



nature's
voice

The Heron



Newsletter - January 2010

FOR YOUR DIARY

JANUARY 2010

Sunday, 17 January	<i>WGBG Car Trip:</i> RSPB INNER MARSH FARM and PARKGATE Depart at 8.00 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow, SK9 5HD <u>or</u> meet at Denhall Lane, Burton, Wirral at 9.00 am.
Sunday, 24 January	<i>National RSPB Event:</i> BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH Join with our RSPB Wildlife Explorers in supporting this family event at Pikelow Farm, School Lane, Marton, SK11 9HD. 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. Contact: Tina Hanak 07870 804413
Tuesday, 26 January	<i>Showing Birds to People:</i> RIVERSIDE PARK, MACCLESFIELD 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 or Ian Taylor 01260 275248
Sunday, 31 January	<i>Outdoor Meeting:</i> TATTON PARK AND TATTON MERE A site that turns up unexpected grebes and divers in winter as well as hosting finches, buntings and possibly yellowhammers. Depart at 9.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all-day trip. Leader: Ian Taylor 01260 275248

FEBRUARY 2010

Wednesday, 3 February	<i>CWT Meeting:</i> WORKING FOR WILDLIFE by Brian Hallworth 7.30 pm. St John's Church Hall, Earlsway, Macclesfield, SK11 8RS
Friday, 5 February	<i>CAWOS Meeting:</i> BENEATH THE DARK CANOPY by Michael Leach 7.45 pm. Cranford Suite, Civic Centre, Toft Road, Knutsford, WA16 0PE
Tuesday, 9 February	<i>Indoor Meeting:</i> BIRDS OF THE WETLANDS by Geoff Trinder plus 'Bring and Buy' in aid of Group funds

BRING AND BUY

An added attraction at our February Indoor Meeting is always our annual 'Bring & Buy'. 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.

RSPB SALES UPDATE

You will be pleased to learn that the Charity Card Shops between them produced sales of £3229, which along with sales of £2156 at our Indoor Meetings and other venues and events, has generated so far this financial year commission of £1885 that, in due course, the Group can allocate to an approved RSPB project of their choice. Thanks again to everyone who has helped us to achieve these excellent sales figures despite the economic downturn.

www.macclesfieldrspb.org.uk

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

BIRD TALK

Dear Friends,

A Happy New Year to you all and congratulations to Sir Graham Wynne, RSPB Chief Executive on being recognised by the Queen in her New Year's Honours List with a knighthood for his services to conservation and the environment. Sadly, Lady Philippa Scott, widow of WWT founder Sir Peter Scott, died on 5 January aged 91. Lady Scott's immense contribution to conservation was summed up by Kate Humble, RSPB President, who said of her, "She was a pioneering conservationist right up until the end of her life. Her energy and enthusiasm never dimmed and she tackled everything with a combination of steely determination and a wicked sense of humour. I adored her". It is interesting to record that Slimbridge, such an important place in her life and her home for so long, is currently hosting the largest number of Bewick swans for many years.

None of us will have been immune from the Arctic conditions that have been gripping the UK over the last few weeks. Whereas we have been able to keep sheltered and warm with plenty of food and water, our feathered friends and other wildlife have not been so fortunate. In many cases they have been dependent on us to provide life-sustaining food. Many more birds have been visiting our gardens including unusual species such as woodcock, snipe and grey wagtail. The food that we are providing is helping many Red-list species including house sparrow, starling, song thrush, redpoll and tree sparrow to survive. In addition, farmers have been encouraged to put out grain tailings for farmland species like corn buntings and yellowhammers. Furthermore, the RSPB has organised specific emergency feeding of several threatened species at locations across the UK where sprats have been put out for bitterns and seed has been scattered for curlew buntings.

The RSPB and other conservation organisations have warned us not to disturb resting wetland bird flocks including ducks, geese, swans and waders as, in the process of fleeing, they will expend energy unnecessarily and this is difficult to replace. Mark Avery, RSPB's Conservation Director believes "this winter could be the single greatest wildlife killer of the new millennium". He bases this on the disastrous impact that the extremely harsh winter of 1962-63 had on British wildlife. Small birds suffer most in severe winters as evidenced by the wren population plummeting in 1962-63. Furthermore, birds like Dartford warbler that are at the extreme of their range in Britain will undoubtedly suffer a population decline.

