



for birds
for people
for ever

The Heron



Newsletter - November 2005

FOR YOUR DAIRY

Sun 13 November

Outdoor Meeting – MOORE NATURE RESERVE

An excellent site for woodpeckers, woodland birds and wildfowl
Depart at 9.00 am from Duke Street Car Park for an all day trip
Leader: Graham Palmer 01625 420179

Friday 2 December

CAWOS Meeting: NAMIBIA - LAND OF CONTRASTS' by Keith Offord

7.45pm at Knutsford Civic Centre, Toft Road, Knutsford
Admission: Members £1.50, Non-members £3.00
Phone 01565 830168 for details

Mon 5 December

Showing Birds to People – RIVERSIDE PARK, MACCLESFIELD

Meet in the Car Park off Manchester Road near the Audi garage at 10.00 am for a leisurely stroll along the River Bollin concluding with festive mince pies back at the Information Centre. Finish at 12.30 pm.
Contact: Ray Evans 01625 432635

Sun 11 December

Coach Trip – CARSINGTON WATER

Depart at 8.00 am from Wilmslow Guild, Bourne Street, Wilmslow

COACH TRIP TO SPURN - 9 OCTOBER 2005

Eight members of the Group joined the Wilmslow Guild trip to Spurn and what a day they had! Spurn has a justifiable record of turning up special birds in the Autumn and this year it didn't let us down.

After arriving at about 11.00 o'clock, we headed straight to Sammy's Point where it had been reported that a Radde's Warbler had been reported. A short walk and we joined a group of birders already in place, so it wasn't hard to find the site!! Very soon it put in an appearance and it moved around a hawthorn bush to give everyone excellent views. What a tremendous start to see such a rare bird all the way from Siberia, giving to most people a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of seeing this bird in this country.



Radde's Warbler

We then headed back to check the area around the Crown and Anchor pub, a notable area for birds to land, the first bit of land having crossed the North Sea. A number of Yellow browed Warblers were around and the group managed to get views of at least two of them - another example of a Siberian vagrant.

The group split up and went their separate ways to explore the area, meeting up again at about 4.30 ready for the trip back. A couple of lucky members in the group had managed to see one of the two Richard's Pipits, further Siberian birds. However, before heading for the M62, we called at Easington village, a couple of miles from Spurn as we had heard that a Barred Warbler and a Red backed Shrike were there. After getting off the coach, we walked along a lane and a couple of birders were already there. We watched a juvenile Red backed Shrike sitting quietly on a branch as it preened itself - excellent. Then a few yards down the same lane, we saw the Barred Warbler, again a juvenile and again giving really good views.

So it was then back to the coach for the journey back.

Overall, the group saw 93 species in the day - a really good total. But it was the quality which really shone. To have seen 3 Siberian vagrants and 2 Eastern European birds was remarkable and everyone confirmed what a tremendous day's birding it had been.

CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

Continuing unseasonably warm weather has meant that many of the birds we would normally expect to be frequenting our gardens at this time of year are still finding plenty to eat in the surrounding fields and hedgerows. However, it cannot be long before we experience colder weather, at which time the regular winter visitors will return to our garden feeders to delight us once again. If you haven't done so already, now is the time to replenish your supplies of food for the birds and to put out those special high-energy treats for them.

This year's 'Feed the Birds Day' at Bollington Arts Centre on 29th October proved extremely popular and successful once again, particularly our RSPB Wildlife Explorers afternoon 'birdfood making' event at which prizes in the Junior Section of our associated 'Brushes with Wildlife' Art and Photographic Competition were presented (see below). Our Wildlife Explorers leaders, particularly David Tolliday and Howard Rowley, along with Jose Spinks from Bollington Arts Centre and Rob Hutchings from Macclesfield Art Group are to be congratulated for organising and mounting such a high quality competition/exhibition.

I know that, because of ill-informed comment in the media about 'bird flu' or, more particularly, the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, some of you may be unnecessarily concerned whether the birds in your garden could present a source of infection to you and members of your family. Hopefully, the Fact Sheet (see Page 4) that I have distilled from up-to-date information provided by the RSPB, BTO, WWT, BirdLife International and DEFRA will go some way to allaying those concerns.

