

Summer 2018

Conservation success stories of 2017

2017 was a record breaking year for several coastal and wetland colonist species.

A pair of **spoonbills** raised 3 young at Fairburn lngs in 2017! A rare bird that is usually found in southern and Eastern Europe, it bred for the first time after many years of absence. It's incredibly exciting to see successful spoonbill nesting coincide with the hard work on habitat improvement.

Our reserves supported 3 out of the 6 pairs of **black-winged stilts** that bred in 2017 in the UK, with these 3 raising 9 young.

This, together with four young fledged by a pair at a Norfolk Wildlife Trust Reserve, is more than the total number of young fledged from all 22 nesting attempts in Britain between 1983 and 2016.

Also in Somerset, **great white egret** numbers continue to grow, **little bitterns** bred again and at Ham Wall **night herons** nested successfully for the first time in the UK. This is now the seventh species of heron breeding on the Avalon Marshes. Further, for the first time in the UK since 2008, 7 pairs of **cattle egret** bred at Ham Wall, fledging 8 young.

Increased nest survival of **black-tailed godwits** was recorded in areas where exclusion fencing was used at the Nene Washes, and with one pair fledging two young at Newton Marsh. The EU LIFE funded Project Godwit is successfully



Spoonbill

Photo: Peter Skelton

up and running with the 26 chicks that were raised in captivity being successfully released under the head-starting part of the programme at WWT Welney.

2017 has been another good year for **cranes** with the first ever chick fledging from West Sedgemoor nature reserve. Another 4 fledged from the reintroduced population at the same reserve and an additional 18 fledged from the native population in East Anglia (Broads and Fens), Yorkshire and NE Scotland.

Heathland, farmland and woodland species

In Scotland, efforts to save **corn buntings** are going well. Recovery measures have been extended to 75% of the Angus & Fife population and we were rewarded by a 16% increase in the population, bucking the national trend.

Meanwhile, at Labrador Bay, the population of **cirl buntings** has increased from 7 to 29 pairs in the 8 years that we have owned the reserve. Ashill Farm has been acquired as a new cirl reserve too.

Of the 27 **wood warblers** fitted with geo-locators in 2016, three returned and two tags were retrieved. The data analysis showed that birds passed through Italy, crossed the Sahara in 1-2 flights, and had a lengthy 1-2 month stopover in Burkina Faso before spending the rest of the winter in Liberia within calling distance of Gola Forest. These are the first UK-breeding wood warblers to have had their migratory journeys mapped.

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Little bittern

In September, we reached a major milestone in our battle to save Lodge Hill, the most important site for **nightingales** in the UK. The planning application for 5,000 houses was withdrawn, with more than 10,000 people objecting to the application to build on this incredibly important SSSI.

Heritage Lottery Funding has been secured for Dearne Valley to understand more about the habitat usage at a landscape scale for our endemic sub-species of **willow tit**. The funding is part of the Back from the Brink partnership programme and the actions will include habitat management and radio-tracking studies.

Marine species

Little terns have been successful in producing more little terns - 17 chicks fledged at Pagham, 27 at Langstone and a record 73 at Chesil.

The 'Puffarazzi' project brought in more than 1,400 pictures of puffins from 602 people over 39 sites across UK and Ireland. Tracking 22 and 11 puffins respectively on the islands of Shiant and Unst also revealed foraging patterns for the species.

Good news for non-avian species

Out of the 16,000 species present on our nature reserves less than 3% of these are birds. In 2017 we have continued to ensure that the 152,791 hectares that we manage over 214 sites through our nature reserve network provide a home for these species.

During a survey, over 300 stems of **wavy St John's wort** were revealed this summer at our Arthog Bog reserve on the Mawddach, putting smiles on people's faces. In the past only a small population of the plant was recorded in the site, but a lot of effort has been put on restoring the reserve, by encroaching trees and scrub, re-wetting the area, mowing, and grazing with ponies.

