

The global Great Bustard conservation publication

# Otis

**GREAT  
BUSTARD  
GROUP**



Autumn 2010

£3.00

## Breeding Bustards hit the headlines



**New support for volunteers**

### **UK chicks hatch**

*The Bustards are back! 2nd year breeding success for the project*



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The magazine of the Great Bustard Group

Issue 33

# twitter



## The Great Bustards are Twittering ...!

Twitter is a website that allows people to post very short updates, essentially 'blogging without the waffle'. You can choose to follow people who interest you by signing up for an account at [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

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## GREAT BUSTARD GROUP



The Great Bustard Group is the UK registered charity and membership organisation formed in 1998 to re-introduce the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) to the UK.

The GBG is actively involved in Great Bustard conservation and is working with other organisations, both nationally and internationally to save the world's heaviest flying bird.

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By the time this issue of *Otis* goes to the printers a British golfer may have won the Open Championship, David Villa may or may not have been signed by your favourite football team, and the English cricketers may or may not be on their way to winning the first test against the Pakistanis. Hopes and dreams, they're what keeps the fire burning in the hearts of all enthusiasts...

The GBG's hopes and dreams of course focus on something that matters even more than cricket or football (do I hear the revered Bill Shankly turning in his grave?): establishing a self-sustaining population of Great Bustards in the UK. And this spring we took another huge step forward when for a second successive year our birds nested and produced chicks. This is only the second time since 1832 that Great Bustards have nested in the UK and we are in celebratory mood!

In this issue our feature article looks in detail at how this spring's successful breeding season unfolded and we have exclusive information and numerous photographs generously supplied by David Kjaer. We're also reporting on how the news of the chicks was received by the UK's media, and at the different ways that we've been promoting our work on the radio, television, and at live events (we've been very busy, I can assure you).

We also have an interview with John Chitty, the expert vet whose work has been so

important to the GBG for so many years (look out too for news of this year's RGS auction lots, which include a day with John that promises to be unforgettable), an article on the BBC Wildlife Fund (the fund paid for our new visitor hide), a report from the first Great Bustard Symposium (which was held in China), and we're also looking at the fascinating data collected over 1000 days by a GPS Transmitter attached to one of our male birds, P5.

In a varied issue we've also a report by GBG stalwart Bill Jordan on a trip he made to Spain to see the Great Bustards at Villafila, and a look at the newly-launched 'Friends of the Bustard' – a volunteer and support group which we have great hopes for.

We've been working hard to make 'Otis' as interesting and involving as possible, and if you've any comments about this or any issue please let me know. In the meantime have a great summer/autumn – and, as a final thought, if our sporting heroes do let us down at least GBG members can bask in the glow that comes with knowing that by supporting the GBG they're definitely backing a winner!

Charlie Moores

# In this issue



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GBG member Barrie Whitney took a birding mini-break to Portugal. His main target – Great Bustards.

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An old friend of the Great Bustard Group, Sebastian Salt FGA, pledges his support.

David Waters, GBG Director, was pleased to show Ashley Fox MEP around the release-site in mid-June. Bristol-based Mr Fox was elected to the European Parliament in June 2009 as the Conservative MEP for the South West of England and Gibraltar, and sits on a number of committees as well as being a member of the Delegation for relations with China. Ashley was keen to learn of the progress of the project – and of the paperwork and our usual funding challenges. Under UK legislation the Great Bustard has no governmental level action plan, and although a protected species, is not afforded the higher level of protection given to other rare nesting birds (under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act). Within the EU the Great Bustard is a Priority Species.

## Local MEP visits the Project site



*Ashley Fox, local MEP (left) with David Waters, GBG Director at the Project site*

## Celebrating Biodiversity

To celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity, the GBG ran two special trips onto Salisbury Plain in mid-May. The aim of the visits was twofold: to explore the biodiversity of these hugely important rich chalk grasslands (the largest area of calcareous grassland in northern Europe); and for participants to get a much better understanding of why they are so suitable for our Great Bustard re-introduction project.

Accompanied by two notable Salisbury Plain experts – Paul Toynton (who devised the regimes that restored so much of the grasslands after decades of unmanaged grazing), and Dr. Bill Jordan - both trips included a visit to the release-site to view our bustards, a tour of the eastern Plain looking for birds, butterflies and plants, and a look at the haul from two moth-traps set up the night before.

Despite the Plain's reputation for being seemingly packed with wildlife one day and empty the next we were able to show our guests an exciting range of biodiversity including Sainfoin and Green-winged Orchids, Adonis Blue and Marsh Fritillary, Emperor and Small Elephant Hawk-moths, Brown Hare, Stone Curlew and Hobby, and – of course – Great Bustards.



### High Sheriff's Garden Parties

The GBG attended two Garden Party Receptions hosted by The High Sheriff of Wiltshire, Dame Elizabeth Neville. The receptions were in a lovely location at Stonar School, where some of the girls gave an equestrian demonstration and entertained the guests with their excellent singing. The receptions gave a great platform for the GBG to raise the profile of the project and Hercule, our hard working stuffed bird, held court over the proceedings. Our thanks go to Dame Elizabeth for her support.



Dave chats to interested visitors

### BBC Wild Days Out

The GBG also attended BBC Wild Days Out in Southampton, Bristol and at Alexandra Palace in London. These events were held to promote the BBC Wildlife Fund, which has benefited the GBG by funding schools work and our new hide. The events gave us excellent publicity and, in addition to meeting many people directly, several radio and TV interviews were given.



The One Show's Mike Dilger with David

## Huge thanks to Springwatch team



The Springwatch team were a huge help in raising awareness of the GBG

Springwatch's Chris Packham gave regular updates on the nesting successes this spring. Dramatic footage recorded by Springwatch cameraman Gordon Buchanan at the project site in the Spring was broadcast during the series. So impressive was the display put on by P5 that Kate Humble and Chris Packham were moved to try and compete by dancing like a Bustard!

## GBG hits the headlines



Chris Packham, Graham Norton & Springwatch all lent their support

It has been a busy season with regard to media activity. The news of the hatching successes led to live interviews on Radio 4's Today programme and numerous regional local radio stations. The story also made the news on Radios 1, 2 and 3, BBC TV as well as several overseas stations. The news was well covered in several local and national newspapers, with very complimentary articles, especially in The Times.

We also took part in a Radio 4 programme on egg collecting and the threat it represents to rare birds which will be broadcast on August 19th.



Chris interviews David about the Great Bustards on BBC2

### GBG goes wild

David Waters participated in a live broadcast from London Zoo during the BBC's Wild Night In. This was the climax of the Wildlife Fund Appeal and attracted some 4.2 million viewers. An interview with Chris Packham highlighted the importance and success of the Great Bustard Project.

### Bustard Release in Russia

One exciting event in Russia this spring was the release into the wild of one of the birds reared last year. In snowy winters (and the last one was!) the Saratov Great Bustards move south west to Ukraine. It was felt this flight may be a difficult challenge for a newly released young bird in the autumn. It was decided to keep some of the birds in an aviary over winter and to use a spring release. That the birds all thrived is a testament to the care Tatiana takes in rearing the birds. A male was released with a GPS/Satellite transmitter.

### GBG visit the Business Awards



Karen Waters and Suzy Elkins talk to supporters

The GBG entered the South West and Salisbury Business of the Year Awards. Sponsor of the Environmental Award, Nick Little of Emery Little Insurance, made special reference to the Great Bustard Project and invited David Waters to come on the Salisbury Playhouse stage with Hercule, the stuffed Bustard. The evening gave the GBG a great chance to raise its profile within the local business community.

