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The Heron



Newsletter - March 2010

FOR YOUR DIARY

March 2010

Friday, 12 March	<i>Lower Moss Wood Event:</i> CONSERVATION OF VULTURES IN INDIA AND NEPAL by Andy Routh, Head Vet at London Zoo. £5 (including light refreshments). Call 01565 755082 or 01625 574883 to reserve a place. 8.00 pm. Marthall Village Hall, Sandlebridge Lane, Marthall, Knutsford, WA16 7SA
Sunday, 14 March	<i>Outdoor Meeting:</i> TROUGH OF BOWLAND This is one of the best areas to see displaying raptors with the added possibility of some early returning summer migrants. Depart at 8.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all-day trip. Leader: Ray Evans 01625 432635
Sunday, 28 March	<i>WGBG Coach Trip:</i> RSPB OLD MOOR AND RSPB FAIRBURN INGS Depart at 8.00 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow.

April 2010

Tuesday, 13 April	<i>Indoor Meeting:</i> NATURE NEAR AND FAR by Trevor Davenport
Saturday, 17 April	<i>Outdoor Meeting:</i> WOOLSTON EYES A superb site for black-necked grebe and a variety of warblers. Courtesy of Woolston Eyes Conservation Group. Depart at 7.30 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all-day trip. Leader: Tricia Thompson 01625 526546

CLEANING NESTBOXES

The nests of most birds harbour fleas and other parasites, which remain to infest young birds that hatch the following year. We recommend that old nests be removed in the autumn, from August onwards once the birds have stopped using the box.

MAINTAINING YOUR BOX

Use boiling water to kill any remaining parasites, and let the box dry out thoroughly before replacing the lid. Insecticides and flea powders must not be used.

Unhatched eggs in the box, can only be removed legally between August and January - and must then be disposed of.

If you place a small handful of clean hay or wood shavings (not straw) in the box once it is thoroughly dry after cleaning, small mammals may hibernate there, or birds may use it as a roost site.

It is quite normal for a few eggs to fail to hatch, or for some young to die. Blue and great tits lay up to 14 eggs to allow for such losses. Cold weather and food shortage may lead to nest desertion, or to only the strongest young surviving. The death of one parent or interference from animals or humans may also cause desertion.

ENJOY!

Avoid inspecting nestboxes in use, however tempting it may be to take a peek! Simply watch and enjoy from a distance. Only open it up if you've got appropriate skills and experience and are taking part in a monitoring project, such as the BTO's Nest Record Scheme. If you want to see the chicks as they grow, you could consider installing a nestbox camera before the breeding season starts.

www.macclesfieldrspb.org.uk

BIRD TALK

Dear Friends,

It's official – the common swift is the fastest avian flyer in level flight although the peregrine falcon remains the fastest bird overall but only when undertaking a stoop. During mating rituals when they form 'screaming parties' common swifts have been clocked at up to 69.3 mph using sophisticated high-speed camera techniques. It appears that these birds initiate turbo-boost simply to show off when impressive speeds are observed even when climbing.

Willow tits have declined by an alarming 80% in only a few years. As our willow tits are a unique sub-species (*kleinschmidti*) found only in Britain it is important that we don't lose them. The decline is thought to be the result of climate change, loss of habitat and increasing distances between wetland sites with areas of mature, damp woodland, their preferred habitat. At Wigan Flashes, one of the few remaining strongholds of the willow tit, efforts are underway to further improve the local environment for the species and arrest its decline.

Many of you will remember the phenomenal influx of painted ladies into Britain that occurred last summer with estimates of more than one billion at one time. However, many of our rare and not so rare butterflies have not fared so well due to the unusually wet conditions during the past three summers. The most critically endangered species facing possible extinction are Duke of Burgundy, high brown fritillary, wood white, Lulworth skipper and pearl-bordered fritillary but Butterfly Conservation are equally concerned about wall brown, small skipper and green hairstreak. It is not all gloom and doom though, as small tortoiseshell made a slight comeback.

A recent report, Waterbirds in the UK 2007/8, charts the fortunes of fifty of our most widespread winter-visiting wetland birds and shows that there have been some dramatic changes over the last decade. Significant declines have been recorded in wintering numbers of ringed plover, pochard, bar-tailed godwit and Greenland white-fronted goose. Apparently, two of these species, ringed plover and bar-tailed godwit, now prefer to spend the winter in continental Europe rather than here in Britain. Species showing the greatest increase in wintering populations are little egret, whooper swan, black-tailed godwit, avocet and Greenland barnacle goose.

Proposals to harness the tidal power of the River Mersey to generate electricity have recently resurfaced causing concern among environmental organisations including The RSPB about the effect that any construction would have on wildlife habitats particularly if the chosen option was a barrage.

