

Summer 2017

## January trip to Essex & Suffolk

At 7 am on Saturday 15 January 2017, thirty-seven of us set off to spend two nights at the Rivenhall Hotel in Witham, Essex. This was the 30th January weekend arranged by Mike and unbeknown to us all, he had organised a surprise at the hotel, but more of that later. Firstly, we were visiting Abberton Reservoir, which is south of Colchester. During the journey red kites were spotted in the Peterborough area and after a stop at the services, we arrived at the reservoir at approximately 11.20 am. This site is noted for its wildfowl and variety of waders. The weather was cold but it was dry with some sunny periods and there was a small feeding station near reception, which was attracting blue tits, great tits, a blackbird, chaffinch and a song thrush in the vegetation.

The wildfowl we saw from the various hides included mute swans, Canada geese, two Egyptian geese, greylag geese, tufted ducks, goldeneyes, teals, wigeons, pochards, shovelers, mallards and gadwalls. Also, we found male goosanders, a female red-breasted merganser, three male pintails and five smews both male and female. Only a few waders were seen, namely lapwings, redshanks, a common snipe and two golden plovers. Other water



30th January weekend cake



Photo: Peter Skelton

Kestrel (female)

birds noted were coots, little grebes, great crested grebes, little egrets and two grey herons. There were cormorants, black-headed, great black-backed, lesser black-backed and common gulls and on the banks of the reservoir we saw starlings, a pied wagtail, meadow pipits and a dozen skylarks. A red kite, marsh harrier and female kestrel were the only raptors seen. Some of the group ventured further round the reservoir and they were rewarded with views of a chiffchaff, robin, stonechat, redwings, fieldfares and a solitary Bewick's swan. There were the usual corvids and wood pigeons in the surrounding trees but all too soon it was time to board the coach and travel to our hotel.

After a lovely evening meal Mike made a short speech explaining that it was the 30th January weekend he had organised, therefore he had arranged a surprise for us. A large cake with candles on it was then brought out from the kitchen and paraded around the dining room, much to everyone's delight. However, as we were all full after the meal, he thought it would be better to receive a slice at breakfast the next day. On Sunday morning, when we arrived for breakfast, there was a very large piece of cake at each place setting.

After breakfast we made our way to Essex Wildlife Trust Fingringhoe Wick reserve, which lies southeast of Colchester. The reserve was a former gravel works that has been transformed into various habitats including

woodland, scrub, reeds, areas of heath and a freshwater lake. There is also a specially constructed scrape. It was drizzling during the journey but it had stopped by the time we arrived. From the excellent café you can see the feeders and they were being visited by blackbirds, chaffinches, blue tits, great tits, a great spotted woodpecker, robin, dunnock and moorhen. Unusually, the moorhen was perched on one of the feeders and successfully getting food out of it. A male pheasant and song thrush were spotted in the adjacent undergrowth.

The reserve has eight hides and we found lapwings, redshanks, avocets, dunlins, knots, bar-tailed godwits, grey plovers, ringed plovers, oystercatchers, turnstones, a curlew, black-tailed godwit and greenshank. The wildfowl seen were much the same as the previous day and shelducks and brent geese were the only additional ones. We also saw cormorants, black-headed gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, herring gulls, little egrets, little grebes, a water rail and kingfisher. A green woodpecker, marsh harrier, sparrowhawk, kestrel, woodpigeons and carrion crows were noted, as well as a small group of long-tailed tits, goldfinches, tree sparrows and a wren.

On Monday we left the hotel and travelled up to Orford where Mike had arranged for us to meet the warden of Havergate Island. Two boats had been booked to take us to the island where we were given a guided tour. It is a low embanked island in the River Ore with some saline lagoons and bounded by shingle beaches and saltmarsh. During the short journey we saw black-tailed and bar-tailed godwits, redshanks, curlews, avocets, dunlins, ringed and grey plovers, cormorants, a common gull, kestrel and two marsh harriers.

The first birds we encountered after stepping off the boat were rock pipits and linnets. The warden informed us they were all Scandinavian

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Rock pipit



RSPB (rspb-images.com)

Linnet

rock pipits on the island. We then split into two groups and from the various hides we saw Canada geese, greylag geese, wigeons, shovelers, teals, mallards, gadwalls and a male pintail. The only waders were turnstones, two little stints, oystercatchers and sanderlings. There were little egrets, grey herons, four spoonbills, a water pipit, wren, male stonechat, reed buntings and wonderful views of two short-eared owls and a barn owl. Lesser black-backed gulls, great black-backed gulls, black-headed gulls and a yellow-legged gull were also spotted.