### NABU study in Germany

The regional government in Lower Saxony has contacted the German Birdlife partner NABU to undertake a feasibility study looking into the possibility of reintroducing Great Bustards to their area. Lower Saxony is in north west Germany bordering Holland. Germany has a Great Bustard population in Brandenburg (north of Berlin) which is looked after by a very active conservation programme (see *Otis* 32 for details). This proposal would mean a true reintroduction and the GBG are the only organisation to have undertaken such a task. We are planning to host the NABU study leader, Kai-Olaf Krüger when he visits our project in September. That such a proposal is being considered shows the impact the UK Great Bustard Project has had internationally. If the project were to go ahead it could establish a new Great Bustard population much closer to the UK than we currently have. This would be a strategic link between separate populations and be a great step towards reuniting the fragmented populations of Great Bustards across Europe.



© Bela Motko

### GBG pitch in at Salisbury Beer Festival

The GBG helped staff the Salisbury Beer Festival 2010 under the guidance of Salisbury CAMRA & GBG member Charles Hibberd. As well as being a thoroughly enjoyable evening it was a great opportunity to talk to the organisers about supporting the GBG next year.



*All the press coverage has resulted in a big increase in our web site visitors, and in turn this has led to an increase in memberships. We have had the busiest month ever for visitors to the site.*

### GBG at Birdworld

The GBG held a Bustard Day at Birdworld in May. Birdworld directly supports the GBG by fundraising on our behalf and by donating the proceeds of their recycling activities. The GBG has a large taxidermy diorama and information boards at Birdworld. On the Bustard Day David Waters gave a presentation in the lecture hall, and Suzy Elkins and Bob Baker drew crowds to our stands by donning the Birdworld Penguin Suit. Despite the heat they managed to keep the children (and the adults!) amused without passing out.



David & Birdworld Manager Mark Anderson

## Quarantine pens



*GBG Release Site Manager Al Dawes puts the finishing touches to the pens*

The GBG quarantine has been rebuilt and has passed its inspection by the licensing authority, making it ready to receive this year's import from Russia. David Waters spent much of the spring in Saratov working closely with our partners at the A.N. Severtsov Institute. New pens were built to house the growing chicks, and this development will protect the young birds from harm.

## Calling all Life & Fellow members

The GBG is holding a Life Members and Fellows Day at the Project Site on Saturday 9th October from 13:00 onwards. If you are a Life or Fellow GBG member come to the site to see the birds, listen to a short presentation on all the GBG has done this year, and help yourself to tea and cake! We do need participants to book their places in advance, and would ask anyone interested in coming to call Lynne Derry on 07817 971327 or email [lynnederry@greatbustard.org](mailto:lynnederry@greatbustard.org)



*A special day for Fellow and Life members*

## Join us in London to raise funds at our Grand Auction



*The stunning Royal Geographic Society building*

Forget the Oscars, gala premieres, or the opening of Jamie's latest restaurant – THE place to be seen this autumn is the GBG's Grand Auction at the Royal Geographic Society on 23rd September!

We've been working hard over the summer preparing for our annual fundraising evening in London and it's shaping up to be a memorable night out. Thanks to the generosity of supporters and retailers alike we now have a truly inspiring selection of auction lots from jewellery and guided tours to original photographs and paintings, from South African safaris and a beautiful Simon Gudgeon bronze sculpture to a day with John Chitty (the GBG's larger-than-life vet) and a cheese-making experience courtesy of the good folk at Loose-hanger Cheeses.

We think there's pretty much something for everybody, but that's not to say we wouldn't welcome more lots – if you have anything rare, unusual, or just plain valuable please email Suzy on [suzy@greatbustard.org](mailto:suzy@greatbustard.org) or telephone 07800 649498. We also of course need a crowd of big-spenders to help us get to our £30,000 target, so book the date in your diary, get your glad rags on – and don't forget your wallets...



## *With Release Site Manager, Al Dawes*

*The family gets bigger*



*One of our regular features, as regular readers may know, is 'Bustardwatch' – a round-up of news about our bustards. In the last few months the big story has of course been all about the 2010 breeding season and the fantastic news that for the second year in succession some of our birds have nested. For this issue of Otis we've 'imaginatively' retitled the feature and are focussing on the chicks and their parents.*

The breeding-season began in earnest in March when a small number of males established a lek and began displaying to the decoys (plastic Canada Geese hand-painted to look like Great Bustards – as yet we've not found anyone who manufactures purpose-built Great Bustards) at the project-site. On April 5th our oldest extant male, Yellow07 (who was released in 2005 and is suspected to be the father of last year's chicks), returned to the project-site and also began displaying. Females arrived around the same



*A proud mother with her chick*

time and by mid/late April hormones had risen and display activity increased to the point where the males were battering at the heads of their plastic 'rivals' so hard they were actually decapitating them!

In mid April one of our 'red' females also returned to the site - for the first time since she was released in autumn 2008. Having left Salisbury Plain just a month after her release she'd spent the intervening months roaming south-west and central England (she was in Oxfordshire on April 11th), and in 2009 had not even been recorded within 18 miles of the project-site. Encouragingly her return coincided with the peak of the lekking activity, which implies that our released birds have an innate ability to find their way back 'home' when the time is right for them to do so.

By late-April display activity at the site had peaked and subsequently tailed off, suggesting that the females were no longer receptive to the males. Shortly afterwards the females became increasingly elusive, and by the first week of May were no longer consorting with their would-be partners at all – a good indica-

tion that nesting might soon begin. Most birds left the project-site soon afterwards.



*The Great Bustards are breeding in Britain*

Males take no further part in the nesting process and disperse, leaving the females to raise any offspring alone. Nesting females are extremely difficult to observe, let alone find but through our own work, and by following-up reports from farmers and land-owners across south Wiltshire, we were finally able to locate four nests by the middle of the month - two more than last year.

Remarkably one of the nests belonged to our wandering young female, the two year old red-tagged bird that had effectively been an absentee for eighteen months! As mentioned, data shows that it takes several breeding attempts before inexperienced females become good mothers, and though 'red' was seen with two chicks she soon lost one, and around ten days later was found in a different location without her chick and associating with another non-breeding female. Hopefully next year she will nest again and the lessons learnt in 2010 will benefit her next clutch of chicks.

Another female was also discovered incubating in mid-May. Halfway through the 28 day incubation period she unexpectedly left the nest and flew to another site. Observations over the following week determined that she had not returned to the nest, and after a further period the eggs were collected and post-mortemed. Our vet confirmed that they were fertile and partly developed. It's possible that once again her inexperience is behind the abandonment though some unknown external factor may be involved.

Meanwhile Green 6, our soon-to-be media star, was found to be incubating, sitting very tight in deep cover. Eventually we were able to confirm that she had two chicks and although both were feeding well one was smaller and weaker and was lost a few days later (as is often the case with inexperienced Great Bustards).

At the time of going to press the remaining chick – just the third UK chick to reach two months old since 1832 - is doing extremely well, and its growth rate and shape of its head suggest that unlike last year's chick, this year's is a female.



© David Kjaer



© David Kjaer

*This year's chick with her mother*

A small number of other females that were present during the courtship displays back in May left the area and have so far not been relocated. The likelihood is that they too are nesting but as yet we have no proof. If the nests are unsuccessful we may never know, but if they have managed to lay eggs and raise their chicks hopefully they'll bring them back to the Bustard Site in the autumn or the following spring. We're keeping our fingers crossed, but by any measure this has already been a great year for the GBG and our bustards...

Further updates will be posted on the GBG website and in the next issue of Otis. The following account might appear to be lacking



in detail, but any disturbance of our breeding birds could be a major setback to the project. We hope

therefore that members will understand why we don't specify nesting locations. We also don't give the tag numbers of the birds involved to keep them safe from egg-collectors who might track sightings of them in subsequent years. One exception to this is Green 6: we've attracted (and are grateful for) a huge amount of publicity over the last few months, and the fact that Green 6 was one of the birds that nested has already been widely reported by, for example, the BBC and other media.