A recent RSPB survey indicates that young people are increasingly missing out on the mental and physical benefits of spending time in nature. Alarming, only a third of under 35s feel connected to the natural world. Kate Humble, RSPB President said: "There is simply no substitute for getting outdoors and experiencing nature first hand. If we don't make sure our young people enjoy nature we're taking away something that will help keep them happy and healthy." The RSPB encourages children to become interested in nature and their environment through RSPB Wildlife Explorers, which currently has 170,000 members. Our RSPB Wildlife Explorers members are certainly knowledgeable, enthusiastic and care about wildlife and the environment as exhibited by their recent fundraising to 'Save the Sumatran Rainforest'. Hopefully, these experiences will develop in them a knowledge and interest that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

Researchers from BTO and Natural England have examined the impact of grey squirrels on thirty-eight bird species across the country and concluded that they do not impact greatly on populations of many of our woodland bird species through predation of eggs and fledglings. The most convincing evidence for a negative effect on local populations was with blackbird and collared dove neither of which is in general decline. Surprisingly, for seven species, there was a higher population than in the absence of grey squirrels probably as a result of both mammal and bird species benefiting from similar changes to their habitat. The researches concluded that the greatest conservation threat posed by grey squirrels is as carriers of parapoxvirus, which does not affect them but is lethal to their red cousins.

Ray Evans

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: stockportspb@googlemail.com

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

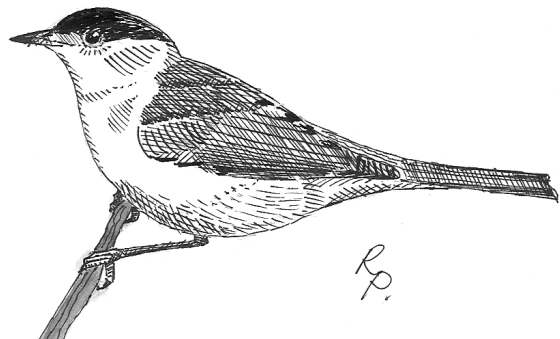
HAVE I GOT NEWS FOR YOU!

When we get the daily news from radio or TV we receive information about the major issues of the day, including politics, armed conflicts and climate change. From newspapers we have the same emphasis but the inner pages deal with a range of other issues, some trivial and some quite important to us such as the state of the natural world. We of the Macc RSPB Group are particularly interested in birding and conservation activities. We already glean information from our favourite magazines, *Birds* and *Birdwatching* included, but occasionally the daily and weekend papers throw in some surprising and sometimes startling items about the bird world. Here are four recent examples:

Let's start with some good news! Scientists are rethinking the life spans of birds after 16 species were found to have lived much longer than had been thought. A bar-tailed godwit was caught in Norfolk almost 34 years after it was tagged. The previous record for this species was 32 years. A red-necked phalarope was recently found at nearly twice the previous maximum age: 11 years and 10 months, compared to six years. One lesser whitethroat was found with a tag showing it was nine years old, two years more than the previous record. The bird typically travels 5,000 miles each year between Britain and east Africa or the Middle East. Incidentally, a Manx shearwater holds the record for the oldest bird species at 49 years and 11 months. Some experts believe climate change could be stretching birds' life spans since warmer winters and longer summers mean some migratory birds no longer need to brave long journeys. The full article appeared in the *Times* under the heading – Pensioner birds ruffle ornithologists' feathers!

The next item is not good; it is positively bad and ugly. Some of the Mediterranean countries and islands have come in for great criticism in the past for their habit of killing thousands of wild birds for pleasure and as delicacies for the table. The practice still continues in some areas in spite of flouting international law. Conservationists say that the practice has made a significant comeback in the last three years. The worst offender seems to be Cyprus. Songbirds are trapped using mist nets and lime sticks. A million songbirds are slaughtered and sold to restaurants as part of an illegal multi-million pound industry. Oddly, the poachers are particularly prolific on the British military base at Dhekelia and on a live firing range on Cape Pyla. The British bases say they are fighting a war on the illegal industry and in August launched "Operation Freedom", a campaign that aims to stop the offenders. The bases police have now freed hundreds of trapped birds. A key campaign was fought on the 2nd October when 75 British soldiers joined local police in a dawn raid, seizing thousands of pounds worth of songbird trapping equipment. The Cypriot authorities insist they are doing their best to fight the songbird trade, saying that they have prosecuted more than 1000 offenders in the past five years. The fight against these illegal activities goes on.

On a happier note, here is a story about the blackcap. Scientists say that the British fondness for bird tables has caused a group of European blackcaps to break their normal custom of migrating to Spain and instead spend the winter season in Britain. In fewer than 30 generations, birds visiting Britain have evolved different shaped beaks and wings. Some birds from southern German forests, started to migrate to Britain in the winter, finding rich pickings in our gardens and an increasingly mild winter climate. Eventually, with different evolutionary pressures, the German blackcaps divided into two ecotypes. The largest group continued to fly south for the winter, migrating about 1000 miles to Spain, but about 10% flew the 560 miles northwest to Britain. As a consequence the northwestern migrating birds have developed rounder wings for better manoeuvrability but make them less suited to long distance migration. Also their longer, narrower bills are not so good for eating food such as olives. If the two ecotypes continue down their separate paths, they could ultimately become separate species. These findings challenge the conventional view that two populations have to be geographically separated to diverge into separate species. No doubt the two views will be debated for some time to come.



