

Winter/Spring 2017

## Butterflies in the Dolomites July 2016

“What’s this blue?” “Where are you looking?”  
“Which way to look?”

These were the questions everyone was asking on our first full day exploring the local area where we had arrived the previous evening after a long day and a harrowing start to our trip to the Dolomites.

Having set out from Grantham on the early morning train to catch our lunchtime flight to Venice we had an hour and a half delay waiting for our baggage to be booked in. Everything was well until we went to collect our vehicles for the three-hour drive to Tamion in the Fassa valley. One vehicle and all the paper work was fine but our local guide had a problem with the administration for his vehicle. This ended up being sorted out by one of our party booking the hire vehicle in his name and eventually the two vehicles headed off for the mountains. After a quick meal and a good night’s sleep we were all up and raring to go the next morning. As we had had a long day’s driving the day before, we explored the meadows above the hotel, hence the many questions about the butterflies and insects we were seeing. These included Mazarine blue, pearl-bordered fritillary together with woodland ringlet and Amanda’s blue. There were some butterflies that were easily recognised from home such as painted lady and marbled white.

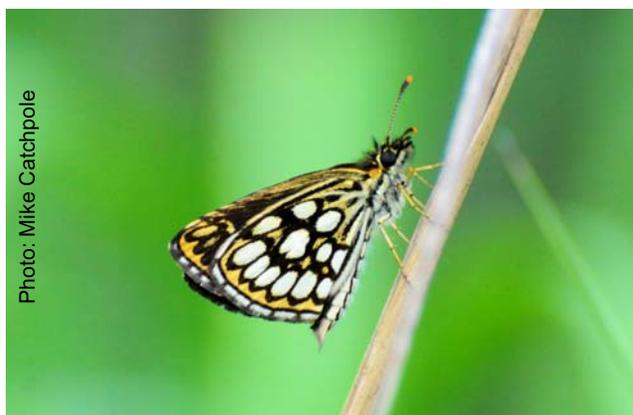


Photo: Mike Catchpole

Large chequered skipper

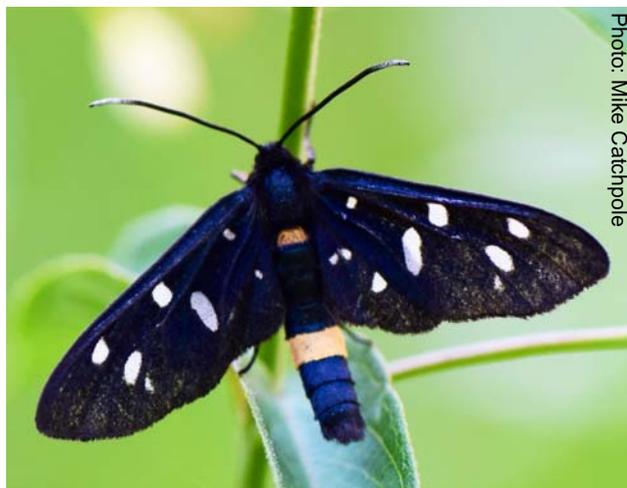


Photo: Mike Catchpole

Nine spot moth

Some members of the group had a wide knowledge of insects and moths but we were all interested in seeing what each other had found. After our walk we took to the minibuses to drive to our picnic spot below the granite slopes of Monzoni in a secluded valley meadow surrounded by wild orchids and cow wheat at about 1500m. Here we found alpine blue and an argent and sable day flying moth.

Back to our hotel for a shower and the log of the day’s findings - in the bar of course! Then dinner and a walk up the road before bed. The village where the hotel is situated is a dead end so there was not a lot of choice as to where to walk in an evening left or right out of the hotel door. Here on the walls we came across glow-worms.

The next day we had the excitement of a cable car ride to a group of mountains known as King Lauren’s Rose Garden whose peaks we could see from our hotel, glowing red in the early sunshine.

We explored the alpine meadows near the cable car station and took a walk towards the small hamlet of Gardeccia at 1948m where the scenery changes together with the butterflies. The path followed a mountain torrent to screes and rocks rich with high alpine plants. The butterflies here were different from the valley below giving us glimpses of alpine blue and

alpine heath. We also saw clouded yellow but not the mountain clouded yellow. The fritillaries included heath and marbled.

Whilst the rest of the group were walking up the meadows I was lucky enough to see a blue butterfly, which Mike photographed and on the leader being shown this there were cries of "Where did you see this?" I said it had just flown around where I was sitting which just goes to show that you don't always have to walk miles to see a rarity. So what was the blue butterfly? It was the mountain Alcon blue. We then made our way back to the cable car for the descent; I don't think London in the rush hour could have got another single person in that car.