Finally, in this article we often use the term 'inexperienced'. Great Bustards are large birds and slow to mature: females normally start breeding around two or three years of age, and males when they're five. Many of our birds are younger than this and studies repeatedly show that while young females are capable of nesting they can take several seasons to successfully fledge their chicks: that inexperienced mothers lose some of their chicks is of course regrettable but entirely expected therefore.

**Find out more at [www.greatbustard.org](http://www.greatbustard.org)**

## Egg Defence

This year, GBG worked closely with Wiltshire Constabulary's Rural Crime Team and Defence Estates to ensure nest locations were kept secret to reduce disturbance from bird watchers. The eggs were also marked with a special permanent forensic marking glue called SelectaDNA to deter and help prosecute any potential egg collectors.



A Great Bustard nest - © GBG library

## China's first International Great Bustard Symposium



David Waters and Al Dawes along with Prof. Juan Carlos Alonso

### David Waters reports on a successful trip to China.

April 2010 saw the first International Great Bustard Symposium in China. The event was hosted by the University of Forestry in Beijing. Delegates from all over China were joined by representatives from Outer Mongolia, Russia, USA, Spain and from the UK. David Waters and Al Dawes of the GBG both attended the symposium. David gave a presentation about the UK/Russian Great Bustard Project and was also invited to chair one of the sessions.

The two day symposium was very interesting with presentations in both Chinese and English and the whole event was very well organised indeed, with a team of students ready to meet any overseas guests at the impressive Beijing airport – no queuing for immigration or luggage carousals. The hotel was on a main street and had large banners hanging down the front of the building

welcoming the international delegates. A primary aim of the symposium was to assist in the creation of a five year Action Plan for the Great Bustard in China. Another focus was on the Great Bustard population in the Daurian region which straddles the borders of Russia, China and Mongolia, and whose best interests would be served by a tripartite conservation plan.

Naturally many of the presentations were on the Chinese bustard populations, but the hosts were keen to hear about conservation and monitoring methods from other countries.

Both forms of Great Bustards occur in China – the nominate *Otis tarda tarda* and the eastern sub species *Otis tarda dybowskii*. The status of the two sub species in China is vague and the Chinese recognise the need for accurate census work. In very broad terms the species as a whole can do well in the protected areas and reserves, but suffers

from illegal hunting, habitat degradation and disturbance from over grazing and from the misuse of poisons.

Several of the reserve areas reported that their birds were secure in the reserves when breeding, but were vulnerable when they left the protected areas during their migration. Some of the reserves had good data on the numbers of Bustards present, but details of migration routes and stop over places were poor and there was little data from non-reserve areas.



'Great Bustard' in Chinese characters



*The beautiful Red-Crowned Crane*

After two days of presentations and discussions the delegates were invited on a field trip to a national nature reserve at Tumuji in Inner Mongolia, about 1000 kms north of Beijing. Here we were shown 'Dybowski's' Great Bustards, and Common, Hooded, and Red-crowned Cranes. Other interesting birds included Pallas's Sandgrouse, Grey-headed Lapwing and Mongolian Lark. The airport at Ulanhot was a delight. It did not compare with Beijing for size and splendor, but the whole building was open just for our flight, and the last person out shut the door. The temperature was hovering around freezing, but the weather was raw. A cold biting wind cut through clothing and the ground was frosted and hard. The harshness of the landscape was confirmed with a total absence of anything green. Everything was brown other than the lakes, which were still frozen white.

Our hosts were very accommodating and looked after us very well. They did however, provide a police escort everywhere we went – blue lights flashing all the time, even in the field. After one of the delicious and sumptuous meals the foreign delegates proposed a walk around the local town to aid digestion.

The idea caused some consternation but arrangements we hurriedly made and a police guide took us around the main streets.

After the field trip and return flight to Beijing there was time to visit the city Zoo. A number of Great Bustards are held here and researchers are keen to develop a successful captive breeding scheme. Some of their birds are fully mature and indeed they have males over 20 years of age. They also have females that produce eggs every year. These two facts indicate a good standard of husbandry, but breeding success still eludes them. Possible solutions may lie in the social grouping of the birds. Males may need exposure to other displaying males to prompt the production of hormones required for successful breeding, or females may need to see more than one displaying male.

The staff at the zoo were very receptive to our ideas and suggestions: specifically that Beijing Zoo work closely with the GBG and Moscow Zoo on captive breeding and that information and methods are both shared and compared.

The experience of the GBG in marking birds and monitoring was very relevant to the hosts and further collaboration has been planned. The GBG has submitted a document suggesting an outline for a 5 year plan for Great Bustard conservation in China, and this was well received by the Organising Committee. The suggested emphasis is on census work; establishing where the Great Bustards are and how many there are must be a first step to their conservation. Other suggested activities included a combination of education and law enforcement to reduce the number of eggs or chicks collected by villages or shepherds for exotic pets. The Great Bustard has the same level of legal protection in China as the Giant Panda, but they are still kept captive in villages amongst chickens and geese.

As well as the formal conference proceedings and the making of new contacts, it was a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues and friends, particularly Prof Juan Carlos Alonso from Madrid Natural History Museum and Prof Vladimir Ostepenko from Moscow

Zoo. Regular contact is maintained with our Chinese counterparts and it is hoped we will be able to work together again in the future.

The GBG is grateful to the Organising Committee of the Beijing International Great Bustard Symposium and to Jing Zhang of Beijing Zoo. Special thanks go to Yamian, who as well as being a very efficient and patient translator became the first GBG member from China.



*Dybowski's Great Bustard*



*Panda in Beijing zoo*

### *John Chitty - GBG Vice President and Consultant Vet*

*Have you ever wondered what a day in the life of a Bustard vet consists of? David Waters talks to John Chitty, GBG's consultant veterinarian.*

In the early days of the Great Bustard Project the GBG was a part of a Consortium consisting of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the University of Stirling as well as the GBG.

After agreeing and signing the project proposal in the licence application submitted to DEFRA, ZSL asked for a meeting at Whipsnade where they informed me they only wanted a few birds to keep at the Zoo at Whipsnade. This did not fit with the objectives of the project so ZSL exited from the consortium. This left the GBG with a big hole in its resources. ZSL had agreed to undertake the import, health screening and quarantine of the birds. They were also to

contribute to the incubation and rearing of the chicks in Russia. After learning of this change of heart I had a long drive home on the M25 where I searched for a way to keep the project moving forward.

A chance encounter, many years before at the Salisbury and District Poultry Club with a guest speaker named John Chitty had been stored in the recesses of my memory. I recalled John giving a presentation about poultry diseases. John had moved practice several times and it took a while to track him down, but after a short telephone briefing we agreed to meet in a mutually local pub. I was hoping we would get a local vet who could help us out with some of the specific veterinary issues we were certain to face, and who could act as a liaison point for issues such as quarantine and the Russian aspects of the project. To my delight John was agreeable to taking responsibility for these issues. The GBG had a vet! That really is less than half the

story as John was also a vet registered at the appropriate levels within the Government structures who could make declarations about import health screening, could operate our quarantine premises, and could operate at the highest level of veterinary officialdom. On top of all this, John is one of the most highly regarded avian veterinarians and is held in this regard on a global level.

In acknowledgement of John's huge commitment to the project he was asked to accept a position as GBG Vice- President – a post he graciously accepted.

