

WOS Review of the Year 2024 – headlines

2024 may well have been one of WOS' most productive years to date. Here are some of the headlines and highlights from a busy year.

Campaigning – WOS goes on the road



Some of the audience at our SFS event in Letterston

In early 2024, we wanted as many people as possible to respond to Welsh Government's *Sustainable Farming Scheme* public consultation, and for them to speak up for Welsh wildlife and our farming communities from a well-informed position, not one based on misleading media headlines.

In a first of its kind for WOS, alongside our colleagues at RSPB Cymru, we organised a 'Sustainable Farming Scheme Roadshow' around Wales. At these events, key points featured in the SFS were explained and individuals were supported in submitting their response to the consultation.

We visited Aberystwyth, Brecon, Caernarfon, Cardiff, Letterston, Swansea and Wrexham. An online webinar was hosted for those who were not able to attend the face-to-face events at these locations and a total of 477 people joined the sessions, either in person or online.

We had terrific feedback from participants, including some farmers, and we hope that a large number of them responded to the consultation calling for the Welsh Government to increase its support for farmers to deliver more for wildlife.

Funding conservation and community projects

One of WOS' priorities is to help fund small conservation and community projects in Wales. We gave grants totalling more than £2400 to the following projects and young people last year.

- ***Yellowhammer conservation in the Vale of Glamorgan.*** This project aims to provide sacrificial wild bird cover crop at a farm in the Vale of Glamorgan to encourage and support resident breeding and over-wintering Yellowhammer and other farmland birds.
- ***Habitat restoration and biodiversity monitoring in an ancient woodland in north Cardiff.*** This project aims to harness community involvement in restoring and protecting the woodland at Coed Tŷ Llwyd, improving the habitat for wildlife, and providing opportunities for education and research.
- ***Welsh Ringing Course organised by the Gower Ringing Group.*** This annual ringing course is aimed at enabling ringers to be independently assessed for permits and further endorsements. Most attendees are from Wales, and a key aim is to increase the number of licensed ringers in Wales.



Some of the participants at the 2024 Welsh Ringing Course

We would dearly like to see many more applications received for our various grants and bursaries. Please visit <https://birdsin.wales/grants-awards/> for more information.

Supporting young birders and conservationists via our Young Conservationists' Bursaries

We gave a bursary to help cover some of the expenses incurred by a young birder who was volunteering for three months on Skokholm. We also gave bursaries to eight young birders to enable them to attend our Annual Conference by helping to cover their conference fee and travel costs.

We offered to part-fund a place for a student from Wales on a training week at Bardsey Lodge and Bird Observatory in late August/early September. Sadly, no applications for this funding were received. This funding will be available again in 2025.



Ciera Atkins - our Spring Newsletter's guest editor

Our Spring Newsletter was guest edited by a young birder and BTO West Glamorgan Youth Representative, Ciera Atkins. The majority of the articles in this newsletter, commissioned by Ciera, were written by young birders in Wales.

We continued to offer our Young Birder annual WOS membership (for birders up to the age of 26) for only £5. At the end of the year the number of young birders taking advantage of this special rate had risen to 19.

And 19 entries were received for our Young Photographer competition. Slightly down on previous years, though the standard was extremely high.

Improving our communications with members and supporters

In 2024, we refreshed both our website and newsletter.

We launched new WOS social media accounts on Instagram, BlueSky and Threads (all @birdsinwales). Both Instagram and Bluesky have grown quickly reflecting a new interest in WOS' activities that reaches beyond our membership.

We hosted an online Membership Survey this year, seeking the opinions and priorities of our members. Almost 100 members responded. We are considering the responses and using them to prioritise work in 2025 and to help us plan for WOS' future.

Record-breaking Annual Conference



164 delegates, a record attendance, attended our annual conference at Aberystwyth. As a result of feedback received from the 2023 Conference delegates, this year's talks celebrated grass roots/citizen science contribution to birds in Wales.

Andy King was awarded our 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award. See <https://birdsin.wales/2024-andy-king/> for more about Andy's work over the years.

Gathering and publishing important information about Welsh birds



We welcomed a new editor, Dr Rachel Taylor, and published a new edition of our journal, *Milvus* – the only journal to publish papers solely about Welsh birds and studies. This edition included data from WOS' 2022-23 *National Rook Survey*, analysed for us by BTO Cymru.

In December, we published our online **Annual Report of Scarce & Rare Birds in Wales 2023**. Many thanks to editor, Jon Green

The mammoth task of compiling all the data, photographs, maps and graphs for the **Welsh Bird Report 2023** was completed in 2024 and the report itself landed on members' doorsteps early in January 2025. Our thanks to editor Julian Hughes and typesetter, Ian Spence.

WOS membership – heading in the right direction

We have seen a growth of 51% in members between 2018-2024.

Through our Affiliated Groups we are in touch with over 2,000 additional birdwatchers across Wales.

Despite substantial rising costs for such things as postage and printing, our membership subscription rates remained the same for the 6th consecutive year.

Record-breaking Photography Competition and brand-new calendar

We ran our fifth WOS Photography Competition in 2024 which received 197 entries. A new record for the competition. The winners received their prizes at our annual conference from Iolo Williams.

We produced, for the first time, a WOS Calendar using the best photographs from the competition which almost sold out in the first week.



WOS representation on conservation groups

WOS is represented on the [Fish-eating Birds Advisory Group](#) and is a partner of [Gylfinir Cymru/Curlew Wales](#). We attended a Natural Resources Wales (NRW) 'Woodland Bird Workshop' in June and a Welsh Arable Biodiversity Network meeting in November.

We also attended our annual strategic meeting with NRW in April. The purpose of these annual meetings is to share information, make each other aware of issues arising and identify areas where we may work in partnership e.g. a single species survey such as the Rook survey.

And finally . . .

WOS, a registered charity, is run entirely by its volunteer Trustees, who are drawn from, and appointed by, our members. The Society has no paid members of staff and to be able to maintain, or hopefully increase the impact we have within Welsh birding, ornithology and conservation circles, we urgently need to recruit new trustees and other volunteers. Please get in touch if you think you can help us in any way chair@birds.in.wales

If you're not already a member, please sign up to support our work. If you are already a member – diolch! – and please help spread the word about WOS!