The next day saw us visiting a different habitat and the slighter warmer climate of Bolzano where the deciduous trees support a range of species not found at the sub-alpine level. Here we saw Amanda's blue, Mazarine blues and Meleager blues. There were more common species like common blue, comma and marbled white.

Each morning before we set off for the day we were treated to the best of the moths, which had been caught in the moth trap overnight. Over the week we saw pinehawk, various alder moths with several varieties of carpet moths while attractive purple-shaded gem, argent and sable moths were also seen in the field on various days.

The one butterfly most of the group wanted to see was the Apollo and our wish was granted on our next trip out on the way to the National Park of Paneveggio. We stopped at the site of some old workings at the side of the road and watched and waited. Our wait was not in vain as the butterfly appeared quite high up but eventually it decided we needed a closer look and came down low enough for us to catch in the net and have a good look at it. We also had a fleeting glimpse of a purple emperor. Arriving at the Visitor Centre just outside the park we took a walk on the south-facing hillside where we found more fritillaries including dark green, Shepherd's and mountain. We then drove uphill to Val Venegia, which is reputed to have all the flowers of the Dolomites, not that we saw them all. After yet another picnic lunch of ham, cheese, olives, cake and chocolate we walked through damp meadows with marsh orchids and masses of bird's eye primrose searching for woodland ringlet. We then climbed through rocky spruce woodland to come out with a magnificent view of mountain Cimon de la Pala.



Apollo

We walked as far as the mountain café where we were lucky enough to catch sight of two alpine marmots peeping over a bank right in front of us.

The weather forecast for the next day was not good but our guide assured us that it would improve so we set out to drive through the San Pelegrino Pass in the pouring rain with thunderstorms threatening. Thankfully our way took us to a chalky hillside above a lake called Miralago where there was a café, which had coffee and a hot chocolate menu of over thirty different flavours!!!! True to the forecast the rain abated and we were able to continue our itinerary for the day. After lunch we followed a track the short distance to Val Dai Be where we spent the afternoon checking the meadows. Here we found dingy, Warren's grizzled and large grizzled skippers together with large wall brown and various ringlets.

Our final day saw us travelling to the Sella Pass, our highest walk at 2200m. Not my happiest day as the going was tougher than before. Here we explored and picnicked beneath the towering Langkofel with a fine view of Marmolada and its glacier. Our two new species of olive skipper and sooty ringlet for the trip were found here.

Our final day saw us travelling back to Marco Polo airport, Venice with a stop at Candatan where we had our only sighting of large chequered skipper. What a way to end our trip to the Dolomites. And whilst the rest of the group travelled back to England, Mike and I stayed on and had four days to visit the sights and wonders of Venice.

*Angela Catchpole  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Field meeting reports

### Mystery Trip - 5 June 2015

Again our destination for this trip was a closely guarded secret and it wasn't until we were travelling south on the A1 that we had any indication of where the reserve was located. The coach left the A1 at the Ramsey slip road and we knew then that it was one of the fenland reserves. We eventually arrived at Woodwalton Fen, which was a new reserve for many of us.

It is one of the last fragments of the ancient fen to survive and it would not exist if it were not for Charles Rothschild. He bought Woodwalton Fen in 1910 to ensure that at least one part of the ancient fens would not disappear forever. It was one of the first nature reserves in Britain.

There are several trails taking in the key features of the site, including the Rothschild Bungalow, Great Fen View and bird hides. We had a slow walk round stopping frequently to admire the variety of wild flowers and the many dragonflies such as scarce chasers, four-spotted chasers and southern hawkers. Also, there were blue damselflies and a few butterflies, namely orange tips, brimstones, speckled woods and a hawk moth caterpillar.

Raptors seen included a marsh harrier, common buzzard, red kite, kestrel, hobby and sparrowhawk. There were numerous birds singing and we identified garden warbler, blackcap, reed warbler, Cetti's warbler and grasshopper warbler. We also heard a green woodpecker, cuckoo, wren, robin, song thrush and skylark.

The only warblers we saw were sedge warblers and common whitethroats but we had excellent



Scarce chaser dragonfly



Chinese water deer

Chris Shields (rspb-images.com)

views of two great spotted woodpeckers and a fleeting glimpse of a bittern flying over the reeds. As well as the usual wood pigeons and carrion crows we found swifts, reed buntings, chaffinches, goldfinches, blackbirds, little egrets, coots, mallards, mute swans, a cormorant, jay and pheasant. Some of the group also spotted a common newt, grass snake, Chinese water deer and muntjac deer.