*“John's enthusiasm for the Bustard project was unbounded, and even more remarkable is the fact that this enthusiasm has grown after 7 years of working with us”.*



*John visits Russia annually to check the health of the birds - © GBG library*



In any typical year John will start the season by inspecting our quarantine premises, for which he maintains responsibility. Along with Ruth Manvell of VLA Weybridge he will then travel out to Saratov in July and examine the chicks at the field station at Diakovka. Blood samples and swabs are taken, of which some are transported to the UK to be tested at the government laboratory at Weybridge. Unhatched eggs are carefully examined in a rather smelly procedure along with any chicks that have died. These post mortem results are very important to ensure no underlying health issues are present and to help us optimise the incubation and rearing conditions. Any sick, injured or abnormal chicks are also treated. John will work closely with the Russian state veterinarians in Karasney Kut and ensure both sets of health protocols are properly implemented. Close monitoring of the chicks has led to development of better methods for transporting the chicks.



*John treats many species of birds, reptiles and all manner of other exotic animals*

With a clean bill of health, John's next encounter with the chicks is when they arrive in the UK. John will meet them at Heathrow's Animal Reception Centre where he assists with the documentation as well as being on hand should any of the birds need any treatment. Generally, the birds tolerate the travel rather better than I do. John will then travel down to Salisbury Plain with the birds and see them safely installed in the quarantine unit. During quarantine the birds need to be examined 4 times, with blood tests and swabs being taken. There is also the chance of sick or injured birds which need treatment, which can be rather complicated as special permissions and agreements are needed to take a bird from the quarantine unit for treatment.

John remains on hand to treat any sick or injured bird after the release and will also post mortem any birds that die, whatever the apparent cause of death. It is very important for the project to know the state of health of a bird immediately before its death. A young bird may be killed by a fox, but we need to know if it was ill or unwell before its capture. John can answer these questions.

There are also the two Great Bustards, Fergus

and Jean-Claude, in the aviary at the Hawk Conservancy Trust. From time to time these two hard working ambassadors for the project need John's attentions.

***John Chitty runs his own veterinary Practice – JC Exotic Pet Consultancy – on the Hampshire Wiltshire border.***

Throughout the year John plays a full part in the project consultative committee and advises on behavioural as well as physical aspects of the Bustards and maintains project liaison with the state veterinary officials. On top of all this, throw in fund raising activities, hosting guests from Russia, including the Bustards in his lectures around the world and the occasional after dinner speech it is remarkable that John finds time enough to run his own veterinary practice. John also covers the veterinary needs of two organisations which support the GBG – the Hawk Conservancy Trust and Birdworld.

***Spend a day with John***  
*A day working with John is up for grabs in our Grand Auction! You can bid online*  
[www.greatbustard.org/auction](http://www.greatbustard.org/auction)

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## The Greatest Bustard site in the world?

**Villafafila (Castilla y Leon, NW Spain) - The Greatest Bustard Site in the World? by Bill and Ann Jordan.**

Located 200 miles northwest of Madrid (and just to the north of Zamora and Valladolid), the Special Protection Area of Villafafila covers 32,600 ha (about three quarters of the size of the Salisbury Plain Training Area's 38,000 ha).

This relatively small area, which contains just a few villages, has a huge resident population of Great Bustards with the highest known density in the world. The latest census in March 2010 revealed 3,100 birds, with a 50:50 sex ratio, and compares with census counts of 2,600 birds in March 2008 and 1,500 in 1992. All birds were recorded within a seven - mile radius of the village of Villafafila. In addition more bustards were seen in 2010 in fields just outside this area. The 2009 to 2010 winter had been relatively mild with no mortalities due to cold weather, though we were told that some birds had moved up to 30 miles away.

This concentration represents 11% of the Spanish and 7% of the world populations, and demonstrates that some Great Bustard populations will increase if favourable habitats are provided and maintained.

The landscape consists of a slightly undulating, tree-less plain, which contrasts with the steep rolling grassy hills of Salisbury Plain. The cropping is 80% wheat or barley, up to 10% Lucerne/alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), and about 10% stubble fallow and sheep pasture. Two EU Life projects were funded between 1997 and 2003, which provided an additional 51 fields of lucerne scattered within areas dominated by cereals.

This mosaic of crops and fallow provides a range of habitats within the same area: the lucerne is used by the bustards for feeding; the grasslands and fallow are grazed by sheep flocks and create summer feeding and lekking areas; and the cereal crops are used for nesting by the females. Great Bustards start breeding here while still quite young: at 3 years old in females and 4 years old in males.

### Numbers of individual Great Bustards at Villafafila 1980s to 2010

1980's 1,000

1992 1,500

1996 2198

2006 2,400

2008 2,600

2010 3,100



Other features at Villafafila which contribute to the success of Great Bustards include:-

- An open landscape, with no fences, walls, irrigation or power lines, which reduces collisions in flight.
- Widely spaced villages, with a low level of human field activity, minimise disturbance during the lekking and nesting seasons.
- The absence of trees and bushes reduces shelter for foxes, the main predator of young bustards. Hunters also visit the area in winter to shoot foxes and first year bustard mortality is now only 70% - still mainly due to foxes – compared with as much as 90% in other Great Bustard populations.

Our observations in April 2010 were that birds again occurred as large groups, feeding mainly in lucerne. Mature males displayed individually: at mid-day there was little activity, but by 4 pm large groups were feeding and moving through the lucerne. At

times around up to 300 birds were visible from a tower hide.

### Visiting Villafafila

Visiting Villafafila is now relatively easy, with flights from Stansted to a small airport north of Valladolid which is less than an hour's drive to the site. There is an impressive visitor centre at Villafafila (Tel. 00 34 980 58 60 46) and stone tower hides on the plains giving excellent panoramic views of the grasslands and often several hundred bustards. Please keep to hides and public roads, to avoid disturbance. Accommodation can be obtained in Villafafila (Hostal de los Angeles Tel 00 34 980 50 12 29), Benavente, Manganeses, Zamora or Ampudia (Posada 4 star, Tel 00 34 979 76 80 08).

*Written by Bill and Ann Jordan, based on field visits to Villafafila on 9 and 16 April 2010 and information from reserve staff. (See also paper on chick productivity by Estlin Waters in last Otis Issue No. 32)*

### Footnote

*There has recently been a severe decline in both Little Bustard and Sandgrouse species. The agricultural systems used at Villafafila have proved to be very effective in supporting a large and increasing population of Great Bustards. Ironically, continual cereal cropping may be responsible for the devastating declines now occurring in other steppe plain species, both here and in other extensive areas of Iberia.*

*In the 1980's at Villafafila, there were 200 pairs of Little Bustards and 50 pairs of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Both species are now virtually extinct at Villafafila, and becoming very scarce in the rest of Spain and Portugal where they previously occurred in tens of thousands. Traditional cereal cultivation consisted of one year crops of wheat or barley followed by two to three years of fallow when the land reverted to wild plants, seeds and associated insects, which provided year round food for Little Bustard and Sandgrouse species.*



## Meet the BBC Wildlife Fund team



Amy Coyte, Director of BBC Wildlife Fund



The ever-enthusiastic BBC Wildlife Fund team - © GBG library

### David Waters visits the BBC Wildlife Fund offices in London to discuss the recent 'Wild Appeal'.

Visitors to the Great Bustard project in recent months cannot fail to have been impressed by the new hide. The previous structure did sterling service, but was in reality, little more than a converted shed. That it hosted somewhere around 10,000 visitors over the years was remarkable. The new hide not only replaced the old one, but is better in every way. The privilege of standing upright is no



Photograph courtesy of Chris Sperring, MBE

longer reserved for those under 5'6", the seating and viewing slots are far more comfortable and the whole structure is solid in windy weather. Above all, the greater size of the new hide makes the visits far more enjoyable and allows easy sharing of telescopes and so on.

This new hide was made possible by a grant from the BBC Wildlife Fund, and this was the second grant the GBG received from this fund. The BBC Wildlife Fund was set up in 2007 by the BBC Natural History Unit (NHU). Whilst making the best wildlife films in the world over many years, the unit became acutely aware of the decline of many rare and exotic species they were filming. The BBC Wildlife Fund was created combat the alarming decline they were filming. The Fund raises its own money, and is not subsidised by BBC or licence fee revenue.