Blackcap by Ray Perry

And finally – situation vacant: would-be Crusoe for remote island (must like puffins)! A new warden is being sought for Skomer Island. The warden will share his or her idyll with 128,000 breeding pairs of Manx shearwaters (very noisy at night). The warden will have to deal with around 14,000 visitors per year. Sunshine is often in short supply. Wrap up in the summer and winter!

Ray Perry

CAN YOU CUT IT?

We are still looking for help to trim the thousands of used postage stamps that we receive each year particularly after Christmas. 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. Detailed instructions can be provided.

BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH 30

31 JANUARY 2010

The RSPB would like our help to ensure that 'Big Garden Birdwatch 2010' is even bigger and better than in 2009 when around half a million people participated. You can help them by getting your relatives, friends and neighbours to take part. Please help make The RSPB's 31st 'Big Garden Birdwatch' a record-breaking event.

As well as counting the birds in your own garden for one hour over 'Big Garden Birdwatch' weekend, why not come along to Pikelow Farm, Marton (SJ856690) on Sunday, 24 January and join us for our very own 'Big Garden Birdwatch 2010'? Birdwatching activities suitable for all ages and experience will be on offer from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm.

WILDLIFE EXPLORERS

Tree Dressing

Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers ended 2009 with their annual 'Tree Dressing' event, celebrating the importance of trees and woodland in our environment and culture. Wildlife Explorers and their families gathered twigs, leaves and other natural materials then set to decorating the trees in Tytherington Woods with a wonderful selection of clay sculptures. The natural materials will gradually weather away without an impact on the environment. The children took inspiration from the natural world and woodland myths and legends, they then added lots of imagination and enthusiasm to create some incredible sculptures.

Save the Sumatran Rainforest

At the last meeting, the RSPB's Tim Melling received a cheque from Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers, for an incredible £1,301.25, towards The RSPB's 'Save the Sumatran Rainforest' campaign. The money raised by Wildlife Explorers, from a variety of events (including the recent 'Brushes with Wildlife' Arts Competition and Exhibition), school and community group visits, will enable The RSPB to replant trees in the Sumatran Rainforest.



Sumatra's lowland rainforests are among the richest in wildlife the world over, rivalling even the Amazonian rainforests in their diversity of plantlife, and are extremely rich in bird species. They are also among the most threatened, at risk of disappearing completely in the next few years. The RSPB and Burung Indonesia, part of the BirdLife International partnership, have a chance to save a substantial proportion of the remaining lowland forest by managing it directly. They are calling this forest in central Sumatra 'Harapan Rainforest' after the Indonesian word for 'hope'.

Tina Hanak, Wildlife Explorer Group Leader said, " We have achieved a brilliant fundraising total. The children recognise the importance of rainforests, both in terms of their incredible biodiversity and as part of our global ecosystem. They have supported the campaign with a huge amount of enthusiasm. Rainforests are disappearing at an alarming rate and Wildlife Explorers are keen to help protect and restore this amazing habitat.

It is a wonderful feeling to know that an area of the Sumatran Rainforest the size of six and a half football pitches will be replanted thanks to the efforts of the Group here in Macclesfield".

There is still time to join The RSPB's 'Big Schools' Birdwatch' (18 January - 1 February 2010).

Later this month Leaders from Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers will be supporting schools and community groups as part of the 'Big Schools' Birdwatch' campaign. 'Big Schools' Birdwatch' is a free activity for schools and youth groups (brownies, scouts, etc.) throughout the UK, which The RSPB run every year and is complementary to 'Big Garden Birdwatch'. It involves a simple bird survey suitable for ages and abilities that takes just one hour. By observing the birds that visit school grounds we help the RSPB monitor UK bird numbers.

If you know of a group that would like help organising a Birdwatch, volunteers from Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers and The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group are able to offer guidance on planning and running the activity. We can loan pairs of binoculars and provide a telescope for use during the Birdwatch as well as offering advice on getting the most out of your 'Big Schools' Birdwatch'.

For more information, visit: www.rspb.org.uk/schoolswatch or contact Tina Hanak on 01625 503572 / 07870 804413. Please contact Tina as soon as possible to check volunteer availability.



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.)