a challenge, Gillian has more recently been studying the basic ecology of tricky birds such as Spotted Crake, Water Rail, Storm Petrel and Stone Curlew.

**Dr Andrew Hoodless, Senior Scientist - Lowland Research, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust**

Andrew gained his PhD on Woodcock at Durham University in 1994 and conducted a collaborative postdoctoral study with Oxford University on the role of pheasants in the transmission dynamics of Lyme disease. He has worked on both lowland and upland gamebirds and waders with the Trust, conducting experiments on supplementary feeding and leading the Upland Predation Experiment at Otterburn (1999-2002). He currently oversees several projects on applied conservation issues relating to Woodcock, lowland wader declines and the effects of game management on wildlife.

**Chris Laurie, Field Surveyor, Shearwater Ecology**

After qualifying in Countryside Management at Oatridge College, Chris has carried out contracted ornithological fieldwork recording and surveying throughout the country for a number of organisations. For the past three years, he has worked on Rum and Canna as part of a contracted team for SNH to monitor the endemic Manx Shearwater and predatory Brown rat. On Handa, he has an ongoing commitment monitoring Arctic and Great Skua breeding success.

**Steve Petty**

Steve worked for the Forestry Commission for 38 years, initially as a forester and then as a bird ecologist for Forest Research. In this latter period, his work focussed on how bird populations have adapted to the extensive conifer forests that have been established in the British uplands, including long-term studies on Tawny Owls and Northern Goshawks. He has lived in Argyll for 30 years where he is now retired, an active member of the Argyll Bird Club and an honorary research fellow at Forest Research and Aberdeen University

**Chris Rollie, Area Manager, Dumfries and Galloway, RSPB**

BSc (Hons) Biology (Stirling, 1980). A science teacher in Ayrshire for ten years, Chris then became RSPB Conservation Officer in D&G in 1991, and Area Manager from 2000. He manages RSPB D&G office and is the Society's strategic lead in the area. Key work includes development casework, species/habitat conservation and partnership working. He is also Director of the Solway Shellfish Management Association, Chairman of D&G Raptor Study Group and Chairman of the National Ring Ouzel Study Group. In 2000 he set up the D&G Nightjar Study Group.

**Geoff Sheppard, Secretary, SOC West Galloway & BTO Regional Rep, Wigtownshire**

Born in Somerset, Geoff moved to Scotland in 1973 and became secretary of the newly formed West Galloway SOC branch in 1976. BTO regional representative since 1983, he is also the Atlas organiser for Wigtownshire. An active bird ringer for 30 years, he is ringing secretary for the North Solway RG. His main interests are waders, bird migration and raptors and he is a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Raptor Study Group. A study of Barn Owl breeding and population in his area is his special long-term project.

**Bob Swann, Scottish Organiser 2007-11 Bird Atlas**

Bob has been a keen Scottish birdwatcher for over 40 years. He lives at Tain in Ross-shire and is Scottish organiser for the 2007-2011 Bird Atlas project. He has been involved as a fieldworker in a wide range of surveys including all three previous national atlas projects. Now as Scottish organiser not only is he whipping up enthusiasm for the Atlas but he is undertaking fieldwork in the remoter parts of the highlands where he has already surveyed over 350 tetrads.

**Dr Rob Thomas, Lecturer, Cardiff School of Biosciences**

Rob did his first degree in Zoology and Ecology at Cambridge University (graduating in 1993), followed by a D.Phil. at the University of Sussex (1997). After a short spell as assistant warden at A Rocha Bird Observatory in Southern Portugal, he moved to the Centre for Behavioural Biology at Bristol University to take up a NERC-funded post-doctoral Research Fellowship, which he brought to Cardiff. He was appointed to his current lectureship in 2006.