Once again we had a lovely day at a great reserve and I am sure we will be making a return visit in the future.

### RSPB Bempton Cliffs - 10 July 2016

Our July trip was to Bempton Cliffs and Flamborough Head and when we arrived it was a lovely, sunny, warm day. Around the car park and reception area we found carrion crows, wood pigeons, blackbirds, tree sparrows, house sparrows and swallows. We then made our way to the cliffs and there were meadow pipits and skylarks in the grass fields.

From the viewing areas on the cliff top the sight and sound of the largest seabird colony in England was absolutely amazing. The smell was also very noticeable. There were thousands of birds either perched on the cliff sides, many with young, or on the sea, or flying around. These were mainly gannets, razorbills and guillemots with a smaller number of puffins, kittiwakes and fulmars. We also managed to find a bridled guillemot among the masses of birds on the cliffs.

A few of us walked along the cliff top to Flamborough North Landing where there were larger numbers of puffins and fulmars, as well as a shag, cormorants, herring gulls and rock

doves. House martins and sand martins were flying over and we saw jackdaws, reed buntings, pied wagtails, a wheatear, yellowhammer, dunnock and a distant peregrine falcon.

There were many marsh orchids in flower and a few butterflies on the wing. Our total number of bird species seen was 28 and it was a very enjoyable day's birding at a stunning location.

### **RSPB Minsmere - 14 August 2016**

Our August trip was to the wonderful Minsmere RSPB Reserve in Suffolk. It was an early start but it was a lovely warm day and we were looking forward to seeing some good birds. Shortly after our arrival we headed to the North Bushes to see the stone curlews that had successfully nested on the grassland. An RSPB volunteer had set up his telescope, therefore, we were able to get good views of the two adults and the one surviving youngster. Also, in the same area there were lapwings, magpies, pied wagtails, goldfinches, linnets, greenfinches and woodpigeons. We then made our way slowly towards the sea where we saw reed warblers, shelducks, black-tailed godwits and little egrets in the reedbeds and sand martins flying over. Also, a pair of stonechats were showing well on the sea bank. We then returned to the Visitor Centre for lunch and from the North Wall footpath two water rails were spotted in the open water of the reed beds.

After lunch we again set off along the North Wall and had another look at the stone curlews. We called in at the North Hide where we found chaffinches and a common whitethroat. Grey herons dropped into the reedbeds this time and on the East Scrape we found cormorants, great black-backed gulls, herring gulls, mute swans, mallards and moorhens. The waders noted included dunlins, knots, ringed plovers, ruffs, avocets, two common snipe, a wood sandpiper, green sandpiper, common sandpiper, spotted redshank and little stint. While we were walking along the sea bank three wheatears appeared and a hobby and two Sandwich terns flew over.

We visited the hides overlooking the South and West Scrapes and we saw Canada geese, reed buntings, a yellow wagtail, swallows and a kingfisher. We then moved to the Bittern Hide where we located a bittern soon after arriving. The next stop was the Island Mere Hide and on the way we found a wren and long-tailed tits. From the hide we saw coots, black-headed gulls, a marsh harrier, kestrel and buzzard.



Water vole

Other wildlife seen included an otter, red deer and water vole and a few butterflies, namely commas, red admirals, painted ladies, common blues and peacocks. We had a superb day at a fantastic reserve and we reluctantly returned to the coach but not before visiting the café to sample their delicious cakes.

### **Cley Marshes - 11 September 2016**

In September we visited Cley Marshes, which is the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's oldest nature reserve. The water levels in the pools and reedbeds are regulated to ensure they are ideal for the resident birds and reed is harvested every year to keep the reedbeds in good condition. The shingle beach and saline lagoons, along with the grazing marsh and reedbed support large numbers of wintering and migrating wildfowl and waders, as well as bitterns, marsh harriers and bearded tits. Also, there is an eco-friendly Visitor Centre containing a café, shop and viewing areas.

