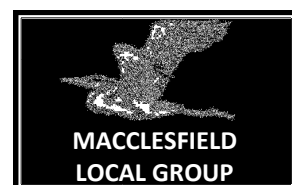




a million
voices for
nature

The Heron



Newsletter - January 2012

We welcome Brian Anderson as our speaker tonight

Brian is an award winning photographer who speaks to many groups across the North West region. He's travelled extensively in the last 25 years, visiting over 35 countries to capture landscape, architectural and nature images for his portfolio. In addition, he runs photographic courses at Burton Manor Adult Residential College as well as bespoke events for schools, clubs and groups on request. Tonight, Brian's presentation is called Petrels, Paddys and Penguins, featuring over 30 species of birds which live in one of the world's last true wildernesses.

DIARY DATES

January 2012

Sunday 15 th	Outdoor Meeting: MARSHSIDE RSPB & MARTIN MERE WWT RESERVES Marshside on the Ribble estuary should provide plenty of wintering waders & possibly owls or harriers as we arrive a few hours ahead of high tide. We will move on to the WWT Reserve in time for the Whooper swan feeding in the late afternoon. For non WWT members, groups of 12 or more pay an £8 admission fee (normally £8.95), concessions £6.20 (normally £6.64) into Martin Mere. Meet Duke Street Car Park at 9:00 am for an all day visit. <i>Leader: Philip Widdows 01625 262597.</i>
Sunday 29 th	Coach Trip: Meresands Wood & Brockholes Nature Reserves. Depart at 08:00 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow. <i>Contact: Tom Gibbons 01625 520317</i>
Sunday 29 th	National RSPB Event: BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH Join us for a birdwatching walk around Pikelow Farm, School Lane, Marton, SK11 9HD (LR Grid Ref: SJ856690) 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. <i>Contact: Tina Hanak 07870 804413</i>
Tuesday 31 st	Showing Birds to People: RIVERSIDE PARK, MACCLESFIELD A leisurely stroll looking for winter visitors with Cheshire East Ranger, Jim Middlemass. 10.00 am to 12.30 pm. Meet in the Car Park off Manchester Road (LR Grid Ref: SJ914715). <i>Leader: Ray Evans 01625 432635 or Ian Taylor 01260 275248</i>

February 2012

Friday 3 rd	CAWOS meeting: 'The biggest twitch' by Alan Davies & Ruth Miller 7:30 for 7:45 pm prompt start at St. Vincents Roman Catholic Church, Tatton St. Knutsford, WA16 6HR
Tuesday 14 th	Indoor Meeting: 'OUT & ABOUT A BRILLIANT BIRDING YEAR' by Jim Almond <i>Introduced by: Tom Gibbons 01625 520137</i> Remember "Bring & Buy"
Friday 24 th to Sunday 26 th	Weekend Away: MORECAMBE BAY Bookings are now closed and 25 members will explore Morecambe Bay and surrounding area for winter waders & wildfowl. Please see Graham, if you have any questions.. <i>Leader: Graham Palmer 01625 420179</i>
Saturday 25 th	Special Event: CONSERVATION WORK AT RSPB COOMBES VALLEY Join us to undertake some important conservation work at our local reserve. Meet in the car park (LR Grid Ref. SJ946845). 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Bring your own food for a BBQ lunch. <i>Contact: David Beer 01625 619861</i>

The Wallcreeper by Ray Perry

In the December edition of Bird Watching Keith Offord recalled his encounters with the Wallcreeper, a mini mountaineer. The Wallcreeper, at present, is taxonomically associated with nuthatches rather than treecreepers. It is a very small bird and the species, although widely distributed, is low in numbers thus Keith had great difficulty in locating a bird to photograph. It is found in high level, steep sided valleys, usually clinging to rock faces probing for insects. Wallcreepers are known to be confiding with apparent unawareness of human presence, hence once he had found his bird within photographic range Keith was successful in obtaining some good shots. It took him many years to catch up with this elusive bird but his doggedness paid off.



