

5 years of Planetthanet.org

An incredible journey

It seems a very long time since we launched Planetthanet.org on an unsuspecting world. A very simple idea, spawned by the response to a fantastic week showing the “Teen Birders” some of the sites, sights, and potential for great birding to be had whilst based at SBBOT.

September 10th 2003 – Gadget makes the first posting on the fledgling website (no blogs back then and the financial outlay for the domain name was/is borne by Gadget – hence **He** is the owner of Planetthanet!)

Digi-scoping was still in its’ formative period, so the posting of images to accompany the various reports, was quite a novelty. We only posted images of the birds seen. We made it our policy never to use archive material to enhance any of our recent sightings pages, of which there are three! Obviously birds provided the bulk of our earliest material but, as time passed, it became apparent that the Moths of Thanet were also of massive interest/importance to the wider website visitors. The non-avian page allowing the other botanical, mammalian, reptilian, etc. sightings to be posted followed shortly after the moth news page. The workload is huge, Gadget being the guy who had the time and skills to put it all together and make it work.



PREENING GREENFINCH

The first image to be posted on Planetthanet.org. A simple picture, yet extremely important in the development of Planetthanet.org. The use of images to accompany our news pages being an additional draw, helping the site to quickly become the established provider of up to

29th October 2003 – Dylan finds a strange female “aythya” duck at Grove Ferry. The id debate that followed was to see the awareness of Planetthanet.org rise from 200 hits per day to over 2000!

29th December 2003 – Dylan marries Bev and the resulting Trip Report, of their honeymoon, was to start another Planetthanet speciality, holiday reports. Not the traditional all-out birding trip, but a family friendly version that is applicable to ordinary guys with a partner and kids in tow.

In 2004 - We launched a “Photo Challenge” where we hoped to get as many species of bird, as possible, captured in digital format. The project was a great success and encouraged many new contributors to become involved. Improvement in digi-scoping technology being mirrored by the photo-shop software on our computers. Our archive was also to provide home to the excellent Pegwell Bay Bird Reports. These humorous offerings being penned by Phil Milton yet, despite the libel and rambling gibberish, they contain some fantastic (& important) statistics concerning the gulls, waders and raptor numbers present during the seasons. If it were not for these wonderful documents, SBBOT would not have been able to produce their recent 2000 – 2007 Report, Phil giving permission for the publication of his data without hesitation. We must have been doing something right as we received over 14,000 hits on the night of 30th December!

2005 - Saw us attempt a Garden Watch page, just to add to Gadget’s workload. We hoped to encourage more youngsters to get involved, by September it was clear that this initiative had failed. Our other pages continued to prove popular and we got involved in several outdoor events, particularly our free BBQ & Moth Nights at Pegwell Bay.

2006 – The digital SLR cameras and telephoto lenses had started to be marketed at a realistic price, thus affordable to the average guy with kids and a mortgage? The improved image quality was noticeable in many of the postings, flight pics becoming obtainable at last, however, compact digital cameras continued to produce fantastic results as the pixels rose from 2 million to 5, then 7 million! Digi-scoping was still very popular and capable of producing superb images.

2007 – The quality, and quantity, of images that are posted continues to improve and amaze. The statistics are scary – 5000 hits per day being fairly regular. We were excited when we recorded our Millionth hit – we get that every 90 days now!

2008 – A little bit of politics? The disturbance of wildlife at Pegwell Bay causes many upsets during the Spring and Summer. Planetthanet posts several reports, from various contributors, complaining about the situation at Pegwell Bay and questioning the worth of EU legislation and the role of the Kent Wildlife Trust in protecting the National Nature Reserve? WE MIGHT **NOT** BE RIGHT, BUT WE **DO** HAVE THE RIGHT TO AN OPINION!

The beauty of being an independent website is that it allows us to do as we wish. The reported sightings are subject to no scrutiny, our only criteria being that the observer be happy to put his/her name to it. We are neither judge, nor jury, just wishing to allow those individuals a chance to report their sightings without the fear of being ridiculed by officialdom!

Our annual year-lists and complete index of our avian picture library are testament to the potential of Thanet as a base for seeing and finding birds.

How long will we continue? We are unable to answer that. We only know that the 5 years, already passed, have provided us with so many happy memories. As long as we continue to enjoy ourselves then Planetthanet will continue to post news and pictures of the wildlife that is encountered by our contributors.

We must thank all the visitors and contributors, to the website, for their continued support and would like to make special mention of the regular contributions by Francis Solly, a truly amazing naturalist, Phil Milton, Don Wilks, Ben Ring, Nick Lever, Barry Hunt, Tim Hodge and Steve Coates. Many thanks. There are so many others who have played their part in the success of this project, but none more than Bev & Anne, our long suffering wives.

Dylan & Gadget