When we arrived it was a sunny, warm day with very little wind and from the viewing area at the Visitor Centre we started our list with rooks, woodpigeons, lapwings, mute swans, wigeons, shelducks, teals, black-tailed godwits, house sparrows and a wren. We then visited the four hides overlooking Simmond's Scrape, Whitwell Scrape and Pat's Pool. Here we saw meadow pipits, pied wagtails, marsh harriers, green sandpipers, redshanks, curlews, cormorants, moorhens, mallards, avocets and a reed warbler. Also on the scrapes there were ruffs, a curlew sandpiper and house martins flying over. We had an excellent view of a hobby and when

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we walked along the East Bank we found a kestrel, magpie, jackdaws, Canada geese, tufted ducks, shovelers, gadwalls, two little egrets, herons and a flock of greylag geese containing some bar-headed geese.

The stroll along the shingle bank provided starlings, a solitary wheatear and a couple of yellow wagtails. From the North Hide we saw a great black-backed gull, lesser black-backed gulls, black-headed gulls, common snipe, little grebes and three bar-tailed godwits. Additional birds recorded by other group members included whimbrel, reed bunting, whinchat, Sandwich tern, bearded tit, kingfisher, common sandpiper, ringed plover and sparrowhawk. A water vole was also spotted and our total bird species seen during this excellent day out was 56.

### RSPB Old Moor - 9 October 2016

In October we visited Old Moor RSPB Reserve, which is situated in the Dearne Valley near Barnsley. There are eight hides and two viewing platforms and our first stop was the feeding area, which was attracting chaffinches, greenfinches, great tits, blackbirds, house sparrows, tree sparrows, a magpie and a collared dove.

We then explored the rest of the reserve and the highlights of the day were superb views of a kingfisher, a couple of green sandpipers showing well in front of one of the hides and a great white egret. Also, there were little egrets, a grey heron, a great crested grebe, water rail, little grebes, moorhens and coots.

Other waders noted were lapwings, common snipe, ruffs, redshanks, dunlins and a flock of golden plovers flying over. Wildfowl included mute swans, greylag geese, Canada geese, gadwalls, shovelers, wigeons, teals, pochards, tufted ducks, mallards and shelducks. There were woodpigeons, a distant stock dove, jackdaws,



Linnets

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rooks and a jay but the only raptors found were a common buzzard and hobby. The addition of linnets, starlings, a robin, stonechat, cormorant and common gulls brought the total species seen to 48.

*Ray Daniels  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Become our Group's Volunteer Coordinator

Do you want to see the Lincoln Local Group continue to thrive and help to encourage more people to care about nature? If so, we need you to join us and organise a rota for the 25 or so volunteers who are keen and willing to help at the heron watch at Hartsholme Country Park and the peregrine watch at Lincoln Cathedral.

The role is mainly an administrative one so you will need to be able to send and receive emails and attend most of the local Group's indoor meetings to chat with the volunteers and find out which days they are available to help.

For more information email [info@lincolnrspb.org.uk](mailto:info@lincolnrspb.org.uk) or phone 01522 695747

## Morocco 20 - 25 February 2016

A previously planned short break to Morocco had been organised on the back of many favourable reports from fellow birdwatchers. On account of the Isis threat and other terrorism in North Africa it was a destination that many people had temporarily taken off their itinerary.

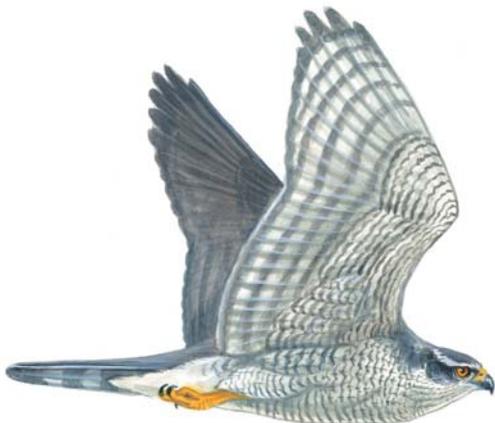
So it proved to be a budget holiday with return flights from Stanstead to Marrakesh for £83 and four-star hotels on bed and breakfast basis at £23 per person per night. The low cost certainly did not detract from the quality of the experience.

Picking up the hire car at the airport a three-hour drive with stops took us down to Agadir on the Atlantic coast; this is an excellent base for exploring some well-recommended sites, one of which is Tamri to the north. Here the target bird is the rare bald Ibis or as the locals would call it 'eeebis'. We were lucky to see a flock of 19 individuals with an osprey fishing in the estuary for good measure. The shoreline yielded sanderlings and Kentish plovers with common and Sandwich terns roosting amongst Audouin's and yellow-legged gulls. In the trees and scrub inland many passerines were seen, such as Moussier's redstart, blackcap and Sardinian warblers, woodchat shrike and southern grey shrike were soon added to the list. Overhead a goshawk and a booted eagle were soaring.