The total species seen over the three days was ninety and we all had a very enjoyable break in Essex and Suffolk. It was a good hotel and as usual everything was well organised by Mike and Carol. Our sincere thanks go to them and we can't wait for the next one!

*Ray Daniels  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Help required in Ruskington

We have recently been contacted by a lady who lives in Ruskington to ask if anyone can erect some house martin nest cups on the wall of her home. Last year the house was fitted with uPVC soffits and house martins that had nested under the eaves for many years were unable to attach their nests to the plastic. She would like a volunteer to visit and fit some house martin nest cups to the wall underneath the eaves. She does not own a ladder. If you have a ladder and can possibly help please contact the Group Leader.

**MANY THANKS TO OUR  
ADVERTISERS AND SPONSORS**

**Please mention the RSPB when  
purchasing their products or services**

## A message from Dr James Robinson, RSPB Director for Eastern England.

Hi everyone,

I spend a lot of my time on RSPB nature reserves. I love them. This weekend, we went to see the wonderful crow roost at Buckenham Marshes and then spent the afternoon watching rafts of seaducks at Titchwell Marsh. And on Monday, I had the joy of taking some new fundraisers from The Lodge around Minsmere with Ben and Adam (with a sneaky peek at the smew!). I'm a massive supporter of our nature reserve work – it still remains the most certain way for us to help threatened wildlife to thrive and recover and involve large numbers of people. The work we do on our nature reserves makes up a massive component of our regional manifesto. I asked our Reserves Manager, Jon Haw, to summarise just how successful our nature reserves were in 2016:

“One of the most important times in the reserves calendar is the November to New Year period, a time when all of the reserves annual reports are compiled, submitted and audited. The reports give an account of the entire ecological, visitor and land management activities delivered in the previous 12 months and present us with a great opportunity to take stock and review progress against our objectives. They highlight an incredible variety of work: projects, habitat management and monitoring carried out to secure our priority species, alongside a huge programme of visitor experience activities to show people wildlife, engender support and secure our long term financial security.

The annual report information is vital and enables us to report progress, celebrate



Woodlark

successes and highlight issues to senior management, Board and Trustees. By doing so, this helps to inform future work programmes, secure funding and other resources to fix problems and continue to make our nature reserves very special places for wildlife and people. There has been some significant progress in the last 12 months – here are a few highlights:

- The annual visitor numbers broke all records with 608,000 recorded visits. This has been growing steadily year on year and is almost 200,000 a year more than in 2008. This has been helped by the opening of new reserves to the public, such as Wallasea, and promoting visits to our key reserves
- Our ability to create great places to visit with wonderful wildlife spectacles has been recognised by the receipt of some top Tourism awards for Minsmere and Lakenheath as well as meeting above average Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Survey scores across the region
- Our ecological delivery once again improved. The Reserves Strategy has set a target to achieve 75% of all of our ecological objectives in favourable or improving condition. In Eastern England we achieved 68% last year and if the plans already laid down for the coming year succeed, we will achieve the 75% target in 2017. This would be a first for any RSPB region
- To support this objective, 100% of Eastern England reserves management plans are approved and in place and reserves teams have responded well to the encouragement to manage our heathland, reedbeds, scrapes woodlands and wet grasslands in a less constrained and more dynamic manner
- It has been a good year for our heathland species, with over 50 pairs of woodlarks, 20 churring nightjars and 30 pairs of Dartford warblers in Suffolk
- Our All Nature work continues to produce some wonderful results and goes from strength to strength. At Sutton Fen over 6,000 fen orchid flowering spikes were recorded and the fen mason wasp is thriving, over 3,800 red tipped cudweed plants were found at Minsmere, grass poly has responded well to management at Fen Drayton. The population of fen raft spiders introduced to Mid Yare continues to increase. Water vole populations throughout the region

are healthy. Our events and activities programme continues to inspire our visitors with a huge variety of 'all nature species'

- Once again booming bitterns in Eastern England reached 40 with our first boomer at Snape wetlands since the habitats were created
- Common cranes are an increasingly common sight in the Broads, Suffolk and Fens where flocks of up to 25 cranes can now be seen in winter. Six young cranes were fledged from seven breeding pairs in the region. Other new colonists such as spoonbill, black-winged stilts and great white egrets will surely be breeding in the region in the coming years
- Despite its size, Fowlmere, with four pairs hits above its weight in terms of breeding turtle doves. A total of 26 turtle doves bred on our reserves last year with peaks at Minsmere (8) and four at Lincs Wash
- Our wet grassland and saltmarshes hold some of the most important assemblages of breeding waders in England. Despite the seemingly healthy numbers - 970 pairs of redshank, 725 pairs of lapwing, 184 snipe and 42 black tailed godwits, productivity remains a challenge with very few fledged young on some sites due to high tides, summer flooding and predation. Breeding wader success will remain a key focus for reserves in this and future years.
- The region was once again top of the rankings in the annual RSPB Golden Wellie awards with Eastern England reserves collecting the top prizes and accolades. Lincs Wash Reserve was the overall winner recording 34 species of wader, with Titchwell 2nd (32) and Minsmere 3rd (31) with Snettisham, Ouse Washes and Wallasea topping their respective leagues."



