



for birds
for people
for ever

The Heron



Newsletter - January 2007

**HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR MEMBERS AND GUESTS**

FOR YOUR DIARY

JANUARY 2007

Sunday, 14 January	<i>Outdoor Meeting:</i> NORTH LANCASHIRE COAST An excellent area for wintering waders and wildfowl plus possible wind-blown sea birds. Depart at 9.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all day trip. Leader: Ray Evans 01625 432635 (Please note change of leader for this trip)
Thursday, 25 January	<i>Showing Birds to People:</i> RIVERSIDE PARK, MACCLESFIELD Meet in the Car Park off Manchester Road (near the Audi garage) at 10.00 am for a leisurely stroll birding along the River Bollin. Finish at 12.00 am. Leader: Ray Evans 01625 432635
Sunday, 28 January	<i>National RSPB Event:</i> BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH Join with the RSPB Wildlife Explorers for a birdwatching event at Pikelow Farm, School Lane, Marton. Grid Ref. SJ856690. 10.00 am – 12.30 pm. Contact: David Tolliday 01625 432105 or Ray Evans 01625 432635

FEBRUARY 2007

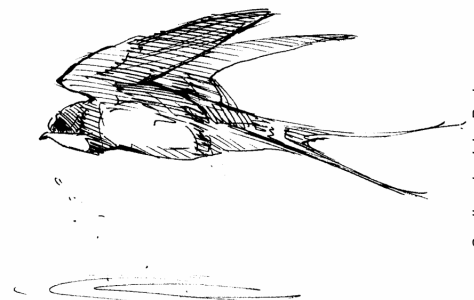
Friday, 2 February	<i>CAWOS:</i> THE RIVER by Paul Hobson 7.45 pm at Cranford Suite, Civic Centre, Toft Road, Knutsford
Wednesday, 7 February	<i>CWT:</i> THE WOODLAND TRUST by Antony Bonehill 7.30 pm at St John's Church Hall, Earlsway, Macclesfield
Tuesday, 13 February	<i>Indoor Meeting:</i> FIFTY YEARS OF BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY by Clifford Heyes <i>plus 'Bring and Buy Sale'</i> in aid of Group funds
Saturday, 17 February to	<i>Short Weekend Away:</i> TEESSIDE

Did You Know?

Swallows are considered to be a sign of good luck. Traditionally a farmer never destroyed a swallow's nest in fear of the adverse events that might befall him.

Swallows drink by skimming the surface of water and scooping up a mouthful.

They also bathe on the wing by plunging into water, and will sometimes dust bathe or smoke bathe.



Swallow by John Busby

CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

Firstly, I want to wish you all a 'Happy and Prosperous New Year'. Let us hope that 2007 is a good year for all of us including our feathered friends, many of which still need our help to assure their long-term survival.

In mid-December, The RSPB announced the acquisition of Sutton Fen on the Norfolk Broads, the Society's 200th since their first in 1930. At the same time they revealed two other major land purchases, Hesketh Out Marsh on the Ribble Estuary and Salthome on Teesside. The former, between Southport and Preston, was reclaimed from the sea 25 years ago for farmland and is to be re-flooded to produce a mix of saltmarsh, saline lagoons and muddy creeks, providing a wetland haven for wintering birds such as black-tailed godwits, dunlins, avocets, redshanks and wigeons. At Salthome, lakes, pools, grasslands and reedbeds are to be created at this former industrial site, to attract wildlife such as marsh harriers, avocets and kingfishers.

Those of you who have been following the exciting developments at RSPB Marshside in recent years will be interested to know that the two major inland marshes, previously designated Marshside 1 and 2, have been renamed Rimmer's Marsh and Sutton's Marsh respectively after established local 'sandgrunder' families that have grazed their stock on each marsh for more than four generations. Furthermore, while we had our silver bells this Christmas the birds at RSPB Marshside, Southport were due to benefit from a delivery of cockleshells, courtesy of a local firm, Kershaws Quality Foods Ltd. The shells, a by-product of the cockling industry, will be spread on the islands to provide more natural nesting sites for avocets, oystercatchers and plovers.

If you are not seeing the usual number of robins, thrushes and blackbirds in your gardens at present it is probably because some Scandinavian birds have failed to fly south for the winter, apparently lured to stay by weeks of mild weather that experts widely link to global warming. It has been suggested that, with increasingly warm winters, some types of birds won't bother to migrate at all. The presence of year-round blackcaps in some of our gardens is testimony to this occurring already. By cutting down on migration birds save vast amounts of energy on dangerous flights -- such as from the Arctic to Africa and back -- and can have the pick of northern breeding sites in spring. However, the downside is that they risk being killed by a snap cold spell.

If you take a walk in woodland during the winter you may be forgiven for wondering where all the birds have gone. In fact, there are likely to be plenty of birds about, but instead of being evenly spread throughout the area, several species group together and move through the woodland in a loose, mixed feeding flock. If you are lucky, you may suddenly find yourself surrounded by blue, great and coal tits, goldcrests and chaffinches, twittering and feeding hungrily in one small area.

