



for birds
for people
for ever

The Heron



Newsletter - September 2006

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday, 23 September	Outdoor Meeting: HILBRE ISLAND, WIRRAL Experience the high tide wader spectacular with the added possibility of skuas and petrels. Meet at Duke Street Car Park at 8.00 am for an all day trip Leader: Ray Evans 01625 432635
Sunday, 1 October	Special Event: TITTESWORTH '50' CHALLENGE Details below.
Tuesday, 10 October	Indoor Meeting: BIRD BEHAVIOUR by Valerie McFarland
Sunday, 15 October	WGBG Coach Trip: SPURN Depart at 7.30 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow.
Sunday, 22 October	Outdoor Meeting: WOOD LANE NATURE RESERVE, ELLESMERE A relatively new wetland reserve with an impressive bird list. Depart at 8.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all day trip Leader: Ian Taylor 01260 275248
Saturday, 28 October	National RSPB Event: FEED THE BIRDS DAY

PEAK HEN HARRIER SUCCESS

Despite a record number of forty-six fledglings this year, the hen harrier, England's most endangered bird of prey, remains vulnerable. It was announced today (Monday) that, of the twelve successful nests, most were in Lancashire's Forest of Bowland but two were on our doorstep in the Peak District.

Hen harriers have been persecuted because they breed almost exclusively on heather moorlands and are believed to prey on grouse chicks. Nest site monitoring appears to be the only means of securing the hen harrier's future in England as more than half of the nesting attempts outside these monitored areas have failed. Let's trust that 'Give



Hen Harriers by Powell

TITTESWORTH '50' CHALLENGE

On Sunday, 1 October 2006, we are invited to join West Midlands Bird Club for their 2nd Tittesworth '50' Challenge. Two teams from The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group took part in the first Challenge in 2005. Can we do better this time? The event is taking place one month earlier this year to increase the chances of picking up any remaining summer migrants. Although there's an element of a 'Bird Race' in the event, the main emphasis is on challenging yourselves to find 75% of the birds that are on site on the day. As many of you know already, it's a great site and a good day's birding is guaranteed. If you are interested in being a member of a Local Group team please contact Ray Evans, 01625 432635. However, if you just want to take part on your own, meet at 9.30 am by the Barbeque area near the Visitor Centre at Tittesworth Reservoir, Leek

CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

WOW. What a Success !!!!

£4,500

(or thereabouts)

I make no apologies for devoting this month's 'Chat from the Chair' to last Sunday's event.

The ideal warm sunny weather and an exciting range of attractions had around 2,000 visitors flocking to Pikelow Farm to experience 'WOW 2006', our second Wildlife and Outdoor World Extravaganza. We were honoured by visits from the Mayor and Mayoress of the Borough of Macclesfield, Councillor Jim Crockatt and Mrs Ina Crockatt in the morning and Macclesfield and Congleton MPs, Sir Nicholas Winterton and Ann Winterton in the afternoon. There was much to see and do, with lots of activities for children and those young at heart. Our 'café area' did a roaring trade throughout the day with the mouth-watering selection of homemade cakes obviously an irresistible attraction.

The event would not have been possible without the financial assistance of our sponsors, the participation of so many other voluntary sector conservation organisations and all our exhibitors, all of whom freely gave their time and energies. As always, we have been reliant on the help of our RSPB Local Group and RSPB Wildlife Explorers Group members, their families and friends. Individually, they have contributed in so many different ways, cake and jam making, collecting bric-a-brac, serving refreshments, running stalls and car park marshalling, to name a few.

Of course, an event of this magnitude would not be possible without the vision and tireless enthusiasm of our hosts, David and Ann Taylor, who not only let us take over Pikelow Farm for the day but contribute so much besides.

Thanks to everyone – didn't you do well !!!

Let us hope that the funds raised will 'Give Peak Birds a Chance' and enable future generations to enjoy our emblematic moorland birds.

Ray Evans



*From left to right
Ann Winterton MP, Sir Nicholas Winterton MP,
Ann and David Taylor and their daughter Elizabeth,
Ray Evans*



*From left to right
Ann Taylor, The Mayor and Mayoress of the Borough of
Macclesfield, Councillor Jim Crockatt and Mrs Ina Crockatt,
Ray Evans*

LOCAL GOSHAWK SIGHTING

I was gratified to see the observation of a Goshawk on the 21st/22nd of August. my wife first witnessed the bird flying over our garden coming from the Cheadle Royal area along Etchells/Turves rd when I came to view it it was turning off towards Handforth Dean. The first reaction was that it was a Buzzard being too large for a Sparrow Hawk But it had that sparrow hawk tail it wasn't until I could get my binoculars on it that I was fairly certain it was a Goshawk. We always seem to doubt ourselves when we see the unexpected in our own area.

Keep up the good work at Macclesfieldrspb I really enjoy your excellent web sight.

Paul Colton

CHARITY CHRISTMAS CARD SHOPS

The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group has been given the following days to staff the Charity Christmas Card Shops at Macclesfield and Wilmslow Libraries:

Tuesday, 7 November: Macclesfield Library

Wednesday 15 November: Wilmslow Library

Do you like to meet people and do you have time to spare? If so, please consider offering to help at one of these venues. **Jennifer Tolliday, 01625 432105 (Macclesfield) or Trisha Thompson, 01625 526546 (Wilmslow)** would love to hear from you.

Did you know that you can save postage and packing by selecting your Christmas goods from The RSPB Autumn

FEED THE BIRDS DAY

We will be celebrating 'Feed the Birds Day' on Saturday, 28th October with two events at Bollington Arts Centre.

Why not join our RSPB Wildlife Explorers between 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm for a fun afternoon making interesting and exciting foods for the birds?

