

Winter/Spring 2018

## A day at RSPB Saltholm

10 September 2017

Some would have written it off as a useless piece of industrial wasteland, an area of rank grassland, scrub, few trees and some pools set in a heavily industrialised part of Teesside. Cooling towers, large sheds, chemical plant and other industrial machinery, plant and buildings surrounds the area. Fortunately, the RSPB recognised it as an important outpost for wildlife and a green oasis for people when they acquired the site some years ago. Today the area is teeming with wildlife and the site has an abundance of excellent facilities (including hides with carpets!), a good café cum restaurant and a shop. Several knowledgeable volunteers are available throughout the site to assist the public in spotting and identifying birds and generally assisting with enquiries.

Our first port of call was the visitor centre, which has been designed to look like an industrial building, so it sits easily into its surroundings. From there we had extensive views over the lake of many wildfowl and, somewhat unusually, two late-staying terns consisting of a common tern and a Sandwich tern.

Our group then headed off to the Saltholme Pools hide, which overlooked the West and Back Saltholme Pools. Notwithstanding our initial surprise at seeing the late-staying terns



Barnacle goose



Saltholme visitor centre

earlier, it was an even greater one to be greeted by the sight of 60 very early migrant barnacle geese which must have travelled over from Greenland, Iceland or Scandinavia to winter in our milder winter. There was also another somewhat more fanciful visitor from other climes in the form of a black swan (originally from Australia). A small flock of other migrants also flew over in the form of spotted redshanks.

After lunch we headed to the Phil Stead hide overlooking a small pool as water rail had been seen there in the morning. A patient wait resulted in the sight of a water rail scurrying across the muddy perimeter on the far side of the pool, which most of the group were able to observe. Some brilliant sunshine also showed up the plumage of a flock of black-tailed godwits and several ruffs.

We continued on to the Wildlife Watchpoint where a number of our smaller birds were seen and a sparrowhawk was viewed chasing them!

A sign further on the track entitled 'Wilderness Trail' intrigued so we resolved to follow it. Heading off into a gusty, strong wind we soon realised why it was called a wilderness trail for it was well off the beaten track through fields and the only way to keep to the trail was to follow some yellow-topped posts, not all of which were immediately visible. Wildlife sightings were few (only a few crows!) but at least we had an invigorating 1.3-mile walk! This set us up nicely for a return to the visitor centre for some well-earned tea and homemade cakes!

The day had been excellent and the weather had been good, although just as we left there was an almighty cloudburst so everyone was thankful it had stayed fine until then!

Birds seen during the day by the total group were: black swan, blackbird, black-tailed godwit, barnacle goose, blue tit, Canada goose, coot, common tern, cormorant, carrion crow, chaffinch, curlew, gadwall, goldfinch, greylag goose, great crested grebe, golden plover, great black-backed gull, great tit, greenfinch, grey heron, herring gull, kestrel, little grebe, little egret, lapwing, lesser black-backed gull, magpie, mute swan, mallard, moorhen, meadow pipit, pochard, redshank, ruff, swallow, sand martin, starling, Sandwich tern, spotted redshank, shoveler, stock dove, snipe, tufted duck, teal, tree sparrow, wigeon, woodpigeon, water rail, whinchat and yellow wagtail.

*Pete Dryburgh  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Coach trips and holidays

We wish to clarify the situation regarding travel insurance, as it is important that you understand this when you book trips with the Group.

Day trips with the Group are classed as charitable events and as such the RSPB's Public Liability Insurance covers us all. The £3.50 deposit you pay when you book one of these trips is non-refundable unless you re-sell the seat or the event is cancelled, in which case a full refund would be made. If you have to cancel the booking you would lose your £3.50 deposit but there will be no more to pay.

When you book a trip, which includes overnight accommodation, the situation is different, as this cannot be classed as a charitable event. This means that neither the RSPB nor the Local Group can provide you with any form of insurance.

As with day trips, the deposit is non-refundable. The balance is payable six weeks before departure and once the balance has been paid refunds will only be made for the accommodation part of the cost and only if the hotel makes a refund. As hotels rarely, if ever, make a refund **it is strongly recommended that you take out a travel insurance policy to cover any unforeseen cancellation.**

The RSPB cannot endorse or recommend a specific travel insurance policy so you are

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advised to speak to an insurance broker or search online for either single trip cover or an annual, multi-trip insurance policy to meet your requirements.

## Changes to your Committee

Jamie Curt has been co-opted onto the committee as the Group's Volunteers Organiser. Jamie will be organising the rota of volunteers for all future events such as the monthly public walks at Hartsholme Country Park, the heron and peregrine watchpoints and any other events where volunteers are needed. This is not always an easy job so please give Jamie all the help and support you possibly can.

Joy Jillings has decided to stand down from the committee after 2 years as a committee member. We would like to thank Joy for all the help she has given to the Group over those two years. Joy will continue to help at the heron and peregrine watchpoints where her knowledge and enthusiasm generates a lot of support for the RSPB from visitors to the watchpoints.

There is now a vacancy on the committee for anyone who would like to get more involved and do more to help the RSPB to protect nature.