On the way back black wheatear, little swift and Barbary partridge were observed whilst watching a pod of bottle-nosed dolphins just offshore.

The following day a call into Oued (river) Sous (south) and a walk along the estuary found many waders on their way northwards again.

Mike Langman (rsbb-images.com)



Goshawk

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The list included both bar-tailed and black-tailed godwits, redshank, grey plover, greenshank, and spotted redshank to name but a few. In the scrub plenty of common bulbuls, goldfinches, linnets, serins and turtle doves. It was here that two mounted police from a patrol challenged us in a very courteous manner as we were close to the Royal Palace.

The next site visited was the eagerly anticipated site at Oued Massa, which is a one-hour drive south of Agadir. Sadly this site did not live up to expectations although it was a truly wonderful walk but minus the birds. The star of the show was a black-crowned tchagra, a shrike-like bird, which resides in the maritime scrub along this location. On the river a kingfisher, common sandpiper and Cetti's warbler were seen but it gave superb opportunities to see donkeys and their owners working and harvesting their crops. A stop at Oued Sous on the way back gave more of the previous sightings.

Leaving Agadir the return drive to Marrakesh was spectacular through a mass of variations in the landscape, all with superb sunshine on them.

Marrakesh was reached having taken a short detour to 'Mini' Marrakesh the city of Taroudant



Black redstart

and when we arrived at the hotel once again it did not disappoint. The Royal Mogador Palace was £23 per night – what amazing value! This hotel had been picked for its out of town location and also easy access to the Atlas Mountains. So that is where we headed the next day. So from sea level the previous day to 9,000 feet up in the Atlas Mountains, which still has a further 4,000 feet above that to the top. The destination was Oukaimeden, which in actual fact is a ski resort. To ski or birdwatch became bit of a hard choice on this particular occasion but birding won. The first sight was a kettling of choughs (over 600 individuals) mixed alpine and red-billed, flocks of crimson-winged finches feeding on the ground in the car park and finally the Holy Grail, a horned lark, again on the ground. A little owl was also seen and, rather bizarrely at this altitude, a grey heron. Several black redstarts put in an appearance. The scenery was spectacular with reflections in the lake having a rather unreal quality. So the drive back to Marrakesh with several stops to absorb both the views and a look at the artisan crafts took rather longer than expected.

The listed Market Square was visited at night and some more local cuisine sampled prior to some bartering in the local souks, which proved to be fascinating but certainly ‘buyer beware’ should be your slogan.

It really is an amazing place which can extend your birdwatching and give you a completely new cultural experience and all on a budget – six days, five nights – hotel, flight, car hire, etc. all for £300 plus spending money. One cannot argue against that.

*Steve Lovell  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Donation to our local reserves

Thanks to the support of our members we were able to make a donation of £6,000 to some of our most threatened nature reserves in eastern England. Your committee decided to split the money three ways with £2,000 going to reedbed reserves, £2,000 to coast and marine reserves and £2,000 to lowland heathland.

### Reedbed

Reedbeds are wetlands dominated by common reed. They naturally dry out over time as they are colonised by bushes and trees; however, drainage and water abstraction have hastened this process, leading to a decline in this habitat.

Reedbeds are a priority for the RSPB as they are essential for the survival of a number of species of high conservation concern such as the bittern. Animals such as the water vole are also often found using reedbeds.

Land management to both restore degraded reedbeds and to create large new wet reedbeds, particularly inland to reduce the risk of flooding from sea level rise, is the focus of the RSPB’s work for this habitat.

### Coast and marine

The seas around the British Isles are rich in wildlife and home to internationally important numbers of seabirds. These birds, their food, their habitats and other marine wildlife face many threats to their survival, and the RSPB works on a number of issues vital to securing their protection, for example developing its nature reserves on the coast to protect seabirds when they are on land.

A myriad of species depend on the waters surrounding the UK, including the charismatic basking shark, yet they remain vulnerable to

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Woodlark

pressure from human activity and development at sea. The RSPB is working hard to get better protection for the UK's seas and the wildlife that lives in and relies on them for food.

We have scored some notable political successes, including getting a UK Marine and Coastal Access Act and a Marine (Scotland) Act. However, work still needs to be done to get important sites designated to protect seabirds at sea.

### Lowland heathland

Three quarters of the heathland in lowland Britain has been lost or seriously degraded since 1800. Therefore this habitat is now recognised as one of the highest priorities for restoration and re-creation.