On a brighter note, last week the RSPB unveiled exciting plans for a new nature reserve at Granny's Bay on the Ribble Estuary, near Lytham. Every winter this area is used by up to a quarter of a million birds as a vital fuelling station but this wonderful wildlife spectacle occurs out on the mudflats so, without the aid of a binoculars or a telescope, most of the time distant views only can be seen. However, under the plans CCTV cameras will continuously monitor the mudflats and give visitors to the Ribble Discovery Centre at Fairhaven Lake the opportunity to see close-up the wondrous spectacle of thousands of feeding waders.

The predicted cold winter currently seems a long way off but, if it materialises, I am sure that, like me, many of you will be hoping for a waxwing irruption again this year. Let's not forget that last year the first of these colourful Scandinavian visitors appeared in the area during November.

Proposed 'Charles Tunnicliffe Appreciation Society'

Charles Tunnicliffe who was born and lived in Langley, Macclesfield before moving to Anglesey was, and arguably remains, one of the country's foremost wildlife artists whose drawings and paintings of birds are, in the opinion of many, second to none. To ensure that the artist and his work is not forgotten, a group of amateur enthusiasts is hoping that, with permission from the trustees of the Charles Tunnicliffe estate and the support of some high profile individuals to launch the above society. If you are interested in finding out more please contact one of the following:

Stuart Pittman, 40 Plumtree Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Bedfordshire SG16 6NE. E-mail: Jossie14@aol.com
Gordon Wilson, 6 Priors House, Prior's Haven, Tynemouth, North Shields, NE30 4EB. E-mail: gordonjenny@wilsonholland2443.fsnet.co.uk

Ray Evans
Group Leader and Chairman of Committee

FLY THE KITE FOR MACCLESFIELD TITTESWORTH 50 CHALLENGE

Want to try something different? Why not come up to Tittesworth Reservoir on Saturday 12th November and try to find 50 species of bird – or as many as you can – in a 'Bird Race' organised by the Staffordshire Branch of the West Midland Bird Club (WMBC). Teams, family groups and individuals are invited to join the WMBC for this fun event. Andy Lawrence, the event organiser, believes that, with a bit of legwork and also a bit of luck, 50 species can be found in a morning. Come and join the fun. Andy will be providing a checklist of birds and a map of the site. Prizes are on offer, donated by the WMBC and Severn Trent Water.

The event is **free** but, to add a little spice, there will be a voluntary sweepstake to predict the highest score for the day. If you would like to take part, then please arrive at about 9.30am, ready for a 10am start. The event will finish at 1.30pm. Please assemble at the large covered barbecue area near the visitor centre with notebook, binoculars and field guide at the ready. Please note that Severn Trent Water levies a small parking fee.

If you are unfamiliar with the site and its potential for birdlife, then why not obtain a copy of the latest Tittesworth Bird Report, available from Margaret and Tony Hayter's sales table. ALL proceeds will go to Macclesfield RSPB Group funds. If you require more information you can ring Andy on 01782 253502 or, if it's more convenient, then ring me on 01625 432668. If you're coming, don't forget to wear appropriate footwear and clothing. Let's hope for dry weather!

OUTINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY TRIP IN FEBRUARY 2006

I've now made a provisional booking for **Saturday 18th February 2006** at **The Douglas Arms Hotel, Castle Douglas** for our Short Weekend Away in Dumfries & Galloway. This former coaching inn (c. 1740) is close to the Solway Coast and is a founder member of the Red Kite Trail. All rooms have en suite bathrooms, television, tea & coffee making facilities and the hotel has sufficient single rooms to meet our needs. It claims an unrivalled Scottish breakfast and I've provisionally made reservations for dinner, bed and breakfast at £45 per person per night for a double or twin room and £55 per person per night for a single room. I need to confirm our numbers following the November Indoor Meeting, so please see me if you would like to join us, a £20 deposit will secure your room.

