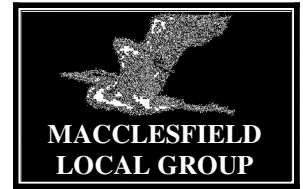




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The
Heron



Newsletter - November 2011

We welcome back our presenters tonight Allan & Susan Parker.

Our records show that Allan & Susan first visited The Macclesfield Group in January 1997 and this will be their 7th visit. They are leading lights in the development and conservation work undertaken at the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Reserve at Potteric Carr, near Doncaster. They have been professional natural history & aviation photographers for over 35 years travelling extensively around the Scottish Islands, the Mediterranean and North America. Tonight's presentation is entitled "A year at Potteric Carr" so some of the images may be familiar to those who came on the September outing to this interesting reserve.

DIARY DATES

November 2011

Thursday 10 th	Special Event: RSPB COFFEE MORNING Gawsworth Methodist Community Hall, Congleton Road, Gawsworth, Macclesfield, SK11 9QZ 10:00 am to 12:00 noon <i>Contact Chris Revett 01625 617384</i>
Saturday 12 th	Conservation work: Wildlife Explorers Group, RSPB Phoenix & Macclesfield Guild Help with a spot of conservation work at Heritage Walk in Macclesfield, part of the ongoing improvement programme for this central Macclesfield location, just opposite B&Q. We will construct wildlife homes and bird feeders to help enrich the area for wildlife. Meet at Heritage Walk, Samuel Street/Churchill Way Grid ref: SJ916732. 10:00 am to 12:00 noon <i>Contact: Tina Hanak 07870 804413 or visit www.macclesfieldrspb.org.uk</i>
Saturday 19 th	Special Event: Macclesfield Charities Fair St. Michaels and All Angels Church, Macclesfield 10:00 am to 3:00 pm <i>Contact: Chris Revett 01625 617384</i>
Sunday 20 th	Outdoor Meeting: ATTENBOROUGH RESERVE. 360 acre complex of former gravel pits where we will look for winter wildfowl and migrating thrushes. Meet Duke Street Car Park at 9:00 am for an all day trip <i>Leader: Ian Taylor 01260 275248</i>
Sunday 27 th	Coach Trip: TREGARON, mid Wales. Depart at 7:30 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow. <i>Contact: Tom Gibbons 01625 520317</i>

December 2011

Friday 2 nd	CAWOS meeting: Birding frontiers of Cheshire, Wirral and beyond by Martin Garner 7:30 for 7:45 pm prompt start at St. Vincents Roman Catholic Church, Tatton St. Knutsford, WA16 6HR
Sunday 4 th	Outdoor Meeting: TITTESWORTH RESERVOIR & CHRISTMAS LUNCH This local reservoir with a bird feeding station boasts a good species list plus an opportunity for Christmas lunch at the near by Lazy Trout Inn. Please see Lydia tonight to book your place. Meet Duke Street Car Park at 9:00 am <i>Leader: Lydia Taylor 01260 275248</i>
Tuesday 13 th	Indoor Meeting: FAIR ISLE—WILDLIFE ON BRITAIN'S REMOTEST ISLAND by Tim Melling <i>Introduced by: Ian Taylor 01260 275248</i>

We welcome **Mr Peter Robertson** to our meeting tonight. Peter is the RSPB Northern England, Regional Director and during the interval he will be presented with a cheque for £5,500 raised by our September WOW event. This money will support the RSPB Living Classrooms Initiative where children can interact with the environment at local RSPB Reserves e.g. Coombes Valley. In addition, Peter will talk for a few minutes during tonight's meeting to share some thoughts on the future of the RSPB.

My Patch by Ray Perry

Writers in wildlife magazines and books often talk about their patch. They usually mean somewhere close to home although many birders travel far and wide these days and it seems as if the world, or a good chunk of it, is their patch. Two friends of mine have been travelling the world for years on their very frequent holidays and have amassed an impressive bird list of around 3,500 species but I suppose their local patch is the Weaver Bend in west Cheshire. In 2008 Alan Davies (former Head Warden at RSPB Conwy) and Ruth Miller travelled the world and successfully saw more bird species in one year than anybody else has ever achieved. Their list was an incredible 4,341 species. You can enjoy their exploits by reading their book – *The Biggest Twitch*, published in 2010 by Christopher Helm (ISBN 978-1-4081-2387-4), so the world was certainly their patch for a year. Combing the local patch is as important as foraging the world or parts of it. A local patch might just be your garden, which is good because RSPB Macclesfield Local Group are most interested in your observations, hence the form produced each year for members to complete and Ian and Lydia Taylor to analyse! The outcome is always very informative. Thanks Ian and Lydia. Your patch might be greater than this. In the past my patch has included the garden and the parishes of Gawsworth and Siddington.