Lowland heathland supports a large number of species unique to the habitat, and it is important for birds of high conservation concern such as nightjars and woodlarks and animals such as the natterjack toad.

The RSPB owns and manages large areas of lowland heathland, and undertakes and promotes its restoration and re-creation.

## Forthcoming coach trips

### Sunday 24 February - National Memorial Arboretum

This is the first visit of the Lincoln Group to the site. It is situated in Staffordshire on the edge of the national forest. The Arboretum is a year-round centre for remembrance. It covers 150 acres and is home to over 30,000 trees of different varieties. Other habitats on site include marsh, hay meadows and riverbank. Therefore we can hope to see a good selection of wildlife. Over 100 species of birds has been recorded including kingfisher, skylark, lapwings and woodland species. Otters and brown hares are

recorded on a regular basis. Come with us and enjoy your day at this wonderful site.

### Sunday, April 2 RSPB Frampton Marsh

An excellent all year round reserve on the edge of The Wash. It includes reedbed, wet grassland, saltmarsh, freshwater scrapes and hedgerow. The site is home to large numbers of wildfowl and wading birds, so consequentially attracts a good variety of raptors including hen and marsh harriers, merlin, owls and peregrine. The visitor centre overlooks reedbed habitats and a feeding station. There are three hides from where you can view the birds on the freshwater scrapes and wet grassland. All the usual facilities are available in the visitor centre. A good day is in prospect with plenty to see.

*Colin Goulding  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## December meeting

When students from the Robert Carre Trust Environmental Society visited the Group last December and spoke about their new nestbox scheme, they briefly mentioned their website where you can follow their activities, find out more about the scheme and help them to achieve their aims. In case you didn't make a note of it on the day their website address is:

**<http://www.rctes.blogspot.co.uk/>**

The students are passionate about nature and are determined to make a difference to the world around us. We need more young people to share their passion and we hope that you will support their efforts.



Merlin

## Quotable quotes

"The greatest threat to this planet is the belief that someone else will save it."

*Robert Swan OBE,  
Polar explorer*

## Quality not quantity

Late in October we spent a day at Holkham during which we logged a mere 32 species. The forenoon was taken up with a walk eastwards along the woodland path towards the Burnhams, which turned out to be very "quiet", the majority of the geese having left to feed on the sugar beet fields. Among the remaining geese we did see a few pink-foot and a 'scoped distant pair of white-fronts and in the afternoon saw a few brents on the beach. We were somewhat surprised to see two great white egrets but *no* little egrets. A few of the commoner duck suspects were present plus marsh harriers and common buzzards, but as yet no rough-legged buzzards.

After our snack at the Lady Ann's Drive car park we went through The Gap and walked westwards towards Wells along the edge of the wood hoping to find the reported flock of shore larks estimated at 50+. Some mile or so later we were delighted to see the ghostly sight of a barn owl hunting over the scrub between the wood and edge of the beach. Eventually we came to a pair of birders who had the shore larks in view in the short vegetation (dried sea lavender, etc.), which covered that part of the beach. One birder had been there most of the afternoon and had counted up to 71 shore larks! It was a wonderful sight as over the past few years we have only seen shore larks in ones or at the most in pairs (except for seven at Theddlethorpe some weeks earlier).

We did not manage to spot the single Lapland bunting that had been reported and at that time there had so far been no sightings of snow buntings.

Heading homewards in the fading light we aimed to stop at Titchwell to use the toilets there as the pub at Holkham was temporarily closed for renovation work. As we arrived at



Waxwing

Titchwell we saw a birder on the roadside looking down the entry road to the reserve and just inside the entrance several more birders. An emergency stop then revealed a flock of 30 to 40 Waxwings in a small tree by the side of the entry road. We had a short but good look at them before they flew off towards Titchwell village then returning and overflying us and finally disappearing somewhere in the Burnham Overly area.

A spectacular ending to a "quiet" day or, as Mike Willey would say, "Quality Birds".

*Les Oiseaux  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Will Vera make 100?

Hopefully the title will make you sit up and read this.

No, its not Vera's age that might be in question, she would be happy for me to 'tick the box', over 21. Otherwise that remains a secret or on a 'you never need to know' basis.

You might know our Vera (Holmes) by name as Miss August in the group's 2016 calendar with an excellent picture of a hoverfly or as Miss May in the new 2017 calendar with her image of herons at the nest. (Have you got your copy of the 2017 calendar yet?)

Although quite new to the group, joining us just less than 3 years ago, she has been very enthusiastic, joining many of the day trips and short holidays with her camera around her neck and quietly clicking away.