The grants are given to UK based charities, but 80% of the money is spent on overseas projects. The aims of the fund are centred upon sustainable activities which provide long term benefits. The main themes are saving our species, conserving, restoring and creating wildlife homes and engaging people

More information can be found here: [www.BBC.co.uk/wild/grants/](http://www.BBC.co.uk/wild/grants/)

The first grant to the GBG was for educational resources; a laptop computer, a digital printer and the printing of educational literature. The second larger grant allowed the commissioning of the new hide, and again this ties in with the educational theme. After a visit to the hide visitors leave enthused about the Bustard, hopefully motivated to participate in real conservation and many then decide to directly support the GBG and its work – education, participation and sustainability.

### Did you know?

**ONE THIRD** of known species are under threat.

The BBC Wildlife Fund raises awareness and funds to help save this threatened wildlife and places.

Your donations make a clear difference.



*Chris Packham, Kate Humble and Martin Hughes-Games supported the BBC Wildlife Fund appeal*

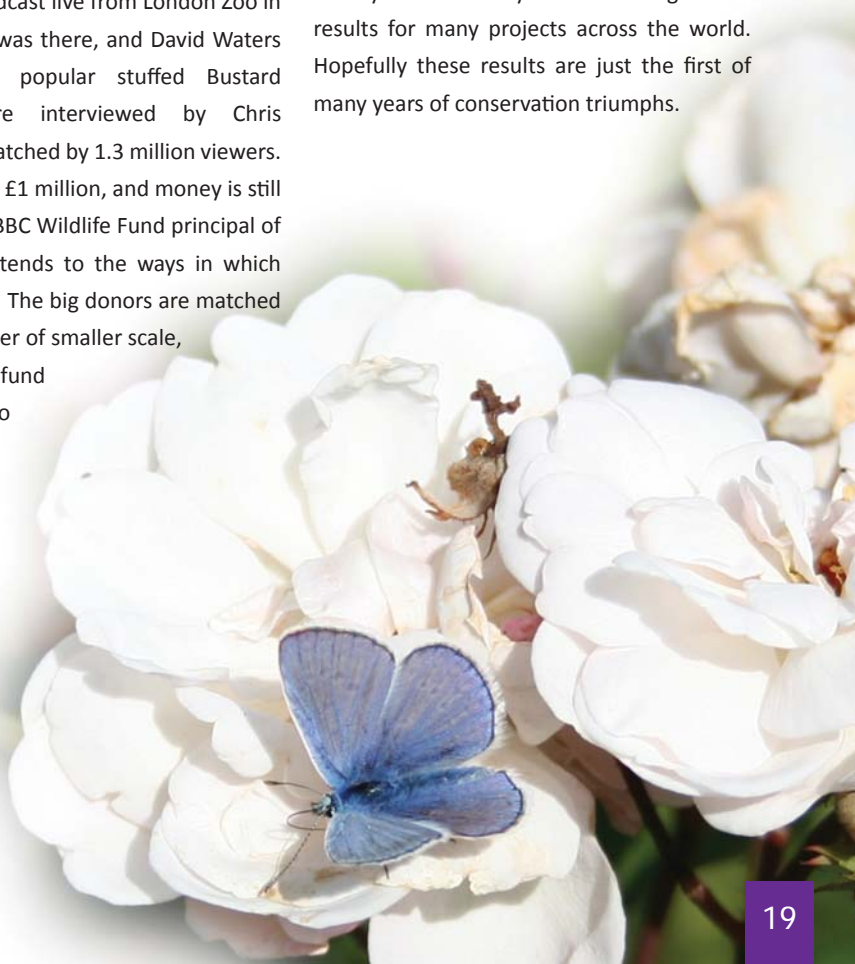
Amy Coyte, the Director of the BBC Wildlife Fund has spent much of her life working for conservation organisations. What she was actually doing, and why, was a mystery to many of her family for a long time. Amy explains, “for so many people, the work of the BBC Wildlife Fund has really brought home what conservation is all about”. It is the challenge of forming complex ecological matters into a simple conservation message that a community can embrace that Amy finds so enjoyable.

GBG supporters will be familiar with the way the Great Bustard works as a flagship species – generating interest, enthusiasm and action which support wider conservation themes. The BBC Wildlife Fund recognises the value of flagship species. As well as the Great Bustard grants, support has been given to a wonderfully effective Jaguar conservation project in Brazil. Getting things right for the mighty and mysterious Jaguar will bring benefits to many other species which share its habitat. The funding, however, is not restricted to the big, and glamorous ‘super species’: UK projects to receive support include the management of reed beds for Bitterns, the Cirl Bunting Project, and conservation of the Fen Raft Spider. Money has been given to help train volunteer observers studying Basking Sharks and for the purchase of acoustic monitoring equipment for Bechstein’s Bat.

The GBG has also developed close ties with another branch of the BBC. Springwatch’s Chris Packham and Gordon Buchanan gave the project some wonderful coverage in this years Springwatch broadcasts. Under the leadership of Executive Producer Tim Scoones, the Springwatch team and BBC Wildlife Fund joined together in a series of events, culminating in the “Wild Night In” which was broadcast live from London Zoo in June. The GBG was there, and David Waters and the ever popular stuffed Bustard “Hercule” were interviewed by Chris Packham and watched by 1.3 million viewers. The night raised £1 million, and money is still coming in. The BBC Wildlife Fund principal of participation extends to the ways in which money is raised. The big donors are matched by a huge number of smaller scale, but imaginative fund raisers: cycling to work dressed as a monkey,

children donating a weeks pocket money and fluttering through a forest in a butterfly costume to name but a few!

The BBC Wildlife Fund is a charitable organisation with a separate identity from the BBC. However, by using its unique position and links with the BBC it is able to use broadcast media to reach wide and new audiences. The charity has already achieved significant results for many projects across the world. Hopefully these results are just the first of many years of conservation triumphs.



## Become a 'Friend' and help the GBG



*We always need more funds to help us continue our work, you can help!*

### ***Charlie Moores looks at a new initiative to help our supporters fund-raise for the GBG.***

Over the last twelve months the GBG has been putting a great deal of effort into making our project even more 'visitor friendly'. Behind the scenes there has been a steady restructuring, from a total redevelopment of our website and a redesigned 'Otis' to improved visitor facilities and a re-organisation of our membership database. The results so far have been impressive: we have more members than ever before and record numbers of people have visited the release-site this spring. We've also seen an increase in offers of help and fundraising ideas from members and the public alike.

Support and funding are the lifeblood of every conservation organisation. We have always been extremely grateful for the help we have received and the time supporters

have put in to organising jumble-sales, manning stalls and promoting the GBG whenever they could. However, apart from holding a regular but informal (and generally good fun!) meeting once a month, as a relatively small group the GBG hasn't previously been able to put in place a formal structure or team to back-up our supporters' efforts.

While we have been refining our infrastructure, however, we have also seen an opportunity for us to offer our supporters an easy way to get plenty of practical and constructive advice and help. This has led us to set up the 'Friends of the Bustard' ('FoB').

Before our long-standing volunteers roll their eyes and mutter about committees and bureaucracy, let me explain first what 'Friends of the Bustard' isn't. It isn't about committees and it isn't about bureaucracy!

### **Find out more?**

*The 'Friends of the Bustard' will be a support group for the GBG and a 'one-stop-shop' so that any GBG supporter, no matter where they live, can get the information and the help they need as quickly and as easily as possible.*



We want to make things as easy as possible for our supporters to offer us their much-welcomed help. Don't things work well already, I hear you ask? On a local scale everything has been working very well but what if, say, a GBG supporter who lives far from the Project Site wanted to set-up a small fundraising event in their town-centre (something we'd very much welcome)? At the moment it's not entirely clear where they would go for help or advice.