Finally, you may remember the popularity of birdsong as a replacement for the sound of 'Big Ben' prior to the Six O'Clock News on BBC Radio 4 while the bell was being refurbished last year. It now appears that birdsong has become the most popular alarm tone after the traditional 'bleep' to wake us in the morning, according to a poll of PURE digital radio users.

Ray Evans



Great Crested Grebes

ARTICLES FOR THE HERON AND MONTHLY NEWLETTER

If you have any articles, stories, or photographs relating to birds and other wildlife that you would like to share with the Group members then please contact me or any member of the committee at an indoor meeting or e-mail me on thompson@sunnycote.fsnet.co.uk

Chinese Grey Squirrel

Well, OK, it's a grey squirrel, but it is eating a prawn cracker!



STOCKPORT RSPB LOCAL GROUP 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRITY LECTURE 'BEHIND THE LENS' BY JANET SUMNER

Janet is almost unique in the world of television wildlife programmes having been involved in both presentation and production. Her presentation will show how wildlife films are made and give an insight into the problems that are faced, with unseen footage of programmes. This is a rare opportunity to see what goes on behind the scenes during the making of a television documentary.

Date and time:

Saturday 20th March 2010 6-30pm for 7pm

Location:

Stockport College of Further and Higher Education,
Peter Barkworth Theatre (Lecture Theatre A),
Wellington Rd. South,
Stockport. SK1 3UQ.

Price:

£7.50 (£5.00 under 16).

Includes free refreshments and parking.

All visitors welcome. All-ticket only

Contact details:

Telephone: Peter Hugo on 0161 485 4024

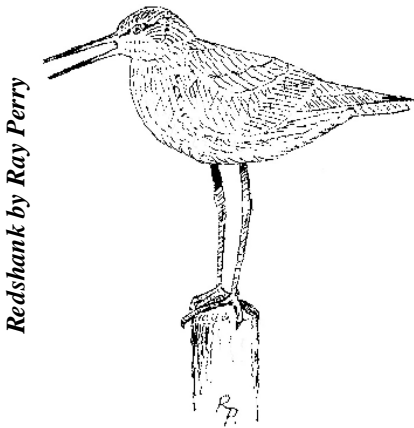
E-mail: stockportrspb@googlemail.com

Website: www.rspb.org.uk/groups/stockport

ON-LINE WILDLIFE MAGAZINES

Most of us read printed wildlife magazines, the titles depending on our own particular interests, Birds and Birdwatching immediately spring to mind. However, if you have access to the Internet then much else is possible. The RSPB, the BTO, the BOU and the WWT have websites where much useful and up to date information can be found. Local information is available from the Macclesfield RSPB local group website – thanks to Dave Tolliday, the site's Webmaster, the West Midland Bird Club, Carsington Water Bird Club and the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society. This last group's website is "a work in progress" but information can be obtained from www.ukbis.net/cawos.

By chance I discovered a very useful website, it is a free on-line birdwatching magazine, changed monthly and entitled "Birds of Britain" (www.birdsofbritain.co.uk). It claims to have 400 pages including permanent guides to bird reserves & clubs and changing monthly features. It has a bird guide, which has comprehensive descriptions of 118 British bird species, a features section and currently David Lindo, the "Urban Birder", known to Birdwatching magazine readers, has an interesting article about the birds in the area around Wormwood Scrubs. There is a news section, which features events for groups and, interestingly, could include details about our own group. Reserve information is featured, some Cheshire sites are described, but thus far not all counties are included. Clubs are included, the North Cheshire RSPB group have a link to their own website and we could do the same! Useful publicity! Other areas include – a mystery bird quiz, a gallery of bird photos – there is a monthly photo prize (44 images shown at present plus access to previous gallery submissions), accommodation information for the UK and the rest of the world, plus frequently asked questions – e.g. what is digiscoping? and Bird Shop book suggestions – nine currently given and tours – seven currently given in the UK plus many more worldwide. An interesting comment from Bill Oddie: "This site could lay claim to be the biggest and the best birdwatching magazine on the Web."



Redshank by Ray Perry

It is also worth mentioning the following: Wildlife Extra – an on-line wildlife magazine. This site offers a free email newsletter, and the current issue includes the thoughts of Chris Packham – one of the recent presenters of Spring and Autumn Watch. Currently there is a "masterclass" about wildlife photography by Elliot Neep. The website is as follows – www.wildlifeextra.com. In addition there is another website dedicated to birdwatching entitled Birdwatch – www.birdwatch.co.uk. This is a printed magazine but much can be found on the website – it is very up to date, containing features, reviews, checklists, picture galleries and a newsletter (subscription required).

There is a website entitled – the Fat Birder (www.fatbirder.com). This is a source of up to date information but is largely a link site, which puts you/sends you in the right direction. According to the Fat Birder website Wildlife Extra is the 71st most popular site of the most interesting 1000 birdwatching sites. The Carsington Water Bird Club website is currently ranked 254. Ranking depends on traffic; the more hits the higher the position.