However, did you know that Vera has been a regular contributor to the pages of the Lincolnshire Echo for many years, submitting pictures of nature around Lincoln? As I write number 95 has just been published, which is a picture of a fox in Hartsholme Country Park.

This is a great achievement in showing residents of Lincoln all sorts of wildlife that can be seen on the doorstep.

She is clearly a talented and observant photographer. I hope she will forgive me for highlighting her success to our members. She is our very own "Voice for Nature".

So please keep up the good work. We are all looking to see what might be your 100th image.

*Mike Catchpole – Publicity Organiser (and fellow photographer) RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Visit to Attenborough Nature Reserve, 21 November 2016

Attenborough Nature Reserve is an important reserve to the south of the city of Nottingham. It consists of a series of worked-out gravel pits alongside the Rivers Trent and Erewash. There are a number of excellent walking trails, hides and a large visitor centre and café.

Despite heavy rain overnight and the threat of more during the day, which fortunately did not materialise until we were going home, 29 members visited the reserve and we went first to the visitor centre to see what local sightings there had been. En route we saw the usual numbers of greylag and Canada geese, mallards and tufted ducks. However, in amongst them was a most attractive-looking female Mandarin duck. It was a probable 'escape' from a private collection but nevertheless very nice to see, especially as many in our group had not seen one before.

Several of the members passed through the visitor centre and viewed the feeders within the garden area: on these were several tree sparrows, a chaffinch and a robin. Passing to the rear, on the lake, we also saw a little egret.

The morning session of our visit saw us take a route from the visitor centre to a public footpath alongside the River Trent. Our first port of call was the footbridge over Barton Lane where we saw several male and female goosanders, a winter visitor to Britain (these were to be the first of many seen). Passing on to the tower hide overlooking Clifton Pond we saw a large number of waterfowl including mallards, Canada geese, tufted ducks, goosanders, a pair of goldeneyes, coots, moorhens, mute swans, shovelers, gadwall, teal, little egret and grey heron. A flock of greylag geese also flew over the lake. In addition, we saw a considerable number of lapwings, two snipe, black-headed, common and herring gulls,

magpie, carrion crow and, somewhat surprisingly, a male pheasant on an island in the middle of the lake as well as several blackbirds and a dunnoek.

Continuing our walk, we next called in at the hide to the south of the main lake where several of our number saw a small group of whooper swans flying over. Amazingly, almost everyone also saw three passes of the lake by a pair of kingfishers.

We walked on to the River Trent where we espied a bird skulking under the vegetation on the far bank of the channel. This led to some interesting discussion as to whether it was a duck or a grebe but the pointed beak was something of a giveaway that it was one of the latter. The debate then continued along the riverbank as we tried to get a good sighting of the bird (this was continually frustrated by tall tree growth on our side of the river). Could this be a Slavonian grebe? Eventually, good views were obtained and it was confirmed to be our first little grebe of the day. Excitement over temporarily!

We carried on down the path for a further half mile or so and were just on the point of turning back for lunch when a harsh, rattling call came out of the scrub alongside the path; a Cetti's warbler was making his presence heard but, as usual, not seen. In addition, to this we saw a small flock of blue and long-tailed tits flitting along amongst the riverside trees and both lesser and great black-backed gulls on one of the lakes.

We headed to the northeast of the reserve in the afternoon. In addition to many of the species seen in the morning we saw a large group of 18-20 goosanders, a pair of goldcrests, a small flock of fieldfares flying over and an Egyptian goose outside the visitor centre. We then made our way back to the centre for a well-earned cup of tea/coffee/hot chocolate and some lovely scones

Several observations were made by individual members in addition to those species identified above. These included bittern, green and great spotted woodpecker, bullfinch, chiffchaff, treecreeper and jay.

Despite the grey and cloudy day this was another good day's outing. Many thanks once again to Mike and Carol for organising it.

*Pete Dryburgh  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group.*

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Kingfisher

## News from the Web

### UK nature needs proper policies

We've teamed up with the country's other large nature organisations to launch a joint vision for a post-Brexit environment, farming and rural policy.

Along with WWF-UK, the National Trust and The Wildlife Trusts, we're calling for:

- A new policy for the countryside - UK Governments to work together to replace the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) with policies that deliver high environmental standards for land management across the UK
- The creation of an independent Policy Commission - to examine a future policy for the environment, farming and rural development and encourage an inclusive and engaging public debate
- A joined-up approach between Government policies and plans for farming and the environment - Any future environment, farming and rural development policy must work together with the Westminster Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment
- Continuation of agri-environment schemes - all existing agri-environment schemes should be kept open until a replacement policy is fully operational.