By bringing fundraising, supporter's events, and promotions under one banner – the 'Friends of the Bustard' - and by having a dedicated team to co-ordinate everything, we can provide that help, speed up decision-making, and pass information around all our supporters far more easily.

The 'Friends of the Bustard' will in effect be a support group for the GBG and a 'one-stop-shop' so that any GBG supporter, no matter where they live, can get the information and the assistance they need to support the GBG as quickly and as easily as possible.

We're going to develop 'Friends of the Bustard' in several ways. Firstly we're bringing 'FoB' under the wing of the GBG's Marketing, Membership and Publicity team: Suzy Elkins, Alex Stott and myself. We will be working to ensure the smooth-running of 'FoB' events: if you, the supporter, need anything from promotional materials to media contacts or have any questions from the use of GBG logos to what you can offer in a competition then the marketing team will be there to help and advise on 01980 671466 or by email at [friends@greatbustard.org](mailto:friends@greatbustard.org).

Secondly, to give the 'FoB' a strong identity we are creating 'FoB' branded material. We are also setting up a dedicated 'FoB' website: all events and all 'FoB' news will be posted here so that supporters and members can see at a glance what's planned. We're also planning a dedicated e-newsletter which will be emailed to all 'Friends' who request it.

## *You're never too young or old to become a 'Friend'*

*"I'm organising a sponsored walk in aid of the Great Bustard Group, thanks for your help in publicising the date"*

**Len Tryhorn.**



Which really leaves one question: how does someone become a 'Friend'? If you want to help support the GBG that's 'friendly' enough as far as we're concerned. You don't need to join anything, pay anything or commit to anything. All you need do is email [friends@greatbustard.org](mailto:friends@greatbustard.org) and one of the team will get straight back to you. We'll ask you for a few details (where you live, how often you think you may be able to help, past experience etc) offer our profuse thanks, and add you to our list of 'Friends'. That's it. If you want to leave at any time just let us know.

We really do want to make being a 'Friend of the Bustard' as simple and as uncomplicated as possible, and we want to be as 'hands on' or as 'hands off' as you want us to be. We really do value the work our supporters do for us, and 'Friends of the Bustard' is our way of recognising that work and making it as easy for you to do as possible.

**Sound good? Email [friends@greatbustard.org](mailto:friends@greatbustard.org) and let us.. help you.. to help us...!**



## Schools - Russia

The GBG was delighted to formalise its relations with schools in the Saratov Region in Russia. In April this year David Waters visited School Number 1 in Karasney Kut in Saratov Oblast. Karasney Kut is the local town for the field station and is in the heart of the Saratov Great Bustard population. The rising profile of the Great Bustard in the area has led to information boards being set up on all roads leading in and out of the town. These have information and pictures of the

Great Bustards and advice to farmers that the birds are protected. School Number 1 is for 11 to 16 year olds and has a very active programme of English language. David's first visit included a splendid presentation about Karasney Kut in excellent English by Valeria Shilla, one of the students. This was followed by an event titled "100 Questions". These were directed at David, and it soon became several hundred questions! Everything from Great Bustards to the Queen and Fishing

were discussed. The visit was later celebrated in the town newspaper. In May David returned to the school and was delighted to be asked to be one of the three founding members of an International Children's Organisation. The GBG support this organisation through its commitment to environmental education. The teachers and pupils are very keen to establish links with schools in the UK, and their command of our language means they can all communicate in English.



The founding members of the new organisation

If you would like to discuss linking your school, club or organisation with a Russian school contact [Natasha Lazareva](mailto:natasha.lazareva@mail.ru), teacher at School Number 1 on [nat24121973@mail.ru](mailto:nat24121973@mail.ru). Natasha and the children will be thrilled to hear from you.



## Schools - UK

*Karen Waters reports on her recent visit to a local school to talk about the Great Bustard.*

I visited Chirton Primary School on 24th June 2010. I had been invited by the Headteacher to give a talk to the whole school of 43 pupils with ages ranging from 4 - 11 years. The children already knew that Great Bustards had been seen on farmland near their school and after the talk, the children and I chatted about what they could do to help the project.

The children decided that they would like to have a Great Bustard Day at the school in order to raise money for the project. On 13th July, I returned to Chirton Primary School and

spent a fantastic morning with them. The pupils and teachers were all dressed in pyjamas in order to raise money for the project!! We decided to try and make our own Great Bustard on the classroom floor. Mrs Gay drew a huge outline of the bird using salt and the children sat and coloured in feather shapes and then cut them all out. We used small braches and twigs for the legs and toes and a large black button for the eye. Using real feathers as well as the coloured paper ones, we covered the body in the feathers trying to replicate the real thing. The finished bird looked great and was duly named Robert!! The children want to adopt one of the wild birds and are currently trying to decide on a name for Blue 3.



*The children and I - no pyjamas for me!*



*The children with 'Robert'*

Would you like the GBG to visit your school? Or how about bringing a class to meet our two captive birds in the UK's only Great Bustard aviary at the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Hampshire? Contact [schools@greatbustard.org](mailto:schools@greatbustard.org) for more information, or see the schools section on our website.

## 1,000 days of data



Released by GBG Director David Waters

**Al Dawes and John Burnside report on the movements of a most interesting bird. (John is working with the GBG, studying for a PhD at University of Bath).**

June 22nd 2010 was a special day for male Great Bustard P5. Not because it was his birthday – he was actually hatched 1,123 days before, on May 26th in 2007 making him 3 years and 27 days old. So why was it a

### P5 - facts and figures

Median distance flown daily: 246 m (the distance moved per day)

Total distance flown: 1,109 km

Furthest distance flown in 1 day: 25.7 km

Furthest distance from release site: 32.4 Km

special day? Because it was the 1,000th since he was released on Salisbury Plain. Released with purple wingtags (hence the P in his name) with the number 5 on, he was also fitted with a GPS transmitter (technically referred to as a Platform Transmitter Terminal or PTT). This remarkable piece of technology, funded by Natural England, has been automatically taking a precise geographic reading of his whereabouts everyday at mid-day since he was released.