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Nightingale

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In 2017, a **pine hoverfly** larva was found at Abernethy, which suggests that our attempts to establish a second site through translocation have succeeded. At the indigenous site at the Caledonian forest in the central Highlands of Scotland, an additional 19 larvae were found and more habitat was created.

The reintroduced population of **field crickets** at Farnham Heath grew to 112 calling males this year, with the species colonising new areas within the reserve.

A total of 93% of UK land mammal species have been recorded on our reserves, and there was excitement when a **dormouse** was also discovered at Radipole Lake and Exminster Marshes reserve. This complements our other reserves where this species is present, namely Garston Wood, Broadwater Warren, Wolves Wood and Blean Woods.

At our Mersehead reserve over 200 male **natterjack toads** were counted this spring. The toads have responded well to the scrapes that were dug over the past three years, with 69+ spawn strings recorded this breeding season, whereas the previous high count was less than 10. Approximately 500 natterjack toadlets were counted at The Lodge reserve in 2017, five times more than were counted in 2016.

The increased survey effort implemented in 2017 identified that **great yellow bumblebees** are doing reasonably well in Tiree and Copinsay. Meanwhile a record of great yellow

bumblebee was recorded at the RSPB's Broubster Leans reserve and 7 more at Balranald on North Uist.

International work

Moving to the other side of the world, our **vulture programme** in Asia is celebrating a major milestone as six captive-reared, Critically Endangered, **white-rumped vultures** have been released into the wild in Nepal after 7 years in captivity. This exciting news followed the thankful end to diclofenac sales for veterinary purposes and a partial recovery of the wild population of the species.

In Sierra Leone, \$1.8 million has been secured from the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Programme to scale up conservation work across the **Greater Gola forest** landscape. At the same time we have worked with 1,500 farmers to produce rainforest friendly cocoa, with 12 metric tonnes exported and the first trial **RSPB Gola chocolate** bars produced. Target species favoured by the conservation methods are the **white-necked picathartes** and the **pygmy hippopotamus**.

Thanks to grants of £1.75 million from the UK Government and \$2 million from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the RSPB Council have given the green light for mouse eradication on **Gough** in 2019 to prevent the critically endangered **Tristan albatross** and **Gough bunting** from becoming extinct.

Our work on **bycatch in gillnet fisheries** has led to a complete ban on hunting of **black guillemot** in Iceland. The focus is now on reducing bycatch in gillnets, which will benefit long-tailed duck, scaup and velvet scoter in the UK.



Ben Hall (rspb-images.com)

Black-browed albatross

The **Albatross Task Force** has been so successful that **black-browed albatross** has recently been downgraded to 'Least Concern'. Argentina has announced new measures to introduce bird-scaring 'Tori lines', which are predicted to save 9,000 albatross lives a year.



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Remembering Allan Houghton

Allan Houghton was one of the Group's founder members supporting the Group and assisting at events from when it was first established in 1974 until ill health forced him to take things a little easier. Allan joined the Local Group committee in 1994 and helped to run the Group until he retired from the committee in 2015 after serving a total of 21 years.

When the RSPB launched its pin badge box scheme it was Allan who took this on board and with great enthusiasm, managed to get numerous boxes placed in shops around the area. His boxes were consistently selling over £1,000 badges a year and he broke all records in 2001 when he sold a record £1,552 of badges.

Allan was widely travelled and visited many countries in pursuit of birds. He also had a great knowledge of wild flowers and took delight in helping people on our field meetings to identify them.

Sadly Allan passed away in December 2017 and we offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

A long weekend in Iceland

It's not every day you get the opportunity to see a 'First for the Western Palearctic' but that is what two members of the Local Group managed on a recent trip to Iceland with *The Travelling Naturalist*.

