



a million
voices for
nature

The Heron



Newsletter - December 2008



FOR YOUR DIARY

DECEMBER 2008

Sunday, 14 December	<i>WGBG Coach Trip: CARSINGTON WATER</i> Depart at 8.00 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow
JANUARY 2009	
Friday, 9 January	<i>CAWOS Meeting: BIRDS AND WILDLIFE OF ALASKA</i> by Phil Palmer 7.45 pm. The Cranford Suite, Civic Centre, Toft Road, Knutsford
Sunday, 11 January	<i>Outdoor Meeting: PARK HALL AND BERRYHILL FIELDS</i> Owls, redwing, fieldfare and golden plover can be seen here in winter. Depart at 9.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all day trip. Leader: Ian Taylor 01260 275248
Tuesday, 13 January	<i>Indoor Meeting: THE LAST PINK BITS (BIRDS AND WILDLIFE OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS)</i> by Tom Lawson
Thursday, 22 January	<i>Showing Birds to People: RIVERSIDE PARK, MACCLESFIELD</i> Meet in the Car Park off Manchester Road (Grid Ref: SJ914715) for a leisurely stroll looking for winter visitors. 10.00 am – 12.30 pm. Contact: Ray Evans 01625 432635
Sunday, 25 January	<i>National RSPB Event: BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH</i> Join with RSPB Wildlife Explorers for a birdwatching experience at Pikelow Farm, School Lane, Marton (Grid Ref: SJ856690). 10.00 am – 12.30 pm. Contact: Tina Hanak 01625 503572

SURPLUS OR UNWANTED GIFTS



If you are wondering what to do with any surplus or unwanted Christmas gifts, please consider donating them to The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group to benefit birds and other wildlife. We can use them as prizes in our monthly raffles or sell them at our 'Bring and Buy' in February.



www.macclesfieldrspb.org.uk

The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way

CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

Waxwing lyrical

As we had been hoping, this year's waxwing irruption has resulted in the recent appearance of a few of these strikingly colourful Scandinavian birds in Macclesfield. A dozen birds first appeared briefly on 17th November at a private site in the town but most of us had to wait until 1st December when seven birds were reported at their regular site at the rear of Paradise Street. A maximum of ten birds were present here until the 5th but only for brief periods. Unfortunately, thrushes and blackbirds had already depleted the rowanberry crop and an aggressive mistle thrush was zealously guarding the remaining supply thereby severely limiting the waxwings' access to it. The birds were last seen early on Saturday morning atop the poplars on Roe Street. Unless, of course, you have any more up-to-date sightings!

For the past two weeks birders have been flocking to Tittesworth Reservoir to see the spotted sandpiper that has taken up temporary residence there. This fairly rare North American vagrant is a 1st -winter bird that is similar in appearance to our common sandpiper but with a shorter tail and less extensive wing bars.

A slender chance

The RSPB along with other Birdlife International partners has launched a final quest to search for the last individuals of one of the world's rarest birds – the slender-billed curlew. The last confirmed sighting was in 1999 when it was suggested that the population might have been as low as 50 birds. However, the slender-billed curlew is easily overlooked, challenging to identify and may use countries, such as Iraq and Iran, that have been relatively inaccessible to experienced birdwatchers in recent years. A toolkit has been developed to help people identify and report slender-billed curlews in the field. This identification leaflet, a downloadable MP3 file of the call and a map of all recent sightings by season and other material to help birders know what to look for, and when and where to look for it can be found on www.slenderbilledcurlew.net

Prey tell us

The RSPB are calling on gamekeepers to report the bad apples who think it is acceptable to kill birds of prey and who threaten the good name of their profession. They are hoping that a new telephone hotline will encourage more people with knowledge of such crimes to come forward.

The tide has turned

The future of the UK's globally-important marine wildlife looks brighter with the introduction of a Marine and Coastal Access Bill in the recent Queen's Speech. This is yet another example of 'a million voices for nature' being heard loud and clear via campaigns and petitions such as 'Save Our Sealife'. I'm sure that our internationally important populations of several species of seabird, which include at least two thirds of the world's Manx shearwaters and six out of ten of the world's great skuas and gannets, will benefit from the proposed extra protection.

Hot tip that wasn't

The RSPB recently recommended that chilli powder dusted onto birdseed would deter grey squirrels without harming birds. However, it appears that some grey squirrels are undeterred by the 'hot stuff' and actually like it. It looks as if, in this respect, squirrels are like people - to some it is distasteful whereas others love it. I suppose it's going to be a case of 'suck it and see'!

Ray Evans

A SEASONAL MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE

At this festive time your Committee joins me in thanking you all for the support that you have given over the past twelve months to The RSPB, your local Group and, of course, its Officers and Committee. Without your continued encouragement, goodwill and, in many cases, unstinting effort, it would have been impossible to achieve all that we have over the past twelve months. It is really heartening to see so many new faces at our Meetings and we hope that all members, old and new, will continue working together to promote the Group and its activities to the benefit of birds and the environment. We hope that you will continue to come along to our events because their success is dependent upon your support. We wish all members and friends of The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group

'A Very Merry Christmas and A Happy and Prosperous New Year'.