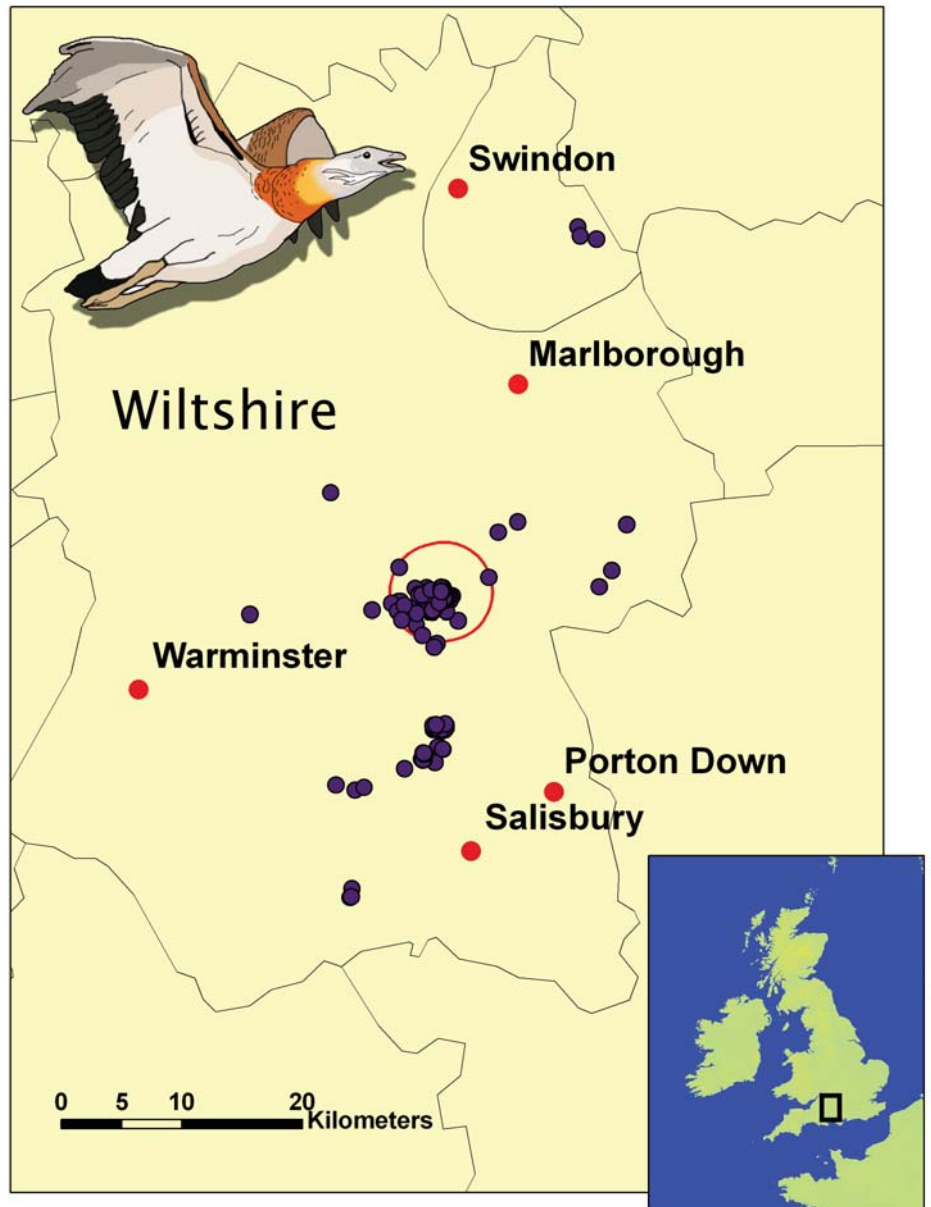


P5 before he is released into the wild on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire - © GBG library



P5 is the oldest of the 15 bustards that have been released at the UK re-introduction site with a PTT so far. As he has been wearing his longer than any other bird he has therefore returned the most information for us to study. Although there is 23 hours 59 minutes between each geographic reading, giving him plenty of time to explore and fly considerable distances that won't be detected by the PTT, data obtained from the PTTs really does further our knowledge and understanding of how our Bustards are settling into the English countryside and we've been able to get a fascinating insight into P5's movements and habitat choices. In fact the location readings are so accurate that we know the exact places within the fields he uses. From the outlook of each site to the food plants present each location can be visited by staff once P5 has moved on to study what factors are influencing his choice of habitat.

It turns out that P5 is something of a home-body. To date the furthest he has travelled is just 32.4 km from the release site but the extreme distances from north to south is 58.7 km and east to west is 32.9 km. Nearly 90 % of his location readings have come from the release site and immediate surroundings (up to 4 km) with the remainder coming mostly from a single site about 10 km away. Allowing for the amount of time he has spent within 4 km of the Bustard Site, his home range is 50.24 km<sup>2</sup>. The total range he has covered is 871 km<sup>2</sup>.



Each purple dot indicates the location of P5 at midday on each of the first 1,000 days after his release. The circle in the middle of the map shows his home range - the area in which 90% of all his locations have been recorded (54.24 km<sup>2</sup>)



January 2010 - © GBG library



P5 on Salisbury Plain - © GBG library

## Iain Green - photographer extraordinaire



Iain Green - wildlife photographer

### Suzy Elkins reports on the work of one of Britain's most original wildlife photographers

At eight years old Iain wrote his first book 'Attracting wildlife to your compost heap'. Those early jottings were the start of his life's passion for wildlife and since 1997 he has worked as a professional wildlife photographer and author.

For much of the past decade Iain has studied the lives of a small family of wild tigers in India, building a unique portrait of their existence. His first book 'Wild Tigers of Bandhavgarh' was published by Tiger Books in 2002; then in 2007, came the sequel 'Tiger Jungle'. With a foreword by David Shepherd OBE, 'Tiger Jungle' tells the intricate story of these wild tigers and their forest home.

However, as much as he adores travelling abroad, tackling climate change is now everyone's responsibility and regularly jetting around the world to photograph endangered

animals does not sit comfortably with Iain. Though he will continue to follow the lives of the tigers, he has made the logical, but difficult decision to greatly reduce his long-haul travel. But far from restricting his work, focussing closer to home means that he can make more detailed studies than were possible overseas.

Taking this to the extreme, in 2005 his book 'Wild London' was published to rave reviews. Far from just rats and pigeons, Wild London showcases the fascinating diversity of wildlife found within the city – from ancient woodlands to number 10 Downing Street.

Following the success of Wild London, Iain is currently working on a number of urban wildlife photography projects. His increasing passion and energy for discovering the wildlife close to our homes - be it in cities, towns or villages, drives him to take his photography to new, exciting levels.

Iain is also working with schools to encourage and enthuse children to explore the natural world around them.

### Biography in brief

Exhibited artwork at events such as a Hampton Court Flower Show: owners include famous names and royalty

Photos/articles regularly published in books, newspapers and magazines.

Presented wildlife feature for BBC London/Springwatch and many radio interviews.

Led exclusive tiger photography holidays to India and wildlife photography workshops on the Isle of Skye.

Regular photography courses for groups, corporate clients and bespoke days for individuals.

Two solo exhibitions in London, October 2005 – 'Wild London', December 2007 – 'In Tiger Jungle'.

Author and photographer of three books.

Lecture throughout UK – to schools, wildlife groups or public events.

Photographs used by many conservation and animal organisations.

Tel 01453 845042

E-mail iain@naturebygreen.com

## Iain donates rare photograph to auction

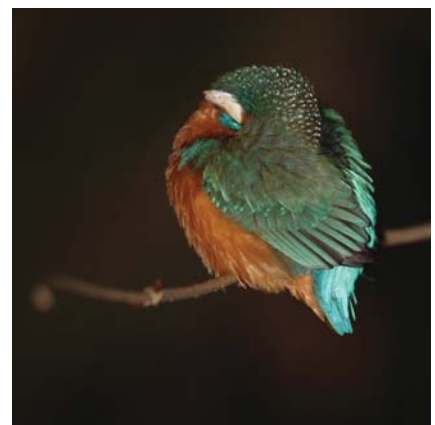
### **Kings of Sleeps**

*Donated By: Iain Green - Wildlife Photographer*

*Description: Signed, gallery-wrapped photograph on canvas (size 24" x 24").*

*More exquisite than any Christmas ornament this feathered ball is a kingfisher – asleep and curled up tightly to shelter from the freezing cold. Though a well-studied species, this aspect of the kingfisher's life has remained secret until now.*

**A Limited Edition of only 100, this photograph is No 3/100**



*King of Sleeps, kindly donated by Iain*

*Iain will be signing copies of Wild London at the GBG Grand Auction on September 23rd, at the Royal Geographical Society, London*

## *GBG member **Barrie Whitney** reports on a recent trip to Portugal*

In April 2010 a pal and I treated ourselves to a Great Bustard “safari” to Portugal. Our flight arrangements meant we arrived in the evening of the first day and left early on the last. The car hire firm we used was Holiday Autos (cheapest - a new Fiesta): the staff wondered why we were going to the Alentejo to stay, “no tourists go there”. We stayed in the Hotel Vila Verde in Castro Verde (absolutely excellent!) and had 3 full days of unencumbered birding. The bistro at the bottom of the street overlooking the market was the icing on the cake. Steaks, salad and beer plus a litre of wine came in at less than £10 per person.