The provisional schedule for the weekend, which is subject to change according to the weather and bird activity in the area, is as follows. We will leave Duke Street Car Park, Macclesfield at 07:00 am on the Saturday morning and head up the M6 motorway for Scotland. Our first birdwatching stop will be Powfoot & Newby, near Annan off the A75 (see Birdwatching 2001 p46) for waders & gulls. After a short break and leg stretch we will move onto the WWT Caerlaverock reserve for a close encounter with wild ducks, geese and swans (see Birdwatching January 2005 p53). We will explore the reserve for most of the day, eating either a packed lunch or making a pit stop at the Fair Trade Coffee Shop for refuelling as appropriate. If we are lucky, as the day draws to a close, we may see some owl activity before setting off for Castle Douglas to find our hotel at for the night.

Hopefully, on Sunday morning (local Saturday night whisky traditions permitting) we will take an early breakfast and be ready to explore the Galloway Red Kite Trail (see Birdwatching October 2004 p50). This will take us around Loch Ken as we search not only for kites but also other raptors e.g. sparrowhawk, kestrel, merlin, hen harrier, peregrine, buzzard and, if we are very lucky, golden eagle. Dependent upon the time we have available, we may visit Carlingwark Lock (Birdwatching September 2002 p51) just outside Castle Douglas where, in addition to the usual ducks and swans, we may see scaup and smew as well as redpoll & brambling. In the afternoon, depending on the time available we will take a whistle stop tour around Mersehead RSPB reserve (Birdwatching November 2000 p 59) where we may encounter thousands of barnacle geese, a little further along the Solway Firth for more waders and sea duck at Southernness Point (Birdwatching November 2001 p46) and Carsthorpe (Birdwatching March 2005 p46). Now we will probably be ready to head for home, unless you elect to stay for the Sunday night (please let me know if you want a second night booking in Castle Douglas) and as we head back to the M6 via Dumfries we might make our final diversion to Glencaple and the River Nith (Birdwatching November 2005 p54) for a final look at the magnificent geese, wildfowl and waders that can be seen on a brief weekend trip to Dumfries & Galloway.



Golden eagle by John Busby

NOVEMBER OUTDOOR MEETING – Moore Nature Reserve

The Outdoor Meeting in November takes us to Moore Nature Reserve a 200-acre site near Warrington in North Cheshire. The reserve is a mixture of five lakes, woodland with feeding station, meadows and wetland that is managed by wardens for the Waste Recycling Group. Recent sightings at the reserve during October include the elusive lesser-spotted woodpecker, little egret, kingfisher and nuthatch with a bittern in September - so plenty to watch out for. Unfortunately, the reserve doesn't have a Visitor Centre or facilities. We will meet at Duke Street Car Park at 9.00am for an all day trip by car. Sadly, I'm away down in London enjoying a wildlife art exhibition at Barnes Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Centre. Graham Palmer or Ray Evans will be leading this trip, so please contact them on 01625 420179 or 01625 432635 respectively if you require further information.

PEMBROKESHIRE WEEKEND 19-21ST May 2006

I've now confirmed room numbers at the Mariners Hotel, Haverfordwest for our Weekend Away next May. All the rooms have en suite bathrooms, television, tea & coffee making facilities and the hotel has sufficient single rooms to meet our needs. The rates for dinner, bed & breakfast are £48 per person per night for a double or twin room and £59 per person per night for a single room. To secure rooms at the Mariners Hotel, I need to send a deposit in January, so please can I have £20 per person by the January Indoor Meeting at the latest.

Ian Taylor

LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS AWAY

Like last year your Committee decided to participate in the Group Insurance Policy that the RSPB had negotiated on behalf Local Groups to protect their officers against Third Party claims for negligence, bodily harm etc. (Fuller details may be obtained from Ray Evans or Ian Taylor). The RSPB's Standard Insurance for Groups does not cover us for such claims when we stay overnight for any activity (normal Outdoor Meetings and Events are covered) and we are not allowed under the Charities Act to pay for this additional insurance from RSPB funds. Consequently, a charge of £1 per person per night will be levied for everyone participating in the trips to Dumfries & Galloway in February 2006 and Pembrokeshire in May 2006. I hope you agree that cover of this type is prudent and that those who participate should bear the nominal cost.