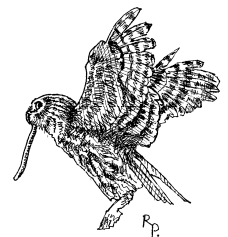
Up until this time last year I ran locally thus covering quite a distance and area. I combined my passion for running and nature watching. Difficult? No, I was always prepared to stop and take a closer look but continued to maintain fitness. Having learnt to recognise bird songs of British species, sometimes I didn't stop running because I knew what was present. If the species was unusual for the area then I would halt and observe. Since replacing running with walking on medical advice my patch has shrunk. I now cover northern Gawsworth on a regular basis but obviously I look at my garden as well. So why do I like Gawsworth? Well it is very local to me: it has a mix of habitats - fields for animals, grass (for hay and silage plus raising maize and potatoes), woodland, miles of hedgerows, undulating ground – not really hilly, streams and ponds, mostly quiet roads, an amazing church and interesting residents. Over the years I have talked to many locals and in particular have befriended Michael who now runs Goostrey Farm on Woodhouse End Road. His family have farmed the area for seven, yes seven, generations. He and the other locals have provided me with much useful information about farming in Gawsworth and nature watching in the parish. Michael always gives me a very loud “toot” from his massive tractor when he sees me. I reply with an exaggerated double-armed wave!



When I wandered far and wide in earlier years, then birds now scarce, were quite abundant. On my runs Corn Buntings, Yellowhammers and Tree Sparrows were almost commonplace but sadly not anymore. The good news is that Gordon & Rita have recently had Tree Sparrows in their garden, so the species is, thankfully, still about. Carsington Water has a good breeding colony but Tittesworth Water has lost its regular breeders and is left with occasional visitors.

My usual walk on “my patch” starts from the Danes Moss footpath reaching Gawsworth Hall via a short stretch of road and five fields. Then I amble along Church Lane, Wardle Crescent and across a field to Lowes Lane. On reaching Moss Houses I cross three fields to bring me back to the Danes Moss footpath. There are various additions I can make to extend the walk. There are other routes I use in the parish from time to time. Often I see a backdrop of Macclesfield Forest, Teggs Nose and Sutton Common. By the way Ravens breed on the high common.

Many interesting wildlife and plant life species have been seen on the route described above including Green Woodpecker, Spotted Flycatcher, Linnet, Curlew, Little Owl, Northern Wheatear, Lesser & Great Spotted Woodpeckers, thousands of Jackdaws, Nuthatch, Swallows flocking at the end of summer, Brown Hares, Red Foxes and Orpine, a colourful but very uncommon species of flowering plant. Just after starting this article I had very close views of a pair of Ravens and observed two soaring and calling Common Buzzards.



I would like to encourage you to record and report sightings from your patch. Complete a garden survey for Macc RSPB. If you do not have a form then one can be obtained from the RSPB Macclesfield Local Group website – www.macclesfieldrspb.org.uk. For other interesting local sightings email them to Gordon Howard, our website Webmaster, or hand them to him at a meeting. The appropriate email address is - bird.records@macclesfieldrspb.org.uk. Have a look at the website: it is fascinating. Lots of group information and the bird sightings section includes excellent photos.

Miss Emma L Turner and The Bittern's Return by Ray Evans

A few weeks ago I was asked by one of our Group members, Joan Keeling, whether I knew anything about her great Aunt, Miss Emma L Turner. I had to admit that I didn't. Although Emma Turner's contributions in the fields of ornithology and bird photography in the early part of the last century were highly significant at the time, these have been all but forgotten until recently. One hundred years ago, in July 1911, Emma Turner in the company of Jim Vincent, another ornithologist, came across and photographed a young bittern at its nest, representing the first evidence of the return of the species since they became extinct in Britain in 1886 when the last bittern in the area was shot. She lived on a houseboat on Hickling Broad, Norfolk during the first quarter of the last century and took up bird photography in 1900; just five years after the first ever bird photograph, a lapwing on a nest, was taken by R B Lodge. The plate camera and tripod that she used were heavy and bulky. Furthermore, to get close to her subjects she had to employ concealment including using simple canvas tents, the forerunner of current hides. This didn't stop her photographing almost all of the birds regularly seen in the marshland of the Norfolk Broads. As well as contributing many articles to *British Birds* and *The Ibis*, in 1924 she published her celebrated book, *Broadland Birds*, containing photographs accompanied by insightful and sparkling prose about the birds of the area and their behaviour.



Emma Turner's photographic record of the discovery of bitterns breeding again in Britain earned her The Royal Photographic Society's Gold Medal. Furthermore, she was one of the first women to be elected a Fellow of the Linnaean Society and among the first women members of the British Ornithologists' Union. Later in her life she moved to Cambridge where she continued her interest in ornithology despite failing eyesight and was a leading light of the Cambridge Bird Club. Her meticulously detailed diaries are conserved in the BTO archives under the watchful eye of Professor Jeremy Greenwood who is collaborating with James Parry, a nature writer, on an article to appear in this coming December's edition of *British Birds*. I understand also that Radio 4 is producing a programme about Emma Turner and the bittern's return which will be aired in the New Year. The memory and legacy of Emma L Turner, who died in 1940 at the age of 74, can still be found in the island on Hickling Broad named after her and, of course, in the bitterns that continue 100 years later to breed in the Norfolk Broads.