We had the good fortune to see a Wallcreeper when we were on a guided tour of Switzerland to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. We were staying in Lucerne and took a round trip to the top of Mount Pilatus and back. We reached the highest level possible by cable car then took a walk. Above us, near the mountain's apex, we saw several Chamois, a mammal we had not seen before. We wandered along the mountain path with a steep sided gorge to our left. Suddenly Margaret grabbed my arm and said, "Look! What's that bird? It's just taken off from the cliff face

over there" I hastily swung round and saw a crimson flash. The bird landed a few feet further on and Margaret peered hard to make out what we had seen. We had no binoculars with us but in those days Margaret was exceptionally long sighted and was able to describe the bird quite well. "It's mainly grey with black on it and crimson on the wings". It flew up again and we could both see a massive crimson area on each open wing plus black areas and many white spots near the wing tips. If it hadn't been for the brilliant crimson red on the wings we would never have noticed it, for the bird is just 16 cm long, including its considerable beak. For comparison – a Eurasian Treecreeper is about 13 cm long with a beak half the size of a Wallcreeper. We continued to watch the bird until it disappeared from view.

Once we had descended Pilatus and returned to Lucerne we headed for the nearest bookshop. We had to find out what we had encountered! We found a bird book and the species was featured within its pages but unfortunately the book was written in German. However, we noted the Latin name – *Tichodroma muraria*. A few days later we stayed in Interlaken and once again located a bookshop, which had a bird guide written in English. We soon found our bird and thus its English name. Glorious and so apt! Because it was such a distinctive bird the illustration was all we needed, the Latin name was not required.

In Europe this species is found at very high levels in a large swathe stretching from northern Iberia to the start of the Middle East. In winter it can be seen at much lower levels on buildings and ruins. It is an extremely rare vagrant to Britain but it has overwintered. It is, of course, on the BOU British list.

Margaret and I are familiar with the birds of Austria and Switzerland and other colourful birds can be found on the mountains including Citril Finch, Rock Thrush, Middle Spotted Woodpecker and Black Woodpecker (yes it's black but the red colour on its head stands out). There are many other species to be found at high levels, which are rarely or infrequently seen in the UK including Water Pipit, Alpine Accentor and Nutcracker. The first time we encountered the latter species was on the same holiday in Switzerland at Davos when a Dutch lady informed us in halting English that the bird was "rare in this place". In subsequent years we have seen many Nutcrackers in



Darren Mayer

Long Service Awards

Tim Melling, the RSPB Conservation Officer for North England Region, presented six members of the Group with their Volunteer Long Service Awards. From left to right: Gordon Howard, Joan Wilson, Chris Revett, Jean & Ray Evans, Tim Melling (presenting), David Tolliday & Ian Taylor. They have a combined total of 65 years



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

Waved albatross - The motivation to save stamps for the RSPB by Ian Taylor

At the last indoor meeting The Group presented Tim Melling with approximately 100 kg of used stamps and Tim explained how stamps raised a staggering £15,000 for the RSPB in 2010. So how much money was our last contribution worth?

I was surprised to learn from the RSPB website (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/campaigns/albatross/howyoucanhelp/stamps.aspx>) that used UK stamps raise £3.50/kg from a loose stamp dealer. This gives our black sacks full of stamps a valuation of £350 - not bad for something we would probably at best recycle with the waste paper! It gets better because Foreign stamps are worth £12.50/kg - so please don't discard those stamps from friends and families abroad or your holiday postcards, these count as well.



The current Stamp Appeal is being used to Save the Albatross. The albatross family is becoming threatened faster than any other family of birds. Seventeen of the 22 species of albatross are globally threatened with extinction, an increase from just seven in 1994. A big contributing factor to this decline is longlining and trawl fishing. In longlining albatrosses take the bait meant for