By using your senses, especially by listening, you can improve your odds of encountering these feeding flocks. The birds keep in touch with one another using short, quiet 'contact' calls, which, roughly translated, mean 'I'm here - where are you?' By sticking together, they improve their chance of survival, because together they are far more likely to spot a predator, like a sparrowhawk, before it's too late.

Many bird species congregate at night in communal roosts for the same reason. We have all seen starlings, rooks, jackdaws, gulls and geese massing at sunset before flying off to or settling down to roost. Pied wagtails are known to do this also and, for those of you who wish to see this spectacle first-hand, more than one-hundred and fifty birds congregate nightly in the two trees in Pickford Street Car Park, Macclesfield.

It is interesting to note that, while we are doing all we can to help 'Save the Albatross', these magnificent birds are helping us to learn more about global warming. Albatrosses are being used to gather huge numbers of sea-surface temperature readings in the North Pacific. The birds are equipped with small GPS data loggers weighing just 45g that sit on their backs and track their movements while simultaneously recording water conditions when they touch down to feed or rest.

CHARITY CARD SHOPS: THANKS

I am sure that you will wish to join the Group Leader and Committee in thanking all members and friends of the Group who helped on our allotted days at the Charity Card Shops at Knutsford Heritage Centre, Wilmslow Guild and Macclesfield and Wilmslow Libraries. Furthermore, we are most grateful to Chris Revett, Joan Wilson, Jennifer Tolliday, Trish Thompson and Jean Gibbons who have looked after our interests at these venues and replenished the stock on a regular basis. We are indebted also to the many other members and friends of the Group who have assisted with RSPB Sales at Charity Fairs and other events during recent months.

You will be pleased to learn that the Charity Card Shops between them produced sales of £4320, which along with sales of £2091 at Indoor Meetings and other events has generated so far this financial year commission of £2244 that, in due course, the Group can allocate to an approved RSPB project of their choice.

THE CINNAMON PIPIT !!!

In the week before Christmas, when apparently the rest of the country ground to a halt under a blanket of fog, we were blessed with clear bright crisp sunny weather on the Menai Straits.

We walked through the lovely old town of Caernarfon, across the footbridge and strolled along the narrow shore road watching the 'usual suspects' - redshank, oystercatcher, turnstone, wigeon and pintail on the mirror-still clear water.

After a pleasant couple of miles, Mike spotted a small pale pipit-type of bird. It had an orange-yellow mantle and crown, cream body, streaked breast, dark eyes and red legs and bill. It sat prominently on stones, was not bothered about us and moved in a swooping-style.

Soon, a car appeared with two 'binoculared' local gentlemen and we discussed our thoughts on it being an albino pipit or odd snow bunting - but - 'no' - they stated that it was a 'Cinnamon Pipit'.

We could hardly wait to discover more from our bird books - but - absolutely no mention or any sketch like our 'Cinnamon Pipit'.

Can anyone help?

Jean and Mike Evans

RUNNING WILD

I first became interested in birdwatching in 1956 while on a walking holiday in the Lake District with three friends. My friend Ernie introduced me to many bird species I had never encountered before, including Peregrine Falcon. From then on I took much more notice of birdlife, although I have to confess that on a holiday in Iceland in 1961 I recorded zero birds. The landscape was magnificent but I overlooked the birds. Very bad! From the late 1980s my ability to identify birds improved considerably after spending several weekend breaks with my wife, Margaret, at "Shorelands", Anglesey, Charles Tunnicliffe's former home, being shown the many and varied local and migrant birds by Paul Rogers, who at that time lead weekend and week long birding breaks on Anglesey.

So what about the running? When I was at school I discovered that I had the ability to outrun most of my contemporaries in middle and long distances. In my early competitive days my only interest was in performance and had no interest in my surrounding environment. In those days I lived in west London or more precisely the old county of Middlesex. There were plenty of parks, golf courses, commons and other open spaces to run in but I took little notice of the wildlife present. I do remember House Sparrows being in abundance but now my children, who live in London, tell me that there are very few to be found. Ring-necked Parakeets – yes but not sparrows. As my ability to identify different species improved, I found more interesting species whilst out training. In the 1980s I frequently encountered Corn Buntings and Tree Sparrows along Pexhill Lane, Siddington. Yellowhammers were found in the fields off the lane leading to Under Bank Farm, Gawsworth. Red-legged Partridge were seen on Penningtons Lane, Gawsworth. Sadly these species are no longer found in these locations.

In recent times whilst out running for health and pleasure I have seen Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Little Owl (one juvenile rescued by me from the edge of a busy road), Northern Wheatear, Curlew, Raven, massive flocking of Jackdaws, Common Buzzards, Pink-footed Geese, Reed Warbler (Redesmere), Nuthatch, Long-tailed Tit, Spotted Flycatcher, Meadow Pipit, Kingfisher and Green Woodpecker.