IMF becomes BMW - Is it a car or a reserve? by Graham Palmer

Many of you will have visited the RSPB reserve of **Inner Marsh Farm**, near Burton on the Wirral. It was open only to members, as it had just a small car park and no visitor facilities. From the car park at Burton Point Farm, off Station Road, a footpath led down a hill and on to a single hide giving great views over pools and scrapes, especially in the afternoon. In the distance beyond the boundary of the reserve you could just see Burton Mere, a water dedicated to fishing.

Well, the RSPB has now bought Burton Mere and woodland beyond it, which combined with the old reserve now becomes RSPB **Burton Mere Wetlands**. It was opened at the end of September. A new access from Puddington Lane leads to a much larger car park next to a small visitor centre overlooking the mere, which has itself been re-engineered to include scrapes. A path leads from the visitor centre along the Mere and through a developing reedbed to a new hide, Marsh Covert Hide, halfway between the visitor centre and the old hide, with a side path looping some other smaller pools, and there is also a woodland walk.

Eventually the path to the new hide will be extended beyond it to link up with the original path from Burton Point Farm to the old hide, now called Inner Marsh Farm Hide. For the time being the old car park at Burton Point Farm will remain open to allow access to that hide, but once the new path is completed that car park will be closed and you will have to walk about a mile from the visitor centre to reach Inner Marsh Farm Hide. However, you will still be able to walk up the hill as far as the existing viewpoint seat overlooking the reserve, and eventually a new path across the railway halfway up the hill will lead you to a new viewpoint, the Hillfort viewpoint, with a stunning panoramic view over the Dee estuary.



The new visitor centre has large windows overlooking the mere with individual moveable seats. There will not be a shop or café, but hot and cold drinks are, or soon will be, available. There is a separate toilet block. The reserve is now open to non-members at a fee, and is open every day except Christmas Day (the old reserve used to be closed on Tuesdays). To find the new car park and visitor centre, from the A540 Chester to West Kirby road follow the brown tourist signs: they took me down Dunstan Lane into Burton village, left into Puddington Lane, and then right into the access lane to the reserve. If you want any further information, please talk to me or go on to the RSPB website.

A final note: I made my first visit to the new reserve on 14th October, and was rewarded by seeing a cattle egret with the cows on the far (Welsh) side of the reserve!

NEWS FROM OUR WILDLIFE EXPLORERS GROUP

Feed the Birds

Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers held a busy and successful Feed the Birds Day event at Tegg's Nose Country Park Visitor Centre. Visitors had the chance to make log feeders and pine cone feeders and even try their hand at making different kinds of nest boxes. Some of our Phoenix members helped visitors plant wildflower seeds to take home with them. These flowers will attract insects next year and provide a valuable source of food for our feathered friends. Junior Leaders were busy promoting the Save Birds of Prey campaign. There were Birds of Prey pin badges on sale and bird ID charts. The group enjoyed reminding visitors that birds really need our help as the clocks go back and the nights draw in.



NOTICES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Joy Thornburn 1923 - 2011

We are sad to report the death of Joy Thornburn just 4 months after that of her only child, Julia.

Joy was born in Abergavenny but spent all her married life in Alderley Edge. She was an active member of the Macclesfield R.S.P.B Group from its earliest days. A keen and willing helper, especially with fund raising, she could always be relied upon to help with the original Christmas card shops at Alderley Edge and Wilmslow libraries and was instrumental in organising a clothes sale in Alderley Edge for group funds. She and her late husband Hugh, were regular attenders on the trips and holidays organised by Julia. Her calm and practical nature came to the fore on occasions such as when their hire car was run into on one of the group's Scottish holidays. She didn't attend meetings in recent years as our monthly meetings clashed with another of her interests, a sewing group.

John Mortin

Gawsworth Coffee Morning - Thurs. 10th November at Gawsworth Methodist Community Hall, Congleton Road, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Macclesfield Charities Fair - Sat. 19th November at St. Michaels & All Angels Church, Macclesfield, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

TITTESWORTH RESERVOIR & ROAST SUNDAY LUNCH Last chance to book a place

Sunday 4th December 2011

Join us for a walk around Tittesworth Reservoir followed by lunch at the Lazy Trout. Please let Lydia know at tonight's meeting if you would like to join us.

Vegetarian option available.

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Wildlife Explorer
&
RSPB Gift Memberships
are available for sale

*Please see Tina Hanak at tonight's meeting
if you would like more details.*

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 this newsletter to any member or non-member of the Group that you know who may be interested