

Birder? What Sort Are You? by Mike Bloomfield

Are you a 'twitcher'? This is the question I'm often asked when out and about with my bins around my neck, which got me thinking about my own status. Since joining BOG, it has become clear to me that a birdwatcher is much more than the name suggests and that there are quite a few aspects of the subject that we, as individuals, enjoy and I list a few, as follows:

Twitching, Patch watching, Year listing, Photography, Raptor watching, Visual migration (vismig), Bird sound recording, Ringing.

I'm sure there may be others, but into which of these categories do you fall? For my part, I enjoy seeing new species and taking pictures. So this categorises me as a 'twitcher/photographer', I suppose.

I was prompted to write this article following recent discussions with Richard Butler (Chuck), a recent addition to our membership and a relative beginner to birding. He asked if I would take him out birding and it was clear that whilst he enjoyed watching birds, he really wanted to see new ones and even had a wish list. I was exactly the same when I joined the group and I suspect this objective would apply to most new members. The only downside to this objective is that local birding has its limitations to the number of species one is likely to see. We do have occasional rarities visiting our area but these are relatively few. Even then, one has to be made aware a.s.a.p. and also be willing and available to set off in haste before the sighting has disappeared for good. In short one has no alternative but to succumb to becoming a 'twitcher', at least for a while until an acceptable list is achieved.

My birding as a BOG member began, without camera, but with a year list which, over the first few years and birding relatively locally, got stuck around the 200 species mark, give or take. To put this into perspective, the very best 'listers' would expect to achieve over 300 in the year but this requires a lot of travel, communication technology, time and significant expense. So somewhere in between seemed a good compromise such that a target of 250 would be reasonable without breaking the bank! Luckily, over the past couple of years, I have 4 or 5 similar minded mates who like to get out and about at the weekends such that I've now cracked the 250 mark in 2012 and 260 plus in 2013.

Space doesn't permit me to show many of the birds I've twitched recently, but here's one of my favourites which may have been 'twitched' by other members!



A Wryneck seen at Spurn in 2013. There was a large passage of these interesting birds during the autumn. photo: Mike Bloomfield