For the record, I run at about half the speed of my formative years but I am perfectly ready to stop and observe wildlife or plantlife nowadays because performance is of secondary importance. I need to keep fit but I need to know what is happening on "my patch" thus I am perfectly happy to stop running and investigate the environment.

In 1959 I broke the record for the seventh stage of the Leyton to Southend eight man running team relay, which still stands to this day. I am very pleased with this record but I am more pleased with the wildlife records I have made in the local area in the last few years. To make a contribution to environmental records is more important than ephemeral sporting records!



Peregrine falcon by John Busby

Ray Perry

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BRING & BUY SALE

An added attraction at our February Indoor Meeting is our annual 'Bring & Buy' Sale. This popular event provides us all with the opportunity to get rid of those unwanted Christmas gifts for the benefit of birds and the environment. Demand remains high for homemade cakes, jams, marmalades and chutneys. So, how about doing a little baking on our behalf or sacrificing a jar or two of preserves from your pantry? From past experience, we can be certain of selling all such food items. All contributions, however small, gratefully received. Please ensure that each item is clearly priced and be prepared to take back any unsold items that you brought.

PLANTS

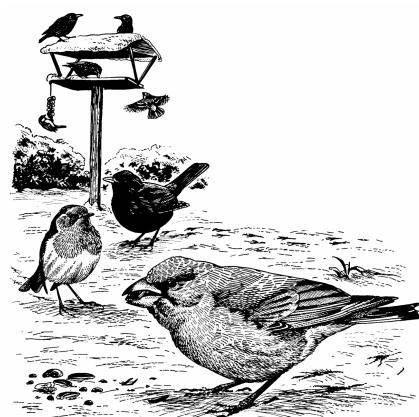
If you are sowing early seeds, taking cuttings or splitting plants that have become too big for their pots or plots, please consider whether you could cope with bringing on a few extra. We will be delighted to take any surplus plants off your hands in time for the two National Garden Scheme Events at Pikelow Farm on Saturday, 28 April and Sunday, 15 July 2007 where, as well as providing refreshments, we will be selling plants in aid of Group funds.

BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH 27 – 28 January 2007

The RSPB would like our help to ensure that 'Big Garden Birdwatch 2007' is even bigger and better than in 2006. Around 440,000 people participated last year and The RSPB are hoping to get ½-million of us to take part this year. You can help them to achieve the necessary higher level of publicity for this National Event by distributing leaflets to your relatives, friends and neighbours. Please take some leaflets with you and help make The RSPB's 28th Big Garden Birdwatch a record-breaking event. Please note that all national RSPB members should receive a Survey Form and instructions with their forthcoming issue of 'Birds' Magazine.

Why not come along to Pikelow Farm, Marton (SJ856690) on Sunday, 28 January and join the RSPB Wildlife Explorers for our 'Big Garden Birdwatch 2007'? Birdwatching activities suitable for all ages and experience will be on offer from 10.00 am to 12.30 pm.

For the first time, The RSPB is promoting 'Big Garden Birdwatch' with a series of 'podcasts' hosted by the popular TV personality and watcher of spring and autumn, Kate Humble. Each 15-minute podcast will be full of fascinating facts, stories and tips about 'Big Garden Birdwatch' and garden birds. Podcasts will be issued at fortnightly intervals until the end of March and the first is now available for downloading as an MP3 file by going to <http://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/podcast/index.asp> and following the on-screen instructions.



Garden birds by Langman

REMEMBER !!!

Don't throw away the stamps you receive on your Christmas cards this year – we can use them to benefit the birds.

Whatever kind of stamps we receive can be re-sold by The RSPB to stamp collectors around the world. All the money raised goes to support a specific environmental campaign or project – this year it's 'Save the Albatross'.

CAN YOU CUT IT?

We are still looking for someone to help us to trim the thousands of used postage stamps that we receive each year. Do you relax while listening to the radio or recorded music? If you do, you may wish to consider trimming some stamps while listening. Have a word with Ray Evans (01625 432635) or Robin Corlett (01625 874604) to find out how easy it is.

Please pass on a copy of this newsletter to any member or non-member of the Group that you know who may be interested

Health and Safety

In the event of fire or other emergency necessitating evacuation of the building, please leave in an orderly manner via the nearest available Emergency Exit or as instructed by a designated Committee member. Emergency Exits, indicated by the internationally recognised symbol of a 'running man' on a green background, are situated through the door at the rear of the hall either straight down the corridor or directly on the right through the main entrance with further exits to the right and through the door to the left of the stage.

If required, there is a first aid kit in the kitchen off the entrance corridor. (If you do have an accident, however minor, while here tonight please report it directly to a Committee member who, amongst other things, will ensure that details are logged in the Accident Report Book.)