Seeing the Aurora Borealis or the Northern Lights has long been on our bucket lists and a November trip to Iceland seemed an ideal opportunity to tick this one off. There was also the small matter of Barrow's goldeneye and gyrfalcon to add to our life lists alongside further views of harlequin duck and a number of winter birds, that we do not see too often in the UK - for example, Iceland and glaucous gulls side by side, great northern divers, long-tailed ducks and black guillemots in the harbours, large flocks of snow buntings around the coast and ptarmigan in the lava fields. Throw in a recent fall of snow to enhance the exceptional scenery, the unusual geo-thermal springs and geysers and a knowledgeable leader - who could ask for anything more?

The following is extracted from a *BirdGuides* article dated 16 November 2017:

On 14 November 2017, Gummi Falk found and photographed a male two-barred Crossbill (Loxia leucoptera) at Seltjörn, South-west Iceland. Gummi's photographs showed the bird to be distinctively pinkish in colour and seemingly quite lightweight in structure, albeit with no other birds for direct comparison. Quite strikingly, it possessed a very long, slender and tapering bill, with the tip of the upper mandible apparently extending well beyond the tip of the lower mandible.

These features, as well as the relatively fine white tips to the tertials, are all highly indicative



The Northern Lights

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of the Nearctic subspecies leucoptera, or white-winged crossbill - a taxon not previously recorded in the Western Palearctic. Returning on 15 November, Gummi and Gunnar Hallgrimsson were able to relocate the bird and obtain better photos and, crucially, sound recordings. These were sent to Magnus Robb, who confirmed the identification.

For the full article please go to:

<https://www.birdguides.com/articles/white-winged-crossbill-in-iceland-a-western-palearctic-first>

On 18 November we spent the day around the South-west coast, seeing good numbers of long-tailed ducks, a single harlequin, three Barrow's goldeneye, three red-throated and four great northern divers plus four black guillemots and a couple of ptarmigan before we paused at Hardisarvik to scan for more wildfowl. Large numbers of ducks took to the sky in panic

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as a large female gyrfalcon made several passes through the massed throng, creating havoc for several minutes before flying off high to the west.

Elated by our success with the gyrfalcon, we were further encouraged to learn that the 'crossbill' had been relocated in the conifer plantation and set off on a 35 minute drive to the site. Upon arrival, we met a local birder, who confirmed that the bird had been seen twenty minutes earlier. However, despite much searching it could not be re-located and, as the light started to fade, we headed back to our guesthouse to drown our sorrows.

On 20 November, our last day, we explored a number of birding sites around the capital, Reykjavik, before heading back to Seltjörn for a picnic lunch. A major Icelandic twitch was underway, with three cars in the car park and three birders (including Gummi Falk) photographing a large group of redpolls, whilst waiting for the crossbill to appear. At this stage, we were told that the white-winged crossbill had joined up with a small flock of red crossbills, so we scanned the treetops and soon picked up small numbers of the more common species.

After a short wait, we picked up **the** bird feeding in a close tree. The good news was we found it quite quickly; the bad news was it was feeding on a cone and offering limited views of its white underside. We waited for what seemed like ages but was probably only a few minutes before the bird turned round, assumed an upright position and showed off its pinkish plumage, double wing bar and white-tipped tertials! Having displayed all its key features, the bird hopped into the greenery and was lost from view - just as our leader suggested that it was time for us to depart for the airport and our flight home!

And so the long weekend came to an end with c 50 species on our list, just two lifers, as we



Photo: G Falk

White-winged crossbill



Photo: Susanne Cohen

Long-tailed duck

had seen white-winged crossbill in Canada in 2009, and some excellent memories. We learned a lot about the geology of the area from our guide, Trausti Gunnarsson, who also delivered a magical sighting in the early hours of 18 November. We had spent the previous two and a half hours staring into the Icelandic darkness, looking for solar activity but were thwarted by the cloud cover. Having decided to give it best and return to our guesthouse, our luck changed as we approached town. The clouds parted for the first time and the Aurora Borealis was revealed in all its glory for just fifteen minutes - another bucket list item ticked off!

All in all, this was a fabulous trip and we would like to express our thanks to *The Travelling Naturalist*, who made all the arrangements and to Trausti, who looked after us so well whilst we were in Iceland.