Ray Perry

Collect Tesco Vouchers for Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers

The Tesco for Schools & Clubs scheme enables UK schools and clubs to redeem vouchers from Tesco purchases for a variety of useful items. Last year Tesco provided over 540,000 items across the country worth an incredible £13.4 million. This year there will be some great new pieces of equipment from paints and pencils to PCs and digital imagery equipment. It would be fantastic if our Wildlife Explorers Group were able to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. The more vouchers we collect the more equipment we can provide for the group.

Vouchers are being issued at Tesco stores from March 1st until May 9th

One voucher is given for every £10 spent in Tesco stores and petrol filling stations in a single transaction (excluding purchases from Concessions, Tobacco Kiosk, prescription medicines, infant formulae or the sale of National Lottery tickets and scratch cards).

One voucher is given for every £5 spent in Tesco Express stores (subject to the above exclusions).

- Simply bring your Tesco vouchers to RSPB meetings or hand them in to a member of the Committee or a Wildlife Explorer Leader. We will then be able to exchange the vouchers for free outdoor and craft equipment.

Please collect your Tesco vouchers and help our local children learn more about the natural world.

For further information on the scheme please contact Wildlife Explorer Leader Tina Hanak 07870 804413.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group will take place on Tuesday, 11th May 2010 at 7.45pm in the Senior Citizens' Hall, Duke Street Car Park, Macclesfield.

Nominations Invited for Officers and Committee

At the Group's Annual General Meeting (AGM) last year, the Group Leader retired from office and the Group Treasurer gave notice of his intention to retire at this year's AGM. Regrettably, despite many impassioned appeals over the past year, no potential successors for either role had come forward. However, rather than see the Group fold due to the lack of either a Group Leader or Treasurer, David Tolliday has kindly agreed to be a nominee for the Group Treasurer role. Notwithstanding David's nomination, in accordance with the Group Constitution and Local Groups Manual, nominations are invited for Group Leader and Group Treasurer. Nominations should be submitted in writing to our Secretary, Anne Bennett along with signed letters from those proposing and seconding the nominee. As it is mandatory that RSPB Northern England Region approves all nominees for these positions, the closing date for nominations is Monday, 12th April 2010 to allow one month for formal vetting and interviews to take place before the AGM on Tuesday, 11th May 2010.

Nominations are invited also for positions on the Committee. The following Committee Members have agreed to continue in their current roles and are seeking re-election this year having completed their previous 5-year term, Graham Palmer, Lydia Taylor and Tom Gibbons. We are always receptive to new ideas and are keen to welcome new blood to the Committee. Please consider doing your bit to help the Group. The closing date for nominations for Committee is Tuesday, 4th May 2010.

For details of submission rules and procedures please contact any member of the Committee. In all cases, nominations should be submitted in writing to our Secretary, Anne Bennett along with signed letters or E-mails from those proposing and seconding the nominee.

CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL BIRD REPORT 2008 NOW AVAILABLE

The 184 pages of text include 12 maps, charts and graphs, and 9 beautiful illustrations and 23 colour photographs, which best capture some of the highlights of the year and are spread over seven full pages. A colour map of the county forms the centre spread of the *Report*.

As usual, this year's *Bird Report* is full of interesting articles which include: Gulls at Moore and Richmond Bank; the account of the Black-winged Stilts which attempted to breed in the county for the first time; a White-throated Sparrow at Helsby that nearly 'got away'; some particularly fascinating behaviour of over-wintering Bitterns at Moore; a review of Cattle Egrets in the county; a look back at Sandbach Flashes where an incredible 40 species of wader have been recorded there; whilst another article recalls the excitement of finding the county's 15th Rough-legged Buzzard on Wirral. Finally, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) highlights and lowlights spanning the period 1994-2008 are listed.

All the 'regulars' are there: 'Weather and Bird Review of the Year'; the full 'Systematic List of Birds Recorded in Cheshire and Wirral during 2008', including 'Category E Species'; 'Early and Late Dates for Migrants'; 'BBRC and County Rarities Decisions'; 'Ringing Report'; 'Chairman's Review'; 'Database Statistics for 2008' and finally, advice on the 'Submission of Records'.

Last, but not least, we have again included a Species Index at the back to help you quickly look up your favourite species. This will be particularly useful to those not familiar with the new Systematic List order now adopted.

The *Bird Report* costs £7.50 + £1.30 p&p and copies are available from:

Andrew Duncalf, 25 Monarch Drive, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 8UN
Tel: 07771 7745210 Email: andrewduncalf@cawos.org



THE EMERSON GROUP

The Emerson Group follows a wildlife and conservation policy throughout the company including all our developments in the UK, Portugal and the USA and we are proud to be sponsoring the RSPB.

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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.)

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