Avian Influenza ('Bird Flu') – The Facts

There are numerous strains of the avian influenza virus, many of which circulate in wild birds at low levels, and most pose no significant problems for bird or human health.

The unusually virulent strain currently causing concern is referred to as H5N1.

This strain probably originated in domestic poultry in Southeast Asia and had never previously been recorded in wild birds before the recent outbreaks.

Avian influenza H5N1 is spreading, and has now been detected in several parts of Europe, but the ways in which it is spreading are still being investigated.

There is a risk that it will reach the UK, but if this were to happen, **the risk to humans with the virus in its current form is very low**. To date all human cases of H5N1 have resulted from close contact with infected domestic poultry. The disease is currently not easily transmitted from human to human. Additionally, **there are no recorded instances of people catching the disease from wild birds**.

It is true that migratory birds, particularly ducks and geese, which may readily associate with domestic poultry, are thought to be one of the routes by which the infection has spread. However, as the vast majority of our visiting winter ducks and geese have come from breeding grounds in Greenland and Scandinavia, well away from areas of recent outbreaks, the likelihood that these birds are infected with H5N1 remains extremely low. Ducks and geese migrating from or through Russia and Siberia, where there are known outbreaks, could theoretically bring the H5N1 virus to the UK but, at present the risk is low, and even if this were to occur, the risk to humans would be negligible.

The risk of infected birds arriving in the UK will depend on many factors not least of which will be what proportion of birds have come into contact with the infection, the transmission rate of the virus and, more importantly, the likelihood that an infected individual could undertake a long-distance migration.

It is extremely unlikely that avian influenza could be transmitted to people by feeding birds in the garden. Therefore, currently there is no reason whatsoever not to continue feeding the birds in your garden particularly as they may be dependent for survival upon the food you provide. Good hygiene at bird feeding stations will further minimise any remaining risk and is a sensible precaution at any time.

Nevertheless, if you come across a sick or dead wild bird, you are advised not to touch it, any droppings or water in the vicinity but to contact DEFRA on 08459 335577.

Acknowledgements to RSPB, BTO, WWT, BirdLife International and DEFRA

ATTENBOROUGH NATURE RESERVE (NOTTINGHAM GRAVEL PITS) 23 October 2005

Fifteen of our members enjoyed a trip to the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's Attenborough Nature Reserve where 52 species of birds were seen. The new visitors' centre and cafe are an added bonus at this site. Egyptian geese, those strange-looking birds that seem to be made from the left-over parts of others, were very tame and joined with mute swans and Canada geese begging food at the lakeside picnic area. Along with the more usual ducks, good views were had of a female red-crested pochard and several goosanders. During the walk around the extensive range of lakes and pools, a bird table at the side of the footpath produced willow tit as well as the more usual tits and finches.

There was excitement when the first water rail was spotted, scopes were trained on it and everyone was shown this elusive bird, but then a further two water rails were seen walking out in the open in front of a reed bed.

One highlight of the trip was when many members managed to train their scopes and bins on that well-known and often heard, but seldom seen, species Ken Clarke (*Toryleader contestor*). He was identified by his drab plumage and doggy-like foot-ware. Whilst Ken's territory is usually in the Westminster area of London, he has been known to visit reserves and bird watching places around the country.

This is an enormous reserve with many types of habitat: large lakes and small pools are surrounded by wooded and scrubby areas, with new scrapes being created, and, as shown by the sora rail which turned up last winter, it can attract all sorts of rarities.

Trisha Thompson

BRUSHES WITH WILDLIFE

Art Exhibition at Bollington Arts Centre

The judging has now taken place for the two age categories in the Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers' Brushes with Wildlife art competition. The judges were delighted at the very high standard of the pictures entered into the competition and had great difficulty in choosing the winners. However after a considerable amount of time they finally made their decisions. The Bollington Town Mayor Councillor Sandra Edwards presented the prizes.

The eight and under age category was won by Joseph Reid with a picture of a Tawny Owl, second was a Song Thrush by George Bell and equal third were Snuffling Hedgehog by Amber Birchall and The Owl by Paul Capes.