David Cohen
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Changes to your committee

Jamie Curt has resigned as Volunteers Organiser as he is moving from Lincolnshire. If you would like to take on the role of Volunteers Organiser please speak to a committee member to find out what is involved or email info@lincolnrspb.org.uk

Fiona McKenna has been co-opted onto the committee to assist in managing the Group. Fiona began volunteering for the Group at the peregrine watch-point in 2008 and has helped at various other Group events since including several events at Hartsholme Country Park.

If you no longer wish to hear from RSPB Lincoln Local Group, please contact Roy Jillings, T: 01522 824861, confirming your name and address and stating that you wish to unsubscribe from the RSPB Lincoln Local Group's communications.

Field meetings reports

Thorp Perrow Arboretum – 22 October 2017

Thorp Perrow Arboretum near Ripon in Yorkshire covers 100 acres and as well as National Plant Collections and Champion Trees, there is a Bird of Prey and Mammal Centre, a children's play area and a good tearoom. The Arboretum is an excellent place for fungi and on the day of our visit there was a Halloween trail, which Mike found quite entertaining.

A few butterflies were on the wing, namely peacocks and red admirals and we also found a common darter and a migrant hawk dragonfly. Our bird list included a common buzzard, woodpigeons, jay, cormorant, carrion crows, jackdaws, black-headed gulls and several fieldfares and redwings. There are a couple of small lakes in the Arboretum and they contained some swans, mallards, a moorhen, coot and two little grebes.

In the wooded areas we found great tits, blue tits, a coal tit, chaffinches, two treecreepers, blackbirds, greenfinches, siskins, redpolls, a goldcrest and wren. We heard a nuthatch and great spotted woodpecker but unfortunately we were unable to locate them. This brought our total birds seen and heard to 29 and although the wild bird count was quite low, we had an enjoyable day.

Idle Valley – 19 November 2017

Our trip in November was to the Idle Valley near Retford, which is a Nottingham Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve. This spectacular wetland site covers an area of 450 hectares following the River Idle and there is an excellent centre and café.

From the viewing area in the café we saw coots, moorhens, mallards, tufted ducks,



Grey wagtail

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This holiday will be a visit to the Cairngorms area where we will not only search out the wildlife that frequent the Highlands, but we will discover the Landscapes plus much more.

A full week of photographic action in the Highlands

During 2018 we will be introducing further photo breaks, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire will rank highly as attractions for a photo challenging break.



If you are interested in wildlife and enjoy your photography then these photographic breaks are a must for you! Maybe you would like to go as a group (max 3 people) then get in touch for a group discount.

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wigeons, pochards, mute swans, great crested grebes, black-headed gulls and lesser black-backed gulls. We also spotted two common snipe. The feeders were enticing chaffinches, a coal tit, blue tit, great tit, robin and blackbird and there were two dunnocks in the undergrowth.

We then set off along the footpath, which followed the river, and we found greylag geese, cormorants, carrion crows, jackdaws, magpies, siskins, a song thrush and female bullfinch.

After lunch we walked around Belmoor Lake and added woodpigeons, starlings, lapwings, long-tailed tits, gadwalls, shovelers, two little grebes, reed buntings, a heron and wren to our list. Other birds seen were linnets, redpolls, a grey wagtail, goldcrest, common buzzard, sparrowhawk, goldeneye and Egyptian geese. This brought our total for the day to 44 species.

Potteric Carr – 10 December 2017

Our final trip of the year was to Potteric Carr Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Reserve near Doncaster. Fortunately, the forecast for heavy snow showers did not happen and we were able to spend a lovely day at this great reserve. After leaving the coach we headed for the superb new centre and café and along the way

we saw a male and female bullfinch, redwings, siskins, goldfinches, blackbirds, reed buntings, blue tits, great tits and jackdaws. The feeders near the Centre were being visited by greenfinches and chaffinches and a dunnock and pheasant were feeding underneath. In the adjacent trees there were starlings, carrion crows, woodpigeons, a kestrel and magpie.