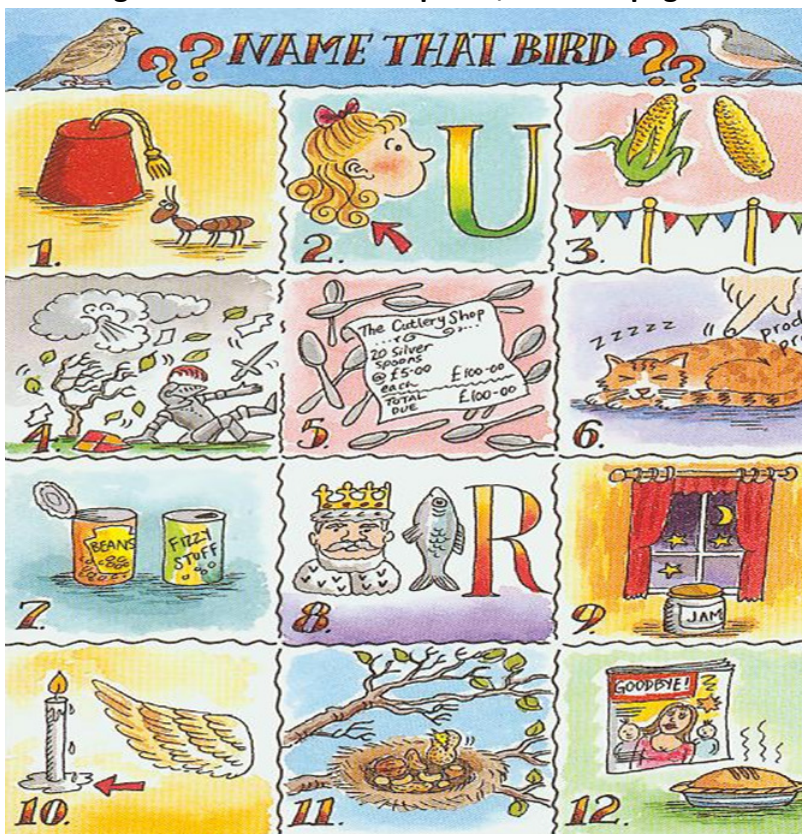
tuna and in trawling they get entangled in the nets or collide with the many cables used in the fishing process. They are being killed in such vast numbers that they can't breed fast enough to keep up, putting them in real danger of extinction.

The albatross is an unlikely bird for members of the Group to see during one of our field trips, the North Atlantic is one place where they don't occur. I was very fortunate to see and photograph waved albatross (accompanying pictures), one of the rarest species during a recent trip to the Galapagos Islands. We visited Espanola Island where the waved albatross and other seabirds breed. It was amazing as we walked across this island paradise on authorised paths which took us to within 10 metres of the nesting birds. They were so tame and trusting and those present will never forget this incredible experience. I know that I will be saving stamps with renewed enthusiasm to help save these beautiful birds from extinction.



Our efforts to save stamps and raise funds for the albatross appeal can make a difference. From as little as £5 - the RSPB can buy a weight for a longline to make it sink more quickly, taking the hooks out of reach of the birds, £50 will buy a set of streamer (tori) lines to scare birds away from baited hooks. **What will our £350 buy - Please keep saving those stamps!**

A Light Hearted Quiz - no prizes, answers page 4



CHRISTMAS CARD SALES

Chris Revett & Joan Wilson, our Sales Goods Officers are pleased to report the following provisional figures from a very successful sale of Christmas cards at the Charity Shops

Macclesfield Library	£965
Wilmslow Library	£1,703
Wilmslow Guild	£64
Bird Clubs, Christmas Fairs etc.	£418
Total:	£3,150

Our sincere thanks to all who helped in any of these events.



NEWS FROM OUR WILDLIFE EXPLORERS

Thank You from RSPB Macclesfield Phoenix Group

The Wildlife Explorers Phoenix Group would like to thank all local group members who supported their cake sale at the December meeting. We raised **£80** to subsidise the purchase of new uniform fleece jackets with the Phoenix logo



NOTICES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

FEBRUARY INDOOR MEETING BRING & BUY

TUESDAY 14th FEBRUARY 2012

Our February Indoor Meeting sees the return of our annual "Bring & Buy" sale. This popular event provides an opportunity to recycle Christmas gifts for the benefit of birds and the environment.

In addition, 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 home any unsold items that you have brought.



BUDDING GARDENERS

SATURDAY 5th MAY 2012

ASTBURY RECTORY GARDEN PARTY & PLANT SALE

Please consider putting up an extra tray or two of seedlings or cuttings as a donation for the Group to boost our stocks at the Astbury Rectory Plant Sale in May. All contributions are welcome.

Thank you



Quiz Answers (Groat) : 1. Fez Ant 2. Curl U. 3. Corn Bunting 4. Knight in Gale 5. Spoon Bill 6. Kitty Wake 7. Two Cans 8. King Fish R 9. Night Jar 10. Wax Wing 11. Nut Hatch 12. Mag Pie

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.)