Snipe



Turtle dove

This is the tip of a brilliant iceberg of success and there are so many other stories to tell. We should all be very proud of how we are creating homes for nature on our nature reserves – every one of us plays some role in making this happen and our staff and volunteers who work at our nature reserves get my special thanks.

They should be cherished for the future and I will fight hard to keep it that way.

*Best wishes  
James*

## Be vigilant!

Recently one of our members had their car broken into while it was parked in the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve car park at Kirkby on Bain Gravel Pits. Apart from the damage caused to the car, a camera, telephoto lens and mobile phone were stolen.

When planning a visit to this relatively isolated site it is advisable not to have anything of value in the car that you are not going to carry around with you on the reserve. It is also suggested that if you use the bird hide, you open the side window as well as the front windows so that you have sight of the car park.

Until this criminal is caught please be vigilant at this nature reserve. If you see anyone acting suspiciously in the area please make a note of their description and their car number plate.

## Quotable quotes

"The environment ought to be right at the top of the political agenda, because 100 per cent of us live in it."

*Simon Barnes  
Author and Journalist*

## Field meeting reports

### Mid week trip to Lancashire

In October 2016 we went to Lancashire to visit Leighton Moss and Martin Mere reserves, staying overnight in the Leyland Hotel near Preston. We left Lincoln at 7 am and arrived at Leighton Moss RSPB reserve at 11.45 am. It was overcast and a bit misty at first but it was dry and mild. We were informed at the Centre that an American wigeon was showing well and a few yellow-browed warblers had been seen.

Our first stop was at the feeding station where we found a couple of pheasants and a moorhen feeding on the ground. A marsh tit, coal tits, blue tits, great tits and chaffinches were visiting the feeders and a treecreeper was located on a nearby tree. We then set off to explore the rest of the reserve and immediately saw two mistle thrushes flying over and goldfinches flitting about in the trees. From the hides overlooking the freshwater marsh and reedbeds we found Canada geese, shovelers, teals, mallards, gadwalls, wigeons and pintails. We also saw cormorants, little egrets, a great white egret, coots, little grebes, two common snipe, a curlew and a spotted redshank. A water rail and a Cetti's warbler were heard and a bearded tit was seen on one of the special grit trays provided on the causeway.

A sparrowhawk flew over and black-headed gulls, carrion crows and a few fieldfares were present. In the trees and bushes there were siskins, long-tailed tits, robins, two nuthatches, and a wren, goldcrest, tawny owl and great spotted woodpecker. We managed to locate the American wigeon and everyone had good views but nobody was able to find the yellow-browed warblers. Red deer were also seen and after a lovely afternoon, when we recorded 43 species of birds, we returned to the coach and made our way to the hotel.

The next day was misty at first but dry and mild and after an enjoyable stay at the Leyland Hotel, we set off for Martin Mere. At the Visitor

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Siskin

## Lanius Bird Tours

Friendly, Affordable Birdwatching Holidays.

### INDIA 16th Nov - 2nd Dec £2950pp

This classic Northern India tour takes us from the foothills of the mighty Himalayas, through the fertile plains of the Ganges to the arid landscapes of Rajasthan. Along the way offering some of the most diverse birdlife found in the sub continent. We will spend the first week in the Himalayan foothills, visiting Corbett NP, Pangot and Sattal, which offers some of the richest birdlife in the whole of Asia. Moving south we will enjoy the sights and sounds of Keoladeo National Park, undoubtedly India's most famous bird sanctuary. Close by the beautiful Chambal River again offers fantastic birding as well as the opportunity to see the rare Ganges River Dolphin and Gharial Crocodile. A completely different avifauna as well as the highly sought-after Bengal Tiger awaits us at the spectacular Ranthambhore reserve, perhaps the easiest place in the world to see Tigers in the wild. India is of course also well known for its rich culture and history and no visit to Northern India would be complete without a visit to the world famous Taj Mahal.

