

## Paul Stancliffe: The Migration of Birds

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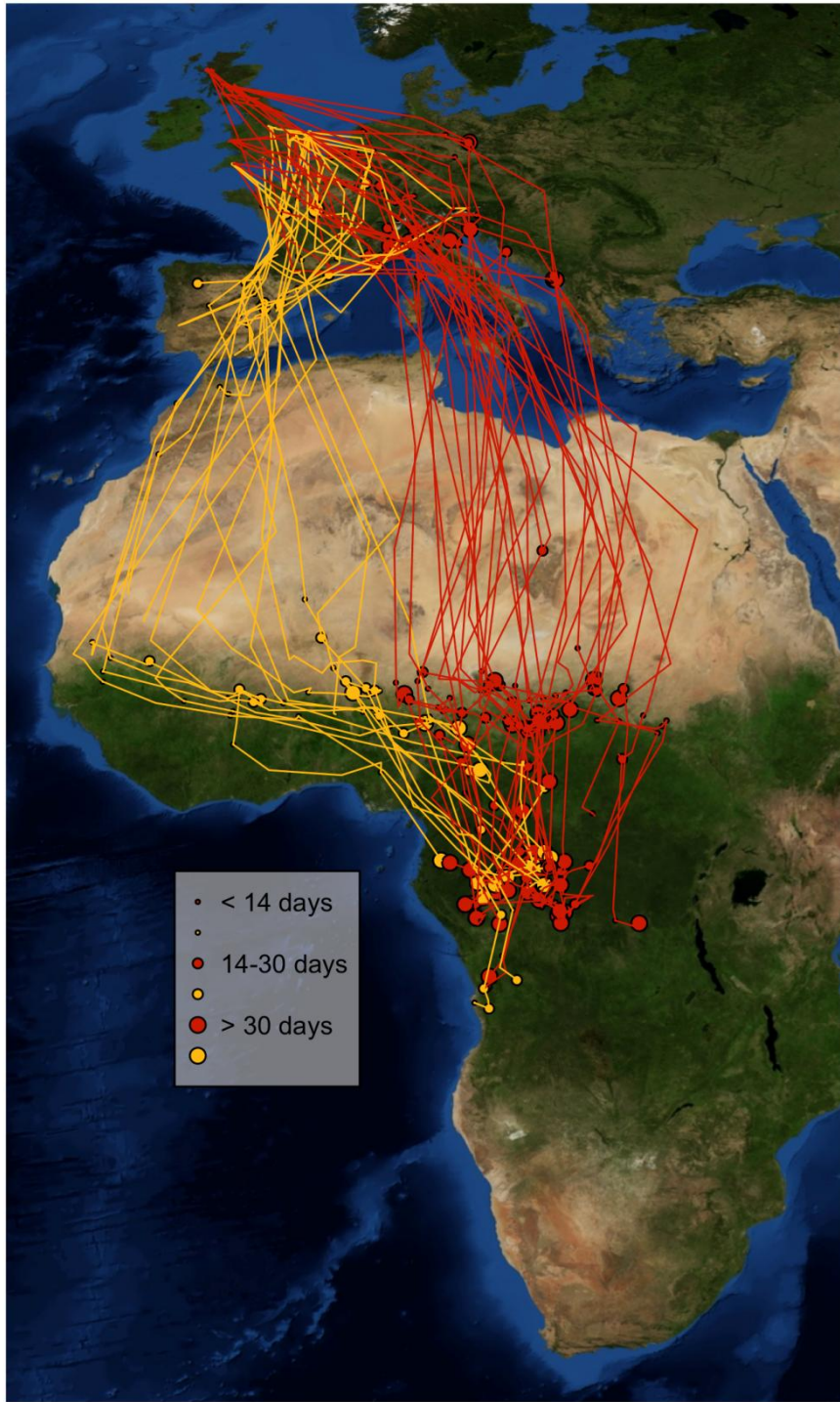
Paul Stancliffe, Media Manager of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), came all the way from Norfolk to give us this talk. The BTO is a research organisation which monitors bird populations and migrations, providing information to scientists and conservationists across the globe. Migration has been studied for 100 years but never in so much detail as now, because of huge advances in technology which make astonishing facts available. Even small birds can be monitored with geolocators, GPS tags or satellite tags, which means that they can be tracked on their annual migrations over vast distances. Any problems they encounter can now be pinpointed more accurately, and the numbers which make it there and back can be estimated.

Unfortunately there is a very high mortality rate among migrant birds. Turtle doves, wood warblers, whinchats, pied flycatchers and cuckoos are all rapidly declining (and are only rarely seen in the Malvern area these days). It is not all bad news though; blackcaps, chiffchaffs, whitethroats, redstarts and swallows are doing quite well.

Paul talked in particular detail about the cuckoo, a popular bird which is declining in numbers over most of the UK, but doing well in NW Scotland. The BTO has tagged 60 cuckoos in the last 6 years and the resulting map of their migratory routes is fascinating. We now know that the birds from England tend to take a westerly route across the Sahara, but about half of them die; birds from Scotland and Wales take an easterly one and 97% survive. The reasons for this are as yet only partly understood. We also know exactly where in Africa they spend the winter, and all this information can be seen on the BTO website.

Alison Uren

See BTO photos below.



Cuckoo migratory routes to Africa (BTO )



Cuckoo with tag attached (BTO photograph)