The call comes as the UK plans for a future outside of the European Union. Major decisions will need to be made about how all governments across the UK support the environment, farming and rural development to replace the Common Agricultural Policy.

Last year, over £3.1bn was spent on the Common Agricultural Policy in the UK. Its rules directly affect how farmers look after their land. This has an impact on everything we do – from the food we eat, and the water we drink, to the air we breathe and the woods, meadows and soils we leave for future generations.

### Nature is in trouble

Martin Harper, RSPB's Director for Conservation commented: "As the recent *State of Nature* report highlighted that we are losing species once common to much of our countryside, and worryingly face losing much more if we don't take action today and step up our efforts in the years ahead.



**giving nature a home**  
rspb

## Become a Visitor Welcome Volunteer

Do you have a passion for nature?

We're looking for volunteers to spend a few hours a week chatting to visitors at our Langford Lowfields Nature Reserve near Newark. You'll be based at our lovely beach hut and be able to get involved with pond dipping and events.

Training is provided and travel expenses covered.

For more information email [langford.beckingham@rspb.org.uk](mailto:langford.beckingham@rspb.org.uk) or ring the office on 01636 893611

Inspiring everyone to give nature a home  
**[rspb.org.uk/langfordlowfields](http://rspb.org.uk/langfordlowfields)**  
Photo by Ben Hall (spinnings.com). The RSPB is a registered charity in England & Wales 202576, in Scotland SC037684.

"We want to work with farmers to realise our shared ambition to restore UK biodiversity within a generation. We should grasp this opportunity to secure the future of the countryside and show we can deliver for both nature and farming."

### An opportunity for wildlife-friendly farming

Recent data from the *State of Nature* report suggests that 56% of native British wildlife species are declining. With around three quarters of the UK's landscape being farmed, the agricultural policies that influence management of our countryside could do much more to support farmers to restore nature.

We're calling on Governments to turn leaving the European Union into an opportunity to create a countryside richer in nature, by supporting sustainable farming that not only produces great food but also rewards farmers for protecting and restoring the farmed environment.

### How you can help

Together we can give nature the home it needs. Help us continue our conservation work.

## Dates for your diary

### JANUARY

**14 - 16 WEEKEND in ESSEX and SUFFOLK** visiting Essex Wildlife Trust reserves at Abberton Reservoir and Fingringhoe Wick and RSPB Havergate Island. The cost per person is £230 in either a single, double or twin room and includes all coach travel, boat charge to Havergate Island and two nights half board at the Rivenhall Hotel, Witham, Essex. Cancellation insurance is *not* included.

**28 - 30 BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH** The RSPB's nationwide event. See the winter issue of *Nature's Home* magazine or contact RSPB HQ T: 01767 680551.

### FEBRUARY

**9 INDOOR MEETING** Filey through the Seasons by Peter Dunn. Sponsored by a Group member who wishes to remain anonymous.

**26 COACH TRIP** to The National Memorial Arboretum, River Tame and local gravel pits. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 4.30 pm. Adults £18. C, VC, WC.

### MARCH

**9 INDOOR MEETING** Extremadura in Spring by Graham Catley (<http://gcatley.zenfolio.com>). A well known local wildlife photographer. Sponsored by London Camera Exchange, Lincoln Ltd.

### APRIL

**2 COACH TRIP** to RSPB Frampton Marsh. A good time to see whimbrels, which flock on the saltmarsh in April. Leave Lincoln 9 am. Leave reserve 4.30 pm. Adults £16. H, NT, VC, WC.

**13 INDOOR MEETING** Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley - Texas by Ian Newton, ARPS ([www.iannewtonphotography.com](http://www.iannewtonphotography.com)). Ian Newton is a professional photographer who specialises in wildlife photography. Sponsored by Michael Carter Travel.

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

**21 - 23 RSPB 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 the National Nature Reserve Cavenham Heath and Norfolk Wildlife Trust Weeting Heath for stone curlew. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5.30 pm. Adults £23 including admission charge. H, VC, WC.

*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>

### Newsletter copy date

Thank you to all the contributors to this newsletter. Short articles are always welcome. Please send your contributions for the summer newsletter to the group leader by the end of March.

Contributions can be hand-written, typed, submitted on memory stick or CD or sent by email to: [info@lincolnrspb.org.uk](mailto:info@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.

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