For more details or to book call  
01777 869620 / 07966698538



[www.laniusbirdtours.co.uk](http://www.laniusbirdtours.co.uk)

Centre we were notified that there were approximately 30,000 pink-footed geese on the reserve and two white-fronted geese were amongst them. We decided to explore the northern edge of the reserve first, calling in at all the hides. We found the same wildfowl species as the previous day with the addition of shelducks, whooper swans, greylag geese, pink-footed geese and a solitary black swan. Other water birds included moorhens, coots, little grebes, grey herons and a few waders such as lapwings, ruffs, black-tailed godwits and common snipe. A kingfisher was seen and we spotted a female marsh harrier, kestrel, sparrowhawk, common buzzard and a stoat.

After lunch we made our way along the eastern side of the reserve where we saw great tits, blue tits, robins, chaffinches, blackbirds, starlings, magpies, jackdaws and carrion crows. From one of the hides we had superb views of a juvenile peregrine falcon flying over the reedbeds and some of the group also saw a merlin. There was a large flock of pink-footed geese and a couple of our party managed to spot a single white-fronted goose amongst them. We then went back to the heated Discovery Hide to see the feeding of the whooper swans, which also enticed a few mute swans as well as large numbers of ducks.

This was a fitting end to a great time in Lancashire and our thanks go to Mike and Carol for once again arranging a wonderful trip.

### Pitsford Reservoir - 11 December 2016

Our final trip of 2016 was to Pitsford Reservoir in Northamptonshire. The weather was dry and sunny but there was a cool wind. Throughout the day we managed to explore three sides of the reservoir and large numbers of wildfowl had congregated on the water. These included mute swans, tufted ducks, wigeons, mallards, teals, pochards, pintails, gadwalls, shovellers, a goosander and the best find of all, two male smews. There were a few greylag geese and Canada geese but many great crested grebes and coots. We found two moorhens, one little grebe, two grey herons, little egrets and two great white egrets. The only waders were lapwings, a redshank and green sandpiper. One person caught a brief glimpse of a kingfisher and a grey wagtail and pied wagtail were seen.

We had distant views of two red kites and a common buzzard and black-headed gulls, great black-backed gulls and lesser black-backed gulls were flying over. Also there were several cormorants perched in the trees around the sides of the reservoir. The feeding areas were attracting tree sparrows, greenfinches, chaffinches, coal tits, blue tits, great tits and a solitary marsh tit. In the woodlands we found rooks, wrens, robins, a treecreeper, goldcrest, great spotted woodpecker, pheasants, blackbirds and a song thrush. The hedgerows and fields were home to carrion crows, magpies, jackdaws, woodpigeons and red-legged and grey partridges, a reed bunting and green woodpecker. There were a few starlings, redwings and fieldfares in the fields and a bullfinch and long-tailed tits were spotted in the hedgerows.

The total species of birds seen was 64 and it was an excellent day out at a wonderful location.

Ray Daniels  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Mike Langman  
(rspb-images.com)



Goldcrest

**worldchoice** 

**Michael Carter Travel**

YOUR LOCAL INDEPENDENT  
TRAVEL AGENT

\*\*\*

 A full travel agency  
for all your needs,  
not just a holiday shop

\*\*\*

A member and sponsor of the RSPB,  
we are here to help you with  
all your travel requirements  
and help the birds as well

\*\*\*

**MICHAEL CARTER TRAVEL**  
77 High Street, (Gowt's Bridge),  
Lincoln LN5 8AA  
Tel: (01522) 524595

### Watch-point volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help at the Local Group's two watch-points this year. The heron watch-point at Hartsholme Country Park and the peregrine watch-point at Lincoln Cathedral. Help is needed on Saturdays and Sundays for either 3 hours in a morning or 3 hours in an afternoon (or 6 hours if you would prefer to stay all day). With four volunteers for each session everyone will have a rest break and if you stay all day you will obviously have a lunch break as well and a café is available at both sites. If you are able to help please contact Heather Dowson: [heather.dowson@lincolnrspb.org.uk](mailto:heather.dowson@lincolnrspb.org.uk)

### Change of speaker

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, David Lingard will be unable to give the advertised talk *Birdwatching in Italy* on the 10th September this year. Instead we will have an illustrated talk by Ashley Grove who is an entertaining speaker and an excellent wildlife photographer. His talk is called *Trinidad and Tobago - Home of the Hummingbird*. David will now give his talk about birdwatching in Italy on 8th February 2018. Please update your diary and copy of the 2017 programme.

## Calendar & photo competition

The Group will be producing another calendar for 2018. The calendar will again feature photographs taken by members of the Group and it will go on sale in September.

