

Birds and us.

Ecology and Conservation Studies Society, Birkbeck Free Lecture series. Autumn 2017: six Friday evenings:

13th October to 17th November, 18:30 to 20:00, Lecture Theatre B01, Clore Management Centre, Torrington Square, London WC1E 7JL (opposite the Birkbeck main building).

Wild birds are popular creatures: twitchers seek them out to list them, ringers study their movements, fanciers enjoy racing them and egg collecting was popular before it became illegal. Birds have interesting historical, cultural and religious significance. Birds can even be tourist attractions, and lots of people delight in feeding them in their gardens and parks. Bird guano even boosted our agricultural fertility. Significantly, wild bird populations are used to indicate the health of our biodiversity and have been the subject of “citizen science” for many years. On the other side of the coin, however, there are problems. Birds can suffer at our hands, either deliberately or because they are in the way. For instance, albatrosses die caught on fishing long-lines and the Quelea is second only to the locust as a tropical plague. Alien species can be very controversial. Food premises need to be bird-proof and gulls breeding in our towns can harass us. Bird ‘flu risks crossing the species barrier to plague us. Bird strike is a hazard for aircraft. Game birds show us both sides of the coin; conserving their habitat conserves other species, but their harvesting kills the birds, and predatory birds are killed illegally by gamekeepers. This series explores some of these issues between birds and us.

13th October **Driven grouse shooting.** Mark Avery.

20th October **The Importance of Birds in Human Culture.** Jonathan Elphick, Natural History Author, Editor & Consultant.

27th October **Tracking Afro-Palaeartic migratory birds to understand population declines.** Chris Hewson, Senior Research Ecologist, International Research Team, British Trust for Ornithology.

3rd November **Saving the albatross: conservation action on the high seas.** Oliver Yates, Programme Manager of BirdLife’s Albatross Task Force.

10th November. **Birds and rewilding at Knepp, West Sussex.** Penny Green, Knepp’s resident ecologist.

17th November. **Invasive alien species threaten island birds around the world.** Steffen Oppel, Senior Conservation Scientist, RSPB Centre for Conservation Science.

Further details, including the programme & venue, will be posted at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geography/our-research/ecss/free-public-lectures> or email: ecssoc@gmail.com.