At the centre most of the group could not resist sampling the delicious food and hot drinks but eventually Mike persuaded us to leave the warmth and do some bird watching. We set off around the reserve, calling in at the various hides where we saw mute swans, a solitary whooper swan, Canada geese, mallards, gadwalls, teals, shovelers, shelducks, tufted ducks, pochards and wigeons. We also spotted a heron, little egret, bittern, great crested grebe, coots, moorhens, lapwings, a sparrowhawk and marsh harrier. We saw some cormorants, black-headed gulls, great black-backed gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, herring gulls and a common gull.

In the wooded areas we found robins, a tree creeper, wren, jay, goldcrest and long-tailed tits. A green and great spotted woodpecker was seen but the highlight of the day was finding a lesser spotted woodpecker, which showed quite well. In the Willow Pool Hide we had excellent views of a willow tit, coal tit and water rail and some of the group saw a kingfisher and stonechat. This brought the total birds seen to 58 and it concluded an excellent day out at a wonderful reserve.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Calendar & photo competition

The Group will be producing a calendar for 2019 and, as this year, it will feature photos taken by members of the Group. The calendar will go on sale in September.

We would like you to submit a maximum of three digital photos for consideration by

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Lesser spotted woodpecker

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handing them to a committee member on a memory stick or CD (which will be returned to you). Alternatively you can email low-resolution jpeg images to info@lincolnrsps.org.uk If the images are selected for the calendar we will require high-resolution files.

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 photographs 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 2018. Any photo submitted after that date will not be considered.

Behind the scenes

What happens once you've submitted your Big Garden Birdwatch results? We asked RSPB Conservation Scientist Daniel Hayhow to explain...

Making your results count

After the long build up to Big Garden Birdwatch, maybe it feels like everything's gone a bit quiet once you've submitted your results.

But at the RSPB UK Headquarters in Sandy, Bedfordshire, a frenzy of activity is just beginning. It's something I and lots of other people here have been looking forward to all year – the Big Garden Number Crunching Fortnight!

Processing all the data is a big job - luckily I don't work alone! The process involves dozens of people from multiple teams, all with different specialisms.

Once you've completed your results online and hit the 'submit' button, or completed your paper form, licked a stamp and handed it to your local postie, here's what happens:

Stage 1: Results collation

After the Birdwatch is over, we wait three weeks to make sure everyone who participated has had a chance to send in their results. This is where the fun begins.

If you sent your results on a paper form, it goes to a data processing agency who manually enter all of the results into the online system.

These join all the other records from people who submitted their results online (which is much quicker and easier).

Then, the RSPB's computer team – Information Technology – collate all those hundreds of thousands of records into one giant set of data.

Stage 2: Cleaning the data

The Information Technology team scan through everyone's results checking for any anomalies.

It's really important that the data is accurate, or the scientific value of the results would be weakened. So they check for any mistyped postcodes, which might transport someone's results from one end of the country to the other.

They check for duplicate entries, because sometimes people are very enthusiastic and submit their results on paper and online.

Stage 3: Looking for oddities

This is where I come in.

When Information Technology sends me the data, it is all divided up into the different regions of the UK. I scan through the data looking for birds that are easily misidentified and do not exist in a particular region.

For example, hooded crows and carrion crows are often mixed up. But hooded crows are only found in Northern Ireland and in West Scotland. So if someone has reported one in Cornwall, then it was almost certainly a carrion crow.



Hooded crow



Carrion crow

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)

I also look through the number of each species counted, using my own common sense, wildlife knowledge, and also data from previous years about the number of species present in particular regions.

It's unlikely, for example, that someone saw 500 robins at one time in their garden. It's more likely that they saw five and in their excitement hit a few extra keys. But we can't be sure how many they really did see, so these records cannot be counted. Again, scientific accuracy is essential.

This process takes a couple of weeks – remember, there are half a million people's results to sift through.