We would like you to submit a maximum of three digital photos for possible inclusion in the calendar by handing them to a committee member on a memory stick, card or CD (which will obviously be returned to you). Alternatively you can email low-resolution jpeg images to [info@lincolnspb.org.uk](mailto:info@lincolnspb.org.uk) but if the images are selected for the calendar we will require high-resolution files.

The requirements for all photographs are:

The person submitting the photograph must be the photographer and the photograph must have been taken in the UK. The copyright of all photographs will remain with the photographer.

The subject must be British wildlife. No wildlife or habitats should be harmed, put at risk or unduly disturbed in the process of taking the photographs and the photographer must abide by the Code of Conduct for Wildlife Photography.

The photos must be in landscape format and ideally should be 3508 x 2480 pixels.

The committee will decide which photographs will be used for the calendar. The committee's decision is final and no correspondence regarding the results will be entered into.

The deadline for submitting photographs is 31 July 2017. Any photo submitted after that date will not be considered.

## Found a baby bird?



Juvenile blackbird

Each year the Group receives a number of phone calls from members of the public requesting someone to come and rescue baby birds from their gardens, usually because either they or their neighbours have a cat. Blackbirds in particular are very vulnerable when they leave the nest, as they are unable to fly properly and spend a

londoncameraexchange

LCE

in partnership with

THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS Lincolnshire

PRESENTS

The Lincoln Nature & Optics Fair

Whisby Nature Park  
Moor Lane, Thorpe on the Hill, LN6 9BW

Friday 19th May 2017  
11am-5pm  
Car Parking £2 All Day

LWT Guided Walks | Olympus Photowalks | Macro Workshops | Demo Areas | Stalls

SUPPORTED BY

SWAROVSKI OPTIK Canon OLYMPUS ZEISS Manfrotto  
Panasonic GIZO opticron SONY  
HAWKE SIGMA Nikon  
CELESTRON MEADE C&H

FANTASTIC DEALS ON THE DAY  
PART EXCHANGE WELCOME  
FINANCE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

couple of days on the ground until they become airborne. Their parents will continue to feed them during this time so if they were removed from the area they would almost certainly die. The only way to ensure they survive is to **leave them alone**. If cats are a problem then responsible owners should keep the cats indoors for a couple of days until the birds have learnt to fly.

We also receive calls from people wanting us to rescue trapped or sick or injured birds. We cannot do this. The RSPB is not an animal welfare organisation. It does not employ vets nor does it have any facilities to look after sick or injured birds. The RSPB is a conservation charity involved in ecology and the protection of wildlife habitats and the environment to enable nature to thrive and prosper.

Most vets will treat wild birds free of charge as part of their Hippocratic Oath but you should always contact the veterinary surgery before taking a wild bird to them. Unfortunately with the closure of Weirfield Wildlife Hospital in Lincoln there may not be anywhere else in the area to take injured wild birds. If a bird requires rescuing the RSPCA may be able to help so it is always worth contacting them. Their national phone number is 0300 1234999.

# Data protection, donations and *Nature's Home* magazine

## Data protection

Over recent months some charities have come in for a lot of criticism over their fundraising tactics and the way they use personal data and information. It is worth pointing out that the RSPB *never* sells members details to anyone and the Society has some very strict data protection policies in place to ensure it fully complies with all Data Protection Laws. Local Groups must also comply with the law and RSPB policies and protect all your personal data. When you book on a coach outing or put your name down to volunteer for an activity we will keep your contact details on file. If you do not wish us to do this please tell us and we will delete them but if you do request us to do this we will not be able to contact you again to let you know if a coach trip or an event has been cancelled or the times have been changed.

## Donated money

Did you know that 90% of the money donated to the RSPB is used for nature conservation work and only 10% is used for administration purposes? This is one of the lowest spends on administration for any charity and it is something we should all be very pleased about. Generally speaking all money donated is used within three months of the Society receiving it simply because people who donate money expect it to be used for nature conservation and not to sit accumulating in a bank account for years. However, it does mean that if all income suddenly stopped, the Society could only continue to operate in the way it does for three months, which is why it is so important that we continue to raise funds and continue to support the RSPB whenever we can.



Photo: Peter Skelson

Heron, Hartsholme Country park



## Fancy becoming a volunteer?

RSPB Langford Lowfields is currently looking for volunteers on our weekly Friday and monthly Sunday work parties and weekly grounds maintenance team. Langford is a developing nature reserve that will hopefully become the largest reedbed in the East Midlands! If you love wildlife, the outdoors and meeting like-minded people, one of these vacancies could be for you!

All training and equipment is provided.

Please contact Jenny on 01636 893611 or [jennifer.wallace@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jennifer.wallace@rspb.org.uk) for more information.