## A day at the seaside

In June last year I was fortunate to travel to Peru for the first time, participating in a Sunbird Tour with Fabrice Schmitt. I was able to take advantage of direct flights from London Gatwick to Lima although this meant I arrived a day before the tour started. However, this gave me the opportunity to spend some time along the Pacific coast, visiting a number of sites around Lima, with the assistance of a guide and driver provided by Manu Expeditions.

Alejandro picked me up from my airport hotel at 6:30 am and we made steady progress through the traffic towards our first destination, Villa Marshes. I have visited many capital cities on my travels and found Lima to be very grey and uninspiring with constant low cloud and mist and beaches of grey pebbles, washed by a grey ocean!

The birding, however, was exceptional with thousands of gulls and shorebirds at our first stop. The gulls included large numbers of kelp, grey-headed, Belcher's, Andean, grey and Franklin's, whilst Peruvian pelicans and Peruvian boobies cruised along the shoreline with hundreds of elegant, common and Inca terns. The latter has to be one of the most fantastic seabirds in the world with its greyish plumage, topped by a black cap and displaying a white face-stripe which continues as a tapered plume which often curls upwards and outwards - all augmented by a bright red bill and feet!

The shorebirds included large flocks of the turnstone that we are used to seeing in the UK with smaller numbers of American visitors, including semipalmated plover, Wilson's phalarope and greater yellowlegs plus individual pectoral and stilt sandpipers. In addition there were several hundred black skimmers resting on the beach. These are unusual looking birds, with strange bills, which have the lower mandible considerably longer



Peruvian pelican



Inca tern

than the upper. They feed by flying low over the water with their lower mandible beneath the water and the upper mandible above. When they find food, the upper mandible snaps shut to capture their prey.

We then moved on to Pucusana, a small fishing town on the coast and took a boat trip around the harbour and just out into the Pacific. Inca terns were everywhere, getting ready to nest on the cliffs, the buildings around the harbour and any other ledges that were not covered by the sea! We saw two marine otters mating in the water – quite a prolonged and difficult affair that looked more like synchronised drowning rather than prolonged passion! The local cormorants were rather different to those we are used to - red-legged and Guanay - and we found a small group of Humboldt penguins feeding close to the harbour. American and blackish oystercatchers were present along the shoreline with surfbirds and good numbers of South American sea lions hauled out on the boats and infrastructure in the harbour.

We had an excellent lunch of fish and chips (Peruvian style) whilst watching Peruvian seaside cinclodes feeding on a rocky ledge. The cinclodes are a family native to South America and are perhaps rather similar to European thrushes. Most live in the high Andes and many are often associated with water. The seaside cinclodes is always found foraging at or near the water's edge picking at the surface of rocks, often where the sea crashes through small caverns in the cliffs. Another marine otter and a close Humboldt penguin completed our time at the coast and it was time to re-join the heavy traffic heading back in to Lima.

There was just time to pause by a small stream at the side of an industrial area, which Alejandro was keen to visit as the site was renowned for an unusual sub-species of the rather common bran-coloured flycatcher. The usual bird is a

rather drab, streaky bird whilst this sub-species is a rich rufescent orange colour. We had excellent views of the bird, which a year later has been recognised as a separate species, rufescent flycatcher - a good armchair tick!

Whilst following the stream, we also came across another good bird, the very secretive, plumbeous rail. Again, this bird is not uncommon in many parts of South America and I have spent a great deal of time peering into thick vegetation as the bird called from its unseen position. This time, the bird was walking down the centre of the stream, showing itself fully. It turned this way, turned that, crossed the stream twice and was still 'strutting its stuff' in the open when we had to leave.

Then it was back to the hotel to meet Fabrice and the other participants on the tour over dinner and a couple of drinks. Pisco Sours, the local drink, proved to be very tasty and during the tour there were plenty of new birds to toast, but I will never forget my day at the seaside and all the fabulous birds that can be seen on a day trip from Lima.

*David Cohen  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Bird food sales

Jill and Colin Jackson are to retire at the 2018 AGM in May. Jill and Colin have sold bird food on behalf of the Group for the last 12 years since taking over from John White in 2006. They have provided an excellent service for people at the indoor meetings and in doing so helped to raise much needed funds for the RSPB. We are indebted to Jill and Colin for all they have done to help nature and thank them for their dedication and help.

We are now looking for a volunteer(s) to take over bird food sales from May onwards so that we can continue to provide this service to group members. If you would like to step in and help please speak to Jill or Colin and find out what is involved. If necessary bird food sales can be done on a smaller scale than Jill and Colin currently do.

## Quotable quotes

"We can't save all we should like to, but we shall save a great deal more than if we had never tried"

*Sir Peter Scott*


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## Generous legacy

Mr George Tom Hull left a legacy of £500 to the RSPB and in accordance with his wishes the money will be used for the 'Axholme and Idle Farmland Birds Project' operating in Lincolnshire. This project has the aims of supporting farmers across the Isle of Axholme and River Idle wash-lands to help them increase the numbers of nationally important farmland birds, and engage local people in understanding and celebrating England's countryside wildlife. Since the project began in 2