Stage 4: Getting geographic

Once we're sure we've got a clean and accurate set of bird data, we sort it in various different ways. This gives counts for the whole of the UK, for each of the UK's constituent countries, for each of the counties, and for each of the 400 local authorities.

It's a lot of work, but it means we can do some really interesting and accurate comparisons.

Stage 5: Comparing the results

When I'm comparing the results for individual species, I look at the average number of each

species seen in each garden, which gives me an indication of their abundance. I also look at the percentage of gardens that the birds were seen in, which gives me a picture of their distribution.

You can really understand how numbers of birds using our gardens are changing, and get a good idea of how different bird species are doing, when you compare their abundance and distribution over several years.

For example, in the winter, if you see starlings, you usually see them in flocks. So someone who recorded starlings in their garden will most likely have seen lots of them. So their abundance could seem high. But this doesn't necessarily mean they're doing well this year.

If you look at the distribution and see that starlings were only seen in 39 per cent of gardens, whereas 10 years ago they were seen in 50 per cent of gardens, then you know there has been a decline in the population.

Stage 6: Publicising the results

After all the number crunching is over, and we've been able to take an accurate health check of the UK's birds, we announce the findings on our website, and we send out press releases to the media. We want everyone to know which birds are doing well and which aren't doing so well.

Why?

Because when a species isn't doing so well, such as starlings, which have dropped by 81 per cent since the Big Garden Birdwatch began in 1979, we want people to know that they have the power to make a difference.



Starling

These are garden birds we're asking people to monitor. Gardens are an essential part of their habitat. You can help a struggling species by making simple changes in your garden, which benefit them.

The RSPB's job is to give nature a home. The best way we do that for garden wildlife is

to make people aware that by planting a particular shrub, or digging a small pond, they could make a real difference.

Thanks!

The power of Big Garden Birdwatch is that when thousands of people are inspired to make small changes in their gardens to benefit wildlife, then it can really change the fortunes of an entire species.

By being a citizen scientist and taking part in the Big Garden Birdwatch, you are playing a vital role in the health of the UK's wildlife. Thanks for your help!

Editors note: This year's BGBW results can be found on the RSPB website from March.

An opportunity for you to help

Can you give just 3 hours to help at the peregrine watch-point at Lincoln Cathedral on any Saturday or Sunday in June or July?

We need more volunteers to help and show these magnificent birds to members of the public and visitors to Lincoln Cathedral. The watch-point is very busy at certain times so we need four people on duty at all times and there are a total of 18 days to cover that's why we need more people to help. Children especially love watching these birds and it's a great way to get them interested in nature. So please help us for just 3 hours sometime over the summer months.

We also need more people to lead the monthly walks at Hartsholme Country Park. These take place on the first Sunday in the month and are as popular as ever, attracting regulars and visitors to the park. Volunteers are also needed to help at the family fun day on Sunday 12 August.

If you would like to help at any of these events please contact any committee member.



Robin

January Weekend to West Sussex

On Saturday 13 January 38 of us set off for West Sussex to spend two nights at the Chichester Park Hotel. During the journey we saw red kites, buzzards and roe deer and after a short stop at the motorway services, we arrived at the Arundel Wildfowl and Wetland Trust at approximately 1 pm. This is a superb little reserve framed by the South Downs and Arundel Castle and after a brief look at the captive wildfowl ponds, where we found a grey wagtail, we made our way to the wild area.

The sky above the reserve was alive with raptors, namely peregrine falcons, buzzards, kestrels, sparrowhawks and a marsh harrier. These were being mobbed by carrion crows and a couple of ravens. Also there were herring gulls, black-headed gulls, jackdaws, magpies and woodpigeons flying over. On the lakes and reedbeds we saw pochards, tufted ducks, mallards, teals, shelducks, gadwalls, Canada geese and greylag geese. Other water birds noted were moorhens, coots, a little grebe, common snipe, water rail and kingfisher.

