



for birds  
for people  
for ever

# The Heron



## Newsletter - October 2007

### FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 21 October	<i>WGBG Coach Trip: SPURN</i> Depart at 7.30 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow.
Friday, 26 October	<i>Special Event: 'FEED THE BIRDS DAY' FILM SHOW</i> 7.30 pm at Bollington Arts Centre, 27 Wellington Road, Bollington, SK10 5JR An opportunity to see the latest wildlife films from The RSPB including 'Waterlands', a visual celebration of our internationally important wetland habitats and their wildlife. Adults £3.50, Children £1.50. Tickets available at our Indoor Meetings or by post from Jean Evans, 112 Ullswater, Macclesfield, SK11 7YP. 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.
Saturday, 27 October	<i>National RSPB Event: 'FEED THE BIRDS DAY'</i> Join the RSPB Wildlife Explorers at Bollington Arts Centre anytime between 2.00 pm and 4.30 pm for a family event making interesting food and feeders for the birds. Contact: Tina Hanak 01625 503572
Sunday, 28 October	<i>Outdoor Meeting: NORTH WALES COAST</i> A popular venue for divers, sea ducks and waders. Depart at 8.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all day trip. Leader: Ray Evans 01625 432635
Wednesday, 7 November	<i>CWT Meeting: BRITISH MAMMALS: THEIR FASCINATING HISTORY</i> by Derek Yalden (President of the Mammal Society) 7.30 pm at St John's Church, Earlsway, Macclesfield
Friday, 9 November	<i>CAWOS Meeting: POLE POSITION – WILDLIFE AND ITS PROTECTION IN NE POLAND</i> by Marek Borkowski 7.45 pm at Cranford Suite, Civic Centre, Toft Road, Knutsford.
Tuesday, 13 November	<i>Indoor Meeting: ROADRUNNER COUNTRY</i> by Keith Offord

### BRUSHES WITH WILDLIFE

Brushes with Wildlife is a combined event that features an art competition and exhibition by local children aged between four and 16 years and a display of wildlife photographs by some talented local photographers.

154 entries have been received for the art competition, which is an increase of over 50% on the number received for the previous competition in 2005. The judges will have a very difficult task in choosing the winners.

The wildlife photographs include a wide selection of species ranging from common garden birds to birds of prey such as merlin, osprey, red kite and buzzard. The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group will benefit from commission on the sale of any of the photographs.

## CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

All the swallows and martins have now departed south and we are seeing already the arrival of redwings and pink-footed geese from northern climes to spend the winter with us.

### **An Attractive View !!**

A recent report has thrown more light on the mechanism whereby birds are able to accurately navigate over long distances. It was already known that they use the Earth's magnetic field for orientation but how they sense this has remained a mystery. It now appears that cryptochromes, specific molecules within the birds' eyes, react to the local magnetic field enabling them to sense direction. More importantly, it has been shown that the resulting neuronal signals are processed in the same area of the brain as visual signals suggesting that birds may actually "see" the magnetic field around them.

### **Moor to Grouse About !!**

I'm sure that we were all horrified to read in the recently issued 'Peak Malpractice Update' that persecution of raptors in our local uplands continues unabated despite increased publicity and greater penalties for offenders. In Scotland, where there has been a similar level of persecution, a number of organisations, including The RSPB, have joined forces to launch the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project. This revolutionary scheme will be assessing, amongst others, the value of specific measures designed to reduce the predation of red grouse by birds of prey. One measure to be tried will entail diversionary feeding of hen harriers. The project as a whole will involve substantial investment in habitat creation and improvement, not only for red grouse but also for hen harriers and bird species that use the moorland for breeding. Interestingly, the project envisages the need for legal control of predators such as foxes, crows, stoats and weasels. We can only hope that, if successful, the measures can be applied more widely on grouse moors and particularly those on our doorstep in the Peak District.