If that doesn't appeal, why not join us at 7.30 pm for 'Birds on Film', a chance to see some of the latest RSPB films celebrating special birds and their unique habitats including 'The Undiscovered Country' depicting the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland and its wildlife plus a brand new film by Peak Productions, an independent production company, entitled 'Birds of Scotland'.

Tickets (Adults £3.50, Children £1.50) are available at our Indoor Meetings or by post from Graham Palmer, 8 Rydal Place, Macclesfield, SK11 7XU. Cheques should be made payable to The RSPB, Macclesfield Local Group. If applying by post, please send a stamped SAE or arrange to collect tickets on the door.

HAVE YOU SEEN SICK, DYING OR DEAD BIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN?

Many people are currently concerned about the appearance of sick and dying birds in their garden, in particular greenfinches, chaffinches and house sparrows. The affected birds are lethargic, fluffed-up, often crouching on the ground and unable to fly: they have trouble swallowing and the feathers close to the bill are often matted and wet with saliva. The birds are affected by a single-cell parasite, *Trichomonas gallinae*, which causes throat lesions and swelling, and hence stops the bird from feeding and breathing properly, leading to starvation, suffocation and death. Originally this disease was confined to pigeons and doves, and to the birds of prey which fed upon them. However, in 2005 the disease jumped to greenfinches and hence to other seed-eating birds. It died down over the winter, but this year's hot July sparked another more widespread outbreak.

This disease does not affect humans and is not "bird flu". It is transmitted mainly by saliva, for example when infected adult birds regurgitate food for their young, but also when seriously affected birds fail to swallow their food and drop it on the ground for other birds to eat. It can also be transmitted by contact with fresh bird droppings. However, the *Trichomonas* parasite cannot survive drying out, so old dried droppings cannot cause the disease.

If you see any birds in your garden or elsewhere that you think may be affected, please phone Ray Evans (01625 432635) or Graham Palmer (01625 420179) who will take some details from you and pass them on to the Garden Bird Health Initiative, a joint project by the RSPB, the BTO and other interested organisations. Do not take or send dead birds to these organisations or to veterinary laboratories, as currently the latter are overwhelmed by the number of specimens they have received for post-mortems.

If you normally feed the birds in your garden and a significant number of birds are sick or dying, consider withdrawing all food for two weeks, both to allow the parasites to die from drying out, and to encourage the birds to disperse and thus avoid the feeding concentrations that encourage the spread of the infection. At the very least, stop all feeding on the ground or on

Did You Know?

Sparrows can have up to four clutches in one year, and the average clutch size is four

FROM MOORLANDS TO SHOREBIRDS **Birdlife in the Art of Charles Tunnicliffe RA (1901 – 1979)**

If you haven't already done so, why not give yourself a real treat and visit West Park Museum to view this stunning display of pictures, book illustrations and other items, some of which have never before been on display in Macclesfield. The exhibition concentrates mainly on the bird species that breed on our moorlands and then winter at the coast. The title of the exhibition captures not only this element but also Charles Tunnicliffe's own parallel movement in middle age from Macclesfield to 'Shorelands' on Anglesey. The exhibition contains a number of original measured drawings (detailed paintings really) kindly loaned by Oriel Ynys Môn, Anglesey. There is also a stunning original painting of a peregrine falcon, which has been generously loaned to the museum by a private collector and Tunnicliffe enthusiast. The RSPB has loaned a unique and interesting scrapbook of photographs, documents and correspondence about the artist's life, which a personal friend had collected over many years.

While you are there you can pick up a copy of the leaflet 'Upland Birds – A Walker's Guide' that describes some of the excitingly different birds that you may come across during a walk on the hills and moorland above Macclesfield and learn more about the 'Peak Birds Project'.

We thank Macclesfield Museums Trust staff including Richard de Peyer, Director, and Annabel Wills who, along with RSPB Local Group members, Ray Perry and Mike & Jean Evans did much of the work to bring the original idea for this exhibition to fruition.

The exhibition at West Park Museum and Art Gallery, Prestbury Road, Macclesfield, SK10 3BJ is open daily, Tue – Sun, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm until 31 Oct 2006 and then 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm until the end of the year. Details: 01625 619831

COACH TRIPS

The first Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group Coach Trip of the season is to Spurn on Sunday, 15 October. If you want to join this trip you will need to reserve your place on the coach without delay, as Spurn is a very popular venue. Trisha Thompson will be pleased to take your booking, which should be accompanied by a deposit of £5 per person.

OUTDOOR MEETING

Our first Outdoor Meeting of the 2006-7 Season will be to Hilbre Island, Wirral on Saturday, 23 September. Please be aware that there are no facilities and there is very little shelter on the island and we will be there for about 6 hours during high tide. For further details please contact Ray Evans, 01625 432635. We will meet as usual at Duke Street Car Park at 8.00 am where we can rationalise the transport arrangements. Wellington boots and warm waterproof clothing is mandatory along with a good supply of food and hot drinks.

WEEKENDS AWAY

Detailed information on this season's 'Weekends Away' was distributed to members as an insert along with 'The Heron' Magazine and Membership Renewal Forms. We are going for a 'Short Weekend' to Teesside in February and to Southwest Cumbria in May for our main 'Weekend Away'. If you wish to join us, please ensure that we receive your booking along with a deposit of £20 per person by 31 October. Regrettably, this early deadline is necessary to secure our hotel accommodation. If you are interested in either 'Weekend Away' and want more information please email outings@macclesfieldrspb.org.uk

Did You Know?

In their lifetime most sparrows will usually only fly up to 2km from where they were hatched.

Wanted

As ever, we want your old mobile phones, inkjet cartridges, stamps and binoculars.
Please bring to any indoor meeting and hand to a Committee member.

Did You Know?

The oldest known British house sparrow was 12 years old