In one of the small woodlands we had sightings of great tits, blue tits, long-tailed tits, robins, treecreepers, goldfinches, goldcrests, nuthatches, a bullfinch, dunnock, wren and great spotted woodpecker. We also had an excellent view of a firecrest, which was showing in the same hedge most of the afternoon. There were starlings, blackbirds, chaffinches, a pheasant, song thrush and greenfinch and after a very pleasant afternoon we returned to the coach and travelled the short distance to our hotel.

The next morning we went to Pagham Harbour and as soon as we alighted from the coach we spotted a marsh harrier flying over the adjacent



Hawfinch



Red-throated diver

Medmerry Reserve. The RSPB warden gave us a brief talk about the reserve and then we set off around the harbour to the shingle beach. The species of wildfowl were similar to the previous day with the addition of mute swans, wigeons, shovelers, pintails, brent geese and goldeneye. However, this area contained many waders such as curlews, lapwings, redshanks, dunlins, grey plovers, golden plovers, black-tailed and bar-tailed godwits, oystercatchers, turnstones, knots, an avocet, whimbrel and green sandpiper.

Most of the group walked to the harbour mouth where they were rewarded with the sight of a red-necked grebe, eider ducks, red-breasted mergansers, a red-throated diver, velvet scoters, common scoters and a gannet. There were a few raptors about including a kestrel, peregrine falcon and buzzard but one of the best finds was a merlin perched on the marsh among the various waders. Other water birds included moorhens, a great-crested grebe, little grebe, little egret and grey heron. On the return journey to the Centre we visited a nearby Chapel where we again found firecrests, goldcrests, a wren, greenfinch, robin, blackbird, blue tits, great tits and long-tailed tits. We also saw pheasants, red-legged partridges, cormorants, common gulls, Mediterranean gulls, great black-backed gulls, black-headed gulls, a kingfisher, great spotted woodpecker, water rail, stonechat, reed bunting and fieldfares.

On our final day Mike had arranged for us to visit Pulborough Brooks RSPB reserve, which was not too far from the hotel and also on the way home. Here we were hoping to see hawfinches and soon after arriving at the reserve we headed to the area where they had been seen. Unfortunately it was raining quite heavily but luckily there was a sheltered area where we could stand undercover. We saw

house sparrows, greenfinches, blue tits, great tits, coal tits, dunnocks, woodpigeons, two jays, a magpie, bullfinch, great spotted woodpecker, redwing and nuthatch but no hawfinches. The rain eventually stopped so we made our way further into the reserve calling at some of the hides and viewing areas. We again saw various wildfowl and waders but the only new birds were three bean geese. There were a couple of stonechats showing well and rooks, linnets, a song thrush, marsh harrier, green woodpecker, bittern and red kite were also spotted. When we returned to the Centre we were pleased to find that three people from our group had found a hawfinch, which was a fitting end to a lovely day.

This brought the total species seen over the three days to 97. During the three days we also saw roe deer, fallow deer, Muntjac deer, rabbits, a grey seal and fox.

We had a wonderful time in West Sussex, the weather was good, the hotel was excellent and the wildlife was varied and plentiful. The reserves we visited were close to the hotel, which reduced the travelling time and allowed us to spend longer at each location. We are all grateful to Mike and Carol for once again arranging a superb trip.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Forthcoming coach trips

13 May, Berney Marshes & Breydon Water

Berney Marshes, south of the River Bure in Norfolk and Breydon Water, are part of the Broads National Park. The habitat consists of wet grassland, saltmarsh and intertidal mud. In spring the reserve holds high water level to create ideal conditions for large numbers of breeding waterfowl and waders. Meadow pipits and skylarks also occur in large numbers on the saltmarsh. Our visit is when Marsh Harriers will be hunting the area and many of the summer migrants will have arrived. We can hope to see terns, egrets and herons fishing in the estuary. Please note there are no facilities on-site.