Exhibition of Wildlife Photography by David Tolliday

Many visitors to Macclesfield Library during the first two weeks in November were able to experience for themselves some wonderful examples of the wildlife photographer's art including stunning images of birds, animals, flowers and insects. It is a measure of the quality and appreciation of his work that during the exhibition David received requests for twenty-one various sized framed pictures with the most popular subjects being little owl, arctic tern and osprey. David is kindly donating the £100 profit from the sale of these photographs to The RSPB.

Arctic Tern by David Tolliday



LET'S BE 'GREEN' THIS CHRISTMAS BY RECYCLING OUR CARDS AND REAL TREES?

On Twelfth Night, or earlier, when you come to take down all your Christmas decorations and cards, please remember to save the latter for recycling. There will be collection boxes at WH Smith, Tesco and Marks & Spencer stores throughout January. Additionally, at our January Indoor Meeting ONLY, we will have a collection box available where you can deposit your cards, which we will take for recycling. Would you believe it? - If everyone in the UK recycles just one Christmas card with the Woodland Trust this year, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity will be able to plant 15,000 trees.

Don't forget also that, if you have a real Christmas tree for disposal, for a small donation in aid of East Cheshire Hospice, you can arrange for it to be collected and recycled. For more details and to book a collection visit www.echtrees.org.uk or phone Richard (01625 612025) or Peter (01625 827164). Please note that this service is available in the following postcode areas only: SK9, SK10, SK11, SK12 and WA16. Collections will take place during the weekend 10 -11 January 2009. The target this year is to collect and recycle 4500 trees in one weekend. Last year's 'Christmas Tree Collection' raised over £36,000 for the East Cheshire Hospice to help meet its £5,500 per day running costs.

CHARITY CARD SHOPS: THANKS

The Group Leader and Committee wish to thank all members and friends of the Group who helped on our allotted days at the Charity Card Shops at Macclesfield and Wilmslow Libraries and Knutsford Tourist Information Centre this year. Furthermore, we are most grateful to Jennifer Tolliday, Trisha Thompson and Chris Revett who respectively have looked after our interests at these different venues and replenished stock on a regular basis. Current indications are that sales of RSPB Christmas cards at these venues slightly exceeded those achieved last year despite the 'credit crunch'.

We are indebted also to the many other members and friends who have assisted with RSPB Sales at Charity Fairs and other events during recent months.

COOMBES VALLEY WORKING PARTY

On Sunday 9 November, a select few of us joined Tina Hanak with members of the RSPB Phoenix Group at RSPB Coombes Valley to help the staff and volunteers make some improvements to the Education Shelter and Fields. Despite horrendous weather forecasts for the weekend, 20+ keen workers assembled at the reserve just as the morning rain eased off. Tina presented us with 3 pages of projects to be undertaken with the promise of a barbecue at half time once we got stuck in.

Groups were sent in all directions for such tasks as: constructing nest boxes, digging pit fall traps, putting up barn owl boxes, decorating the inside of the Education Shelter, cutting willow herb stems to be dried and used in insect boxes, constructing log and brick piles, making a compost bin and wormery, creating an artificial squirrel drey, digging an artificial badger sett and molehills and wrapping trees with bubble wrap (for insects to shelter under in case you were wondering!)

A couple of hours and a couple of rain showers later, the smells wafting from Julian's barbecue brought everyone round for some very welcome beef/veggie burgers and sausages. Then it was back to work putting the finishing touches to everything and nailing up the completed bird and bat boxes. The sun even managed to put in a brief appearance.



Tina allocates the jobs



Barbeque Time!

As a finale we took a tour of the area to see the results of everyone's handiwork. The shelter had been brightened up inside with animal track and tree designs on the walls, the outside had sprouted several bat and bird boxes, the small pond had been cleared of vegetation and roped off and Ray and Ed's compost bin/wormery was duly set in place. The Education Field had been transformed into not so much Homes for Wildlife, as a Wildlife City with houses for toads, worms, moles, butterflies, earwigs, tits, robins, bees, harvest and dormice and a badger sett, which had already been occupied by an obliging (albeit artificial) badger!

The 'Thanks' and 'Goodbyes' were said just as the heavens opened to end a very enjoyable and worthwhile day's work.

David Beer

SAVE YOUR STAMPS AND HELP TO 'SAVE THE ALBATROSS'

In the excitement of opening your Christmas cards this year please don't forget that, by saving the stamps, you can still help to 'Save the Albatross'. Why not leave yourself a reminder to save the stamps from all the mail you receive? Please don't try to remove stamps from envelopes as this could damage them. However, if you wish to help, we would be most grateful if you could carefully trim around each stamp or group of stamps to leave a 6mm (¼ inch) margin of envelope on all sides (see picture). Furthermore, we will be even more pleased if you are prepared to sort your stamps into the following three categories, Foreign, British commemoratives (special e.g. Christmas) and British definitives (non-pictorial). Remember, all proceeds from the sale by The RSPB of collected stamps will go to help 'Save the Albatross'.



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.)

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654