The nine to 11 age category was won by Zoe Williamson with a picture of a Great Crested Grebe, second was Hunting Ladybirds by Hannah Stewart and joint third were Cabbage Whites by Rachel Fitchett and Kingfisher by Emily White. The children's art work, together with a range of other photographs and paintings of local wildlife, is on display at the Bollington Arts Centre, Wellington Road, Bollington with the last special opening on Sunday afternoon 13 November from 2.00pm until 4.00pm.

A calendar including some of the entries to the competition has been produced and over 65 copies have already been sold raising approximately £300 for our Wildlife Explorers group.



Joseph Reid whose picture of a tawny owl won the 8 and under age group

Dave Tolliday

THE RSPB FEED THE BIRDS DAY

The birds of Macclesfield and Bollington should be well fed over the next few weeks due to the Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers'; Feed the Birds Day event. Approximately 120 people, including 70 children, visited Bollington Arts Centre to make bird cake, pine cone feeders and peanut holders to take home to feed the birds in their gardens. A video called 'Attracting Birds to your Garden', by TV presenter Michaela Strachan was also shown. In the evening the film Winged Migration was shown. This film followed migrating birds with photography by cameras on remote controlled planes, powered hang gliders and microlites that flew with the birds. What a wonderful sight to be flying with the flocks of birds over many parts of the world.

The Met Office are predicting a hard winter so feeding garden birds, and putting out fresh water, may mean the birds' lives could depend on our help. Please therefore continue to feed the birds in your garden. An increased range of wild bird food products, to include fat balls, suet blocks and feed specially formulated for song birds, is on sale from our bird food sales table.



Dave Tolliday

10th Annual North West Bird Fair

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November 2005
Wildlife and Wetlands Trust

Did you know?

*In winter, tiny birds like wrens sleep together at night for warmth.
An incredible 63 wrens were once found in a single nest box*

Local Group Website

Being the victims of our own success and needing more space to store our website, it recently became necessary to move to a new service provider for our Local Group Website. For a while the old website host was retained with a message that a change had taken place. However as there was a financial implication of maintaining two hosts, the original one has now been cancelled and anybody accessing it will receive an error message.

If you usually access the www.macclesfieldrspb.org.uk website through your "favourites page" using the old stored address you will now have to change your records as follows. Simply delete the website from your favourites, and re-input the address (shown above) in your browser. This will then take you to the new location. You can then re-save the appropriate webpage in your favourites.

If you are unsure about any of the above advice, please feel free to contact either Gordon Howard 01625 420055 or David Tolliday 01625 432105 or email website@macclesfieldrspb.org.uk.

Apologies to those of you who have experienced difficulties in accessing our website due to this change, and to those of you who are not internet users and are probably wondering what we are talking about.

Help and Advice Wanted

I am waiting for a hip replacement and find that my poor mobility means that my birdwatching is now limited. If anyone knows of places either locally or within a short day's distance where you can watch from a car or nearby, please can they contact me:

Phone 01260 272618
or at artom65@hotmail.com

Doreen Tomlinson

SOME SILLY BIRD HUMOUR!!

What did the little bird say to the big bird?
Peck on someone your own size.

What kind of ducks rob banks?
Safe quackers.

What does a 1,000 lb. canary say? Answer: Here kitty, kitty, kitty!

Do you know the difference between unlawful and illegal? Unlawful means something is against the law and illegal is a sick bird.

A Frenchman walks into a bar with a parrot on his shoulder. The bartender asks, "Where did you get that thing?" The parrot replies, "In France, there are millions of them!"

Two wildfowlers out on the marsh duck hunting. One says to the other, "we're not having much luck to-day getting any ducks." The other one says, " maybe we're not throwing the dog high enough"

Did you hear about the Tawny Owl which set off to go to the local disco to try and find a mate ? It poured down with rain on the way, and when he got there, he was too-wet-to-woo

Tom Gibbons

Why are Robins so Christmassy? Because postmen - bringers of Christmas cards and presents - used to wear red jackets. and were called redbreasts. The uniform changes, but the bird still fulfils his symbolic Christmas role.

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.)