



Plate 113. Gannets. © Naomi Hodgson

Bird Camp - and what came next...

My name is Naomi, and I'm 12 years old and have been birdwatching for a few years. My interest in birds began during lockdown with one of my best friends, Evie. We went on walks together, and spent a lot of time excitedly running up and down Blackford Hill in Edinburgh, looking for woodpeckers, Treecreepers and Buzzards. Birdwatching is my favourite way to spend my time.

Recently, my friends made me aware of how many birds were dying from avian flu - before then I didn't know much. It reminded me of the trip to see the Gannets at Bass Rock that I did at the SOC/BTO Scotland Scottish Bird Camp last summer. The sight of these beautiful creatures filling the skies, like a cloud, was breath-taking. But knowing how badly this population has been hit since then is heart-breaking.

Realising how serious bird flu is, my friends (Evie and Maeve) and I decided to learn more. At school we have been trying to increase awareness and have also started a fundraising stall. We chose to make cards and painted wooden pieces because my friends and I love art, and I especially love drawing birds and animals. My other friends (Julie and Cadi) have also recently started birdwatching. They too have helped by baking cookies and cupcakes, as well as painting the wooden art pieces.

At the time of writing, our stall had been going for six weeks. We raised about £80 on our first day, and we have now made over £450. We plan to donate our funds to the BTO to support their avian influenza appeal.

I want to help because I love birds - when I'm birdwatching, I lose track of time, it's just me and the bird and nothing to worry about. To live in a world where even a Robin is a scarce sighting would be very sad. Birds are fascinating creatures. One of my favourite birds is the White-tailed Eagle. I know people have been working so hard in the UK to bring it back from extinction. It would be devastating if all that progress was destroyed because of this virus. So, I want to help in any way I can, so that no bird will have to face extinction.

Naomi Hodgson,
2022 Scottish Bird Camp participant



Plate 114. At the end of their fundraising drive, the young people had raised an incredible £474.30 for BTO, which was accepted by staff members Ben Darvill and Steve Willis, on behalf of the Trust, at the 2023 Spring Conference. © David Palmer



Plate 115. The fundraising team (from left to right) Maeve, Julie, Naomi, Evie and Cadi. Image © Anoushka Matthew