Inspiring everyone to give nature a home  
[rspb.org.uk/langfordlowfields](http://rspb.org.uk/langfordlowfields)

Photo by Genevieve Leaper (rspb-images.com). The RSPB is a registered charity in England & Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654.

## Natures Home magazine

Some people think that there are too many adverts in *Natures Home* magazine but did you know that the adverts cover the entire cost of producing and mailing the magazine to members? Great news because it means that none of your annual subscription has to be used to produce the magazine and can therefore be used for nature conservation.

If you have any concerns about data protection or about how your money is spent please contact Membership Services at The Lodge. They will be only too happy to answer your questions and if they don't know the answer, they will find out for you.

## Volunteer coordinator wanted

A volunteer coordinator is wanted to join the committee and organise the rota for the two watch-points and the monthly walks at Hartsholme Country Park.

Volunteers are also needed for the spring fair and the family fun day at the Park. Please contact any committee member if you can help or email: [info@lincolnrspb.org.uk](mailto:info@lincolnrspb.org.uk)



## Lakenheath Fen news December 2016

### Reserve management

For the last few months, we have been concentrating on vegetation control in one form or another! First up, we had some big 'boys toys' here at the end of July, with a machine called a Pisten Bully and an accompanying Softrack, which came to try and tackle our soft rush problem, mostly on Cowles Drove. The Pisten Bully is a modified version of a machine normally seen blowing snow on ski slopes, but instead of having a snow blower, this one was mounted with a cutting head. It has really low ground pressure making it ideal to work in very wet areas, perfect for work on wet grassland. The cut material is blown up through a spout much like silage is, and into the back of the waiting Softrack (also very low ground pressure). The cut material was then taken to a local AD (Anaerobic Digestion) plant, who hopefully will pay for it in the future, but as this year was a trial, we had to foot the cost ourselves. There were a few issues and breakdowns, but overall just less than 12 hectares of soft rush was cut and carted. The regrowth has now been treated using a high concentration of herbicide and early signs that we've had some success are promising.

Then we were back to the annual strimming of reeds at the viewpoints and along the visitor trails. We aim to do this every year to open up the pools and views a bit, and hopefully encouraging wildlife out into the open. Since doing the viewpoints and the visitor centre pool, we've had great views of bittern, otter and great white egret, along with bearded tits using the grit trays and kingfishers using the perches. One lucky visitor even managed to see a Chinese water deer, which are very rarely recorded on the reserve. All of the benches



Chinese water deer

have had a bit of TLC lavished upon them, with some being replaced entirely and the others getting a good oiling.

Then in mid December we had the big

machines back with our reed cutting contractors and their reed-cutting bucket. Last year we cut around 5 ha of reed at the eastern end of New Fen North, so this year we're concentrating on the western end.

We also plan to do a bit of extra cutting using brush cutters at the eastern end just to open up the view from the viewpoint.

### Reserve events

We held a very successful Big Wild Sleep Out event on the reserve on 5/6 August. The weather behaved, and we had an excellent turnout with about 40 people camping out over the weekend, with most families choosing to camp both nights. Everyone seemed to enjoy the event and the wildlife related activities that were organised.

Our other big annual event, the Race for Wildlife, was also a success. Despite the damp October weather, a record 100 runners (or walkers) took part in either the 5 or 10 km routes. Between entry fees, sponsorship and sales from homemade cakes, the event raised £1,308.50. A lot of hard work goes into organising these events, so we are delighted that we had such great turnouts for both.

### Wildlife sightings

We gained some excellent wader records towards the end of August when the water levels on the river washland dropped dramatically. The muddy edge and trapped fish in the main washland pool presented an excellent feeding opportunity for up to 53 little egrets, 35 herons, five green sandpipers, five greenshanks, five black-tailed godwits, four redshanks, three common sandpipers, three ruffs, curlew sandpiper, little stint, two dunlins, and a little ringed plover! I've never seen so many waders on the washland – it was fantastic! Up to three great white egrets are currently being seen daily.

Sightings of red kites have been fairly regular and an osprey flew over on 14 August, and was



Pisten bully and Softrack

Photo: Dave Rogers



Bearded tit

then present for much of September. A honey buzzard flew over Joist Fen also on 14 August. There are currently up to 25 marsh harriers roosting on the reserve, along with the occasional peregrine and merlin.

Bearded tits are being seen regularly, as are kingfishers and water rails. A small roost of corn buntings can be seen around the Brandon Fen family trail at the moment.