**[Day 1]** – We set off at 08.30 am and went to the area suggested by Stephen Burch in his birding trip report (Aug 2007) around St Marcos da Ataboiera, a short distance from Castro Verde. Stops were frequent seeing the first of many Montagu’s Harriers (2 pairs skydancing), Black Kites, numerous White Storks (nesting on purpose built poles), Calandra and Thekla Larks, Corn Buntings, Lesser Kestrels and Spanish Sparrows sharing the Stork nests. The weather was perfect and the scenery stunningly beautiful; temperatures in the high seventies, cloudless skies and billions of wild flowers in meadows to the horizon.

We stopped and scanned (bins and spotting scope) and within the first hour had a magnificent male Great Bustard in full display strutting about 1000 yards away – great views through the scope - watched it for about 20 minutes - and moved on. In this area it’s completely random where to look next. More Montagu’s – seemingly abundant around here – and a Red Kite. Drove back to N123 (road from CV to St Marcos) and

stopped to walk up one of the many tracks and flushed 5 Bustards (got 3 poor photos in flight) – they are very nervous birds!

In the afternoon we went to a different area for Black-shouldered Kite. Saw more Black Kites, lots of Egrets in the cattle fields and a Spoonbill feeding with Herons. The old Cork woods had Azure-winged Magpies (flock of 10-12) but no kite. Giving up we decided to drive back to the hotel and typically, stopped abruptly to watch a floppy-flighted (with legs dangling) small raptor – which obligingly glided and enabled identification as a Black-shouldered Kite! Magnificent meal at the bistro – end of a perfect day!

**[Day 2]** – Decided to explore the surrounding unpopulated and unspoilt countryside and enjoyed the clean, traffic-free roads and scented meadows. Like the towns, no litter or roadside debris, exquisite and perfect for birds, which were everywhere - we must have missed dozens.

Usual Montys and Black Kites and the occasional Hoopoe undulating across our path. Also increasing sightings of Bee-eaters on telegraph lines, a couple of Red-rumped Swallows and regular sightings of Lesser Kestrels. Brief sighting of a Booted Eagle added another first to our list.

On the way back to Castro Verde we flushed three more Great Bustards (we had no idea they were there – sightings are random luck around here). We stopped further on and wandered away from the road to admire a field of long meadowgrass and purple –flowering vetch when I saw two long-necked birds with black necks – Little Bustards – which lifted away as soon as they saw us!

We decided to visit the reserve a short distance north of Castro Verde where the staff were really helpful. A tower has been built for Lesser Kestrels and Rollers to nest in, which has been a great success judging from the sheer numbers of birds using it. The staff said that the population of Great Bustards was increasing and was at least 1800 birds; a new acre by acre population count was about to be undertaken. Efforts were being made to improve the fertility of the soil in large areas to provide better feeding for the birds during the summer months when the Alentejo is baked dry and arid. We saw no more bustards that day.

**[Day 3]** - Hottest day of the trip (80+ degrees). We headed for the east coast below Lisbon where there were several salt marsh reserves. The areas visited were vast and many were dried out with few birds, apart from herons, egrets, storks and Black-winged stilts. We had views of a Marsh Harrier and a further nine spoonbills. We eventually found beautiful, unspoilt (and empty) beaches on the Atlantic coast. This is one of the most attractive parts of southern Europe I have ever visited: why does everyone go to the Algarve? Shops? Fish and chips? For sheer peace, tranquility and unspoiled surroundings and birding opportunities this takes some beating. Of course it is a paradise for birds and nature lovers and I saw no reason why it should not remain so.



## Old friend is now new supporter

Sarum Jewellers, part of the Goldman Jewellery Group, sits in the centre of Salisbury. Managed by the extremely personable Sebastian (Seb) Salt FGA, this small and friendly shop has three windows of antique and second hand jewellery (one of the best selections in the south of England, I'm assured) and a fine selection of quality pre-owned Swiss brand watches - everything from 1940s wind-ups through to top of the range Rolex and Cartiers.

Their extensive range of pieces has just been reduced by three – all very generously donated by Seb to be auctioned off at our September fundraiser at the RGS! Seb explains that not only are the Goldman Group proud to support a Wiltshire-based charity that is doing so much to promote the county, but that he has a personal connection with the Great Bustard: when he was growing up his home backed onto the very field that held the pens that the Rt Hon Aylmer Tryon and the Great Bustard Trust had built for their attempt at breeding Great Bustards in captivity in the 1970s. Seb has been following the project for many years with great interest and we're delighted to announce that he spent his day off with us as Otis went to press, visiting both the project site and meeting Fergus at the Hawk Conservancy Trust. Few people responded to our call for auction lots so quickly, and our thanks go to Seb and his team at Sarum Jewellers for their generosity and support.

[www.goldmanjewellers.com/sarum-jewellers.html](http://www.goldmanjewellers.com/sarum-jewellers.html)



Tracy Mattingley models the Emerald Collarette, kindly donated by Sebastian



Sebastian Salt FGA presented GBG's Suzy Elkins with the generous auction lots

## Sarum Jewellers



*Exquisite jewellery,  
watches, repairs,  
insurance valuations  
and gem stone identification  
by expert staff*

**Manager: Sebastian Salt FGA**  
**Assistant Manager: Roy Kempson**

Sarum Jewellers, 14, New Canal, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP12AQ.  
**01722 334567**

# Join the GBG & help us to bring the Bustard back

[www.greatbustard.org](http://www.greatbustard.org) • [membership@greatbustard.org](mailto:membership@greatbustard.org)

Postal address: 1 Down Barn Close, Winterbourne Gunner, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 6JP



## MEMBERSHIP

Pay monthly from just £1.66 a month

**Become a member of the Great Bustard Group to help secure the future of this amazing bird.**

Simply fill out the form & send to the address shown above or give to a GBG staff member. Membership includes:

Quarterly magazine OTIS • Booklet about the Great Bustard • Free guided visits of the release site • Invitations to all Fundraising and Social Events • Membership badge • Car sticker

### Annual Membership (tick box)

Ordinary £20  Family £25  Fellow £75  Life Member (Single payment of min £500)

### Your details

Organisation (if applicable) .....		
Title .....	Forename .....	Surname .....
Address .....		Phone .....
.....		Email .....
.....		
.....		
Post code .....		

### Payment method (please tick)

Cheque (payable to the Great Bustard Group)  Monthly Standing Order

### Instruction to your Bank/Building Society to pay Monthly Standing Order

To the Manager Bank/Building Society
Branch Address
Post Code

Account Name .....
Sort Code .....
Account Number .....



Please pay the Great Bustard Group (Nat West, 48, Blue Boar Row, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 1DF, Account Number 29562325, Sort Code 54 - 41 - 19) the sum of (**minimum £1.66**) £ ..... on 1st day of each month until further notice.

### Donation

I would like to make a donation to the Great Bustard Group of £ .....

### Gift Aid.

If you are a UK taxpayer, the Inland Revenue will give us an extra 25p for every pound you give.

Please tick the box and sign. It's that simple!

*I am a UK taxpayer and request that my membership and all gifts of money that I have made in the past four years and all future gifts of money that I make to the Great Bustard Group from the date of this declaration be Gift Aid donations. I understand that I must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6th April one year to 5 April the next) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that the charity will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.*

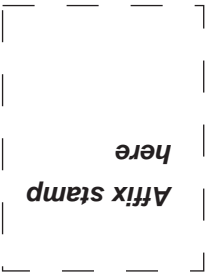
Signature ..... Date .....

**GBG is a registered charity number 1092515**



[www.greatbustard.org](http://www.greatbustard.org)

*Fold here, glue or tape edges closed*



**Membership Secretary,**

**The Great Bustard Group,**

**1 Down Barn Close,**

**Winterbourne Gunner, Salisbury,**

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