8 July 2018 Lakenheath Fen

Lakenheath Fen comprises a mixture of wetland and woodland south of the Little Ouse in Suffolk. An area of arable farmland has been converted into a large wetland sight consisting of grazing marshes reedbeds. The new reedbeds have attracted large numbers of reed

and sedge warblers, Cetti's warblers and bearded tits. Summer is a great time for Marsh Harriers displaying, hobbies feeding on insects above the reedbeds and listening to the summer warblers. Sightings of bitterns and cranes are a good possibility; dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies are in abundance along with a dazzling display of fenland plants. There is an excellent visitor centre with refreshments, shop, information and toilets. Four viewing points and a hide dotted around the various trails of the reserve.



Bean goose

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)

12th of August 2018 Wicken Fen

Wicken Fen is a SSSI situated close to Wicken in Cambridgeshire. It is a National Nature Reserve of which a large part is owned and managed by the National Trust. The reserve consists of fenland, farmland, marsh and reedbeds. The area is noted for its richness in plant life and invertebrates. Damselflies, dragonflies, moths and butterflies are here in abundance. We should get sightings of hobbies and marsh harriers are there will still be plenty of warblers around.

There are several hides and a number of nature trails to follow. The visitor centre has a shop, café, information about the history of the fen and its ecological importance.

9 September 2018 Home Dunes

Home Dunes is a National Nature Reserve near Hunstanton and is managed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. There are a range of coastal habitats on reserve including grazing marsh, freshwater pools and sand dunes with sea buckthorn. There is a wooded area including a belt of pines, which are always worth a look for goldcrests and firecrests. Holme Dunes is perfectly situated for attracting migrant birds in September. Sea watching can be very good; we may see skuas, terns, gannets and shearwaters on passage.

There are a number of hides overlooking the grazing marshes and pools, which attract passage wading birds. The visitor centre has a café, shop, information and toilets.

Colin Goulding
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Dates for your diary

April

15 COACH TRIP to Sherwood Forest. Ancient oak woodland. Leave Lincoln 9 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £16. C, NT, S, VC, WC.

May

10 INDOOR MEETING RSPB Frampton Marsh by Chris Andrews. Sponsored by Sleafordian Coaches.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING The Group's AGM will be held at 9 pm following the break for refreshments. Free admission from 9 pm for people only attending the AGM.

13 COACH TRIP to RSPB Berney Marshes & Breydon Water. Includes a short train journey between Great Yarmouth and Berney Arms Station. Leave Lincoln 7 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £29. Price includes train fare.

15 AFTERNOON BIRDWATCH at Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Fiskerton Fen. Meet in the car park at 1 pm. The car park is small so please car share if possible.

20 - 23 FOUR DAYS IN KENT visiting NNR Stodmarsh, RSPB Dungeness, Kent WT Sandwich and Pegwell Bay, RSPB Northward Hill and Cliffe Pools. Full details from Mike Willey

June

10 MIKE'S MYSTERY TRIP visiting two sites new to the Group. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £23. First site: H, NT, VC, WC. No facilities are available at the second site.

12 AFTERNOON BIRDWATCH in the grounds of **Doddington Hall**. Meet in Doddington Hall car park at 1 pm. C, NT, S, WC.

July

8 COACH TRIP to RSPB Lakenheath Fen. At this time of year hobbies hunt for dragonflies overhead and marsh harriers can be seen carrying prey to their nests. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £19.50. H, NT, VC, WC.

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

August

12 COACH TRIP to National Trust Wicken Fen, Britain's oldest nature reserve. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £20. Price includes admission charge. H, NT, VC, WC.

17 - 19 BIRDFAIR 2018 at Rutland Water. Details from the Events Team at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. T: 01767 680551.

September

9 COACH TRIP to Norfolk Wildlife Trust Holme Dunes. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £20. Price includes admission charge. C, NT, VC, WC.

13 INDOOR MEETING Golden Birding Moments by **Jim Almond**. Jim will inspire you with his amazing photos. (www.shropshirebirder.co.uk) Sponsored by Shirley Warner in memory of her husband 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 UK'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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