### And finally!

This will be the last contribution from me for a while as I'm off on maternity leave in late January. You will continue to get news from the reserve either from my replacement, Alan Kell, who joins us from Dungeness, or Emma, our other reserve warden. I hope you've enjoyed my ramblings over the past 10 years; I've certainly enjoyed writing them!

Hope you will visit the reserve soon!

*Cheers, Katherine  
(Warden) 22/12/16*

## Future coach trip

### Cavenham and Weeting Heath, Sunday 23 April

Cavenham Heath in Suffolk is a National Nature Reserve and is designated as a SSSI. The reserve consists of woodland, heathland, fen and reedbeds and consequently has a rich variety of flora and fauna. There are three trails on the site and as summer visitors should be arriving by now we can expect to see common and lesser whitethroats, reed and sedge warblers as well as the resident species. Nightingales and grasshopper warblers are also recorded on the heathland and we may see wheatears and stone curlews.

Weeting Heath near Brandon is one of the most important areas of heath in Breckland covered

by open grassland and stony heath. The site is home to a number of rare plants, birds and insects. It was purchased for Norfolk Wildlife Trust in 1941 and was one of the first nature reserves in Breckland. It was designated a National Nature Reserve in 1954. The visitor centre has all the usual facilities. There are hides overlooking the heath from where we hope to see stone curlew, woodlark, green woodpecker and mistle thrush. There is a forest trail that offers a chance to see woodland birds and possibly common crossbill. We haven't visited these reserves for sometime, so now is your chance to come with us to view these unique sites.

*Colin Goulding  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Rare wildlife sightings in Lincolnshire

It has been a good winter for rarities in Lincolnshire. Waxwings were seen in many areas of the City including Bagholme Road, Outer Circle Road and in North Hykeham. They had managed to find their favourite rowan trees in these areas, sorbus vilmorinii, and were feeding greedily on the berries.

In January a white-billed diver was resident on the River Witham for several weeks giving people some excellent views and good photo opportunities. A white-billed diver was recorded in almost exactly the same place in 1996, 21 years ago but sadly that bird became entangled in some discarded fishing tackle and did not survive. Let's hope that this bird doesn't meet the same fate.

In February a bluethroat was found at Willow Tree Fen and has been very confiding, again



White-billed diver

giving people excellent photographic opportunities. A great grey shrike was also seen in the same area. A scaup was recorded on Lincolnshire Trust Boultham Mere reserve in Lincoln. Also in February mobile phone footage of an otter swimming in Brayford Pool - right in the heart of the City - was posted on the Lincolnite website.

You never know what will arrive next in Lincolnshire so keep your eyes open and see what you can find!

## New swift brick available

A new swift brick has been designed offering a safe, habitable space for swifts that can easily be incorporated into the construction process.

Working closely with Barratt Developments PLC, the RSPB, and Action for Swifts, British manufacturing company Manthorpe Building Products Ltd have designed the new swift brick. At a cost of about £15, the new brick is significantly cheaper than other products, but there may be scenarios where other bricks are the more appropriate solution. The bricks have been designed so that they can be used by both swifts and house sparrows, which are both RSPB urban priority species. They are easy for bricklayers to install, so we hope they will be widely used throughout the housing industry. With government targets for 200,000 new homes each year, and recommendations that this target needs to increase even more, the RSPB is working with businesses like this to demonstrate that houses can be built in a more nature-friendly way.

The swift brick is made from recyclable plastics and doesn't look out of place when it is fitted. The bricks are double-walled at the front for added insulation and have drainage and ventilation holes. It has a concave nest cup moulded in to the base.

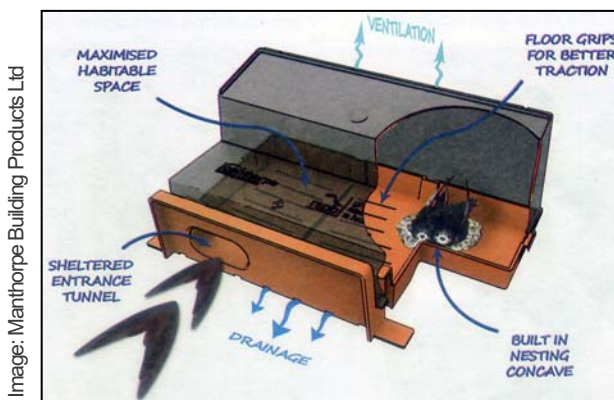


Image: Manthorpe Building Products Ltd



The swift brick can be used in place of a single standard size brick and comes in a variety of different colours so that it blends in with the surrounding brickwork. They are already being used at the Kingsbrook development in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, the flagship project of the RSPB/Barratt partnership. In total, 900 swift bricks will be built in to the new homes at Kingsbrook.