### **News in Brief**

Climate change is the greatest long-term threat facing wildlife. Its detrimental effects on migrating birds are being seen already with pied flycatchers apparently arriving too late to take full advantage of the glut of insects that they need to rear their chicks successfully. Furthermore, breeding waders in southeast England are suffering due to their wetland habitats drying out. Inevitably, many species will be unable to adapt quickly enough on their own and it will be necessary for us to help wildlife adapt to climate change by creating suitable habitats for them. If we don't, they may be lost forever. Hopefully, enabling measures will be contained in the Government's Climate Change Bill, which is expected to be outlined in the Queen's Speech next month.

It is outrageous that illegal trapping and killing of migrating birds continues in parts of the EU despite the European Birds Directive forbidding such activities. A recent proposal by the Catalan Government to permit non-selective hunting could mean that hundreds of thousands of song thrushes and fieldfares migrating from northern Europe will be at risk of being killed. Other less numerous birds, for example common redstart, a species that is already in decline in Europe, are equally likely to end up as victims in this indiscriminate orgy of killing. You can help prevent this outrage by signing the online petition at [www.gepec.org/barraca-i-filat/index\\_eng.html](http://www.gepec.org/barraca-i-filat/index_eng.html).

The RSPB highlighted recently the poor condition of wildlife sites in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and the threat that they face from pollution, rising sea levels and the demand for water to supply homes and businesses. In 'A Greener Future for The Broads' they have suggested twelve indicator targets that need to be met by 2015 to show that recovery is on track leading to a sustainable future for these unique habitats.

It is great to see that bitterns have done well this year with birds nesting in the East Anglia Fens for the first time since the Second World War. Fifty-one male bitterns were recorded over thirty-three sites countrywide. Ten years ago there were only eleven male bitterns recorded. This year's breeding successes included two nests at RSPB Leighton Moss and, with the creation of more reed beds, hopefully the upward trend will continue.

Thankfully, the prospect of seeing the destruction of thousands of hectares of mudflats through construction of a Severn barrage is looking less likely following a less than enthusiastic report last week by the Sustainable Development Commission.

### **Homes for Wildlife**

To coincide with 'Feed the Birds Day', The RSPB is launching a new initiative, '*Homes for Wildlife*'. This is an exciting new activity, inspiring people to make a real difference for the wildlife that shares the open space closest to them - their garden. It aims to help a range of wildlife, including familiar birds that have seriously declined.

By taking part in '*Homes for Wildlife*', you can make a real difference to their fortunes and help to reverse the declines. We hope that thousands of you across the UK will be able to make your homes and gardens richer in wildlife by following the simple wildlife gardening advice that we provide.

You can do as much, or as little, as you like. From a few potted plants on a balcony, to putting up a nesting box, to digging a pond and planting trees in a garden – everything will help. All that is needed to make it work is you!

## Environmental Symposium

On Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> November, The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group, in conjunction with AstraZeneca, will be hosting an environmental symposium entitled '*Our Changing Environment: Threat or Opportunity for Local Flora and Fauna?*' at AstraZeneca's Alderley Park site. The event offers our members and those of other conservation organisations in the area the unique opportunity to hear about and discuss what is happening and what may happen locally. We are honoured that Dr Mark Avery, RSPB Director of Conservation, has accepted our invitation to give the keynote address. Further details of this forthcoming event appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

*Ray Evans*

## **“DERBYSHIRE RESERVOIRS” (WILLINGTON GRAVEL PITS, FOREMARK RESERVOIR & STAUNTON HAROLD RESERVOIR) 30TH SEPTEMBER 2007**

A typically autumnal day start (cold but fresh) we set out from Duke Street heading Derbyshire way for pastures new to the group.

Our first port of call, the Willington Gravel Pits, with its elevated platforms overlooking the water and reed beds showed itself to be a venue of great potential. Although on the day, there was a dearth of waders, we were treated to good views of snipe, including a flock of some 17 or so lifting off to give us a spectacular flypast. Various wildfowl (see list), reed bunting, green and great spotted woodpeckers were seen, and in the distance a good flock (c150) of lapwings. A hobby had been reported on the previous day, but sadly we only managed a kestrel.