### Action for Swifts

Please let Sue Nock know of any swift nests in your area. Sue is collating the information for the RSPB Action for Swifts project.  
Email: [k.s.nock@btinternet.com](mailto:k.s.nock@btinternet.com)

Swifts are highly charismatic, iconic birds, and a characteristic part of the summer urban landscape. However, in the past 20 years the UK population has fallen by an alarming 47%. The cause of this decline is unknown, but the loss of traditional nest sites and insufficient provision of new nesting sites are thought to be at least partly to blame. Providing replacement nest sites in new buildings will help to counteract the continued loss of traditional sites and hopefully start to reverse this decline. Due to the desperate decline in the swift population the RSPB and Barratt Homes have agreed that the swift brick will be available to other builders and developers.

For more information on the RSPB's work with Barratt contact Paul Stephen, RSPB and Barratt Biodiversity Advisor: [paul.stephen@rspb.org.uk](mailto:paul.stephen@rspb.org.uk) or for advice on wider urban matters contact John Day, RSPB Urban Land Management Advisor: [john.day@rspb.org.uk](mailto:john.day@rspb.org.uk)

For information on purchasing bricks and distribution, contact the sales department at Manthorpe Building Products: [bpsales@manthorpe.co.uk](mailto:bpsales@manthorpe.co.uk)

## Dates for your diary

### April

21 - 23 MEMBERS' WEEKEND, East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham. See the winter issue of *Nature's Home* magazine or contact RSPB HQ T: 01767 680551.

23 COACH TRIP to NNR Cavenham Heath and Norfolk Wildlife Trust Weeting Heath. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5.30 pm. Adults £23 including admission charge. H, VC, WC.

### May

10 EVENING BIRDWATCH Forestry Commission Chambers Farm Wood. Meet in the car park at 7 pm.

11 INDOOR MEETING A Year of Nature by Mike Pickwell ([www.mikepickwellwildimages.co.uk](http://www.mikepickwellwildimages.co.uk)). Sponsored by Sleafordian Coaches. The Group's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at 9 pm following the refreshment break. Free admission from 9 pm for the AGM.

21 COACH TRIP to RSPB Middleton Lakes in the Tame Valley. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £19. C, H, VC, WC.

### June

1 - 5 HOLIDAY IN DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY visiting Ken-Dee Marshes, Mersehead, Wood of Cree, Mull of Galloway, Campfield Marsh and Caerlaverock. Further details from Mike Willey.

11 COACH TRIP to Norfolk Wildlife Trust Hickling Broad, Leave Lincoln 7.30 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £32 including admission and a 2 hour boat trip. H, NT, VC, WC.

17 AFTERNOON BIRDWATCH at Mike's local patch. Meet outside the Royal Oak, Scopwick at 2 pm. The site is 5 minutes drive from here.

### July

9 COACH TRIP to Suffolk Wildlife Trust Redgrave and Lopham Fen. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £20. C, NT, VC, WC.

16 AFTERNOON BIRDWATCH at RSPB Langford Lowfields. Meet in the reserve car park at 2 pm.

Any advertisements enclosed with this newsletter are not specifically endorsed by the RSPB or the Lincoln Local Group.

### August

13 COACH TRIP to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserves at North Cave and Kiplingcotes. Leave Lincoln 8.30 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £14. H, VC, WC.

18 - 20 BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR at Rutland Water. Details from the Events Team at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. T: 01767 680551.

### September

10 COACH TRIP to RSPB Saltholme, Teesside. Leave Lincoln 7.30 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £23. C, H, VC, WC.

14 INDOOR MEETING Trinidad and Tobago - Home of the Hummingbird by Ashley Grove ([www.experiencenature.co.uk](http://www.experiencenature.co.uk)). Please note this is a change to the original programme. Sponsored by Shirley Warner in memory of Peter Warner.

*Indoor meetings are held at Bishop Grosseteste University. Nature reserve facilities are shown thus: C = Café, H = Hides, NT = Nature Trail, S = Shop, VC = Visitor Centre, WC = Toilets. One child free for each full fare-paying adult booked on the Sunday coach trips (any admission charges still apply). To book coach trips or holidays phone Mike on 01526 321917.*

Further details of all of our events can be found on our website: <http://www.lincolnrspb.org.uk>

Find us on 

<http://www.facebook.com/lincolnlocalgroup>

The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We also play a leading role in a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.

**Website:** <http://www.rspb.org.uk>

The RSPB Lincoln Local Group holds regular events to which RSPB members and members of the public are welcome.

**Website:** <http://www.lincolnrspb.org.uk>