Leaving the platforms, we went walkabout and were treated to the delightful sight of a sizeable goldfinch flock (50+) wheeling round and dropping back into the shrubbery.

By now the day was warming up, and we moved on to Foremark Reservoir. As one would expect, belonging to the Severn and Trent authority, it is a typically well managed visitor friendly site. We elected to take one of the three signposted woodland walks before taking lunch. Although enjoyable as a walk, it was, on the day, sadly lacking in birdlife.

Returning to the cars to pick up our lunch packs, we sat in sunshine over looking the water and the local sailing club activities. A nice little treat was the sight of a soaring female Sparrowhawk overhead, which prompted one local to enquire what he was looking at. It's always a pleasure to give someone the opportunity to look through binoculars and see the reaction!

After lunch, we moved on to Staunton Harold. After taking a little time to check out the bird feeding station, giving us the always welcome sight of tree sparrows, we set up telescopes to scan the reservoir, but sadly the only sighting worthy of note was the significant number of great crested grebe on the water.

Putting our telescopes away, we then set out on a goodly walk part of the way round the reservoir. This gave varied habitat of woodland and open farmland, (including a walk through a head high maize field). Again although enjoyable, the walk proved disappointingly unproductive in farmland birds. Ah well, that's bird watching!

None the less, a count of almost 50 species was achieved on the outing. A good day in the fresh air, autumn sunshine and good company. (Do come and join us sometime).

Finally, yet again, our grateful thanks to Ian, who gave up his Saturday to pioneer the site on our behalf.

*Gordon Howard*



*Kestrel by Busby*

### **REMINDER !!! WEEKENDS AWAY 2008**

If you intend joining us on either or both of our Weekends Away next year, you will need to book with **Trisha Thompson** (North Lincolnshire Coast, 2 – 3 February) or **Graham Palmer** (Dorset, 2 – 5 May) by the **25 October 2007**. Please note that a deposit of £20 per person is required at the time of booking.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SYMPOSIUM

### ***Our Changing Environment: Threat or Opportunity for Local Flora and Fauna?***

on Saturday, 17th November 2007, 10:00h – 17:00h  
at Mereview Restaurant, Alderley Park

As part of the celebration of 50 years at Alderley Park, AstraZeneca are sponsoring this event which offers a unique opportunity for all conservation organisations and individuals to discuss freely the impact of the changes that are taking place in our local environment, whether resulting from climate change, agricultural policies, leisure activities or creeping urbanisation.

Speakers will include:

- Dr Mark Avery, RSPB Director of Conservation
- Prof. David Norman, (CAWOS, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and RSPB Council)
- Dr Tim Walmsley, Environment Manager, Manchester Airport
- Dr Philip James, School of Environment & Life Sciences, University of Salford
- Dr Philip Fermor, Managing Director, Middlemarch Environmental Ltd.

There is a small charge of £10 to attend. Refreshments including a buffet lunch will be provided. Advance booking is essential.

For more information and for registration forms for this event please contact:

Ray Evans, 112 Ullswater, Macclesfield, SK11 7YP  
Tel: 01625 432635, Mobile: 07870 455354  
E-mail: ray@macclesfieldrspb.org.uk

## COMBINED CHARITIES CHRISTMAS CARD SHOPS

Once again The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group will have cards and calendars for sale at three venues around the Borough:

Wilmslow Library:	27 October – 8 December
Macclesfield Library:	3 November – 8 December
Knutsford Heritage Centre:	10 November – 8 December

Volunteers from the participating charities look after the 'Shops' on a daily basis with each charity being allocated a specific day.

The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group will be responsible for providing volunteers at the named venues as follows:

**Wilmslow Library on Wednesday, 21 November**  
**Macclesfield Library on Thursday, 22 November**

If you can help by giving 4 hours of your time in the morning or afternoon on either of the above dates please contact **Trisha Thompson 01625 526546** (Wilmslow) or **Jen Tolliday 01625 432105** (Macclesfield). You will not be alone but part of a team of five volunteers from the Group at each session. It presents an ideal opportunity for you to meet new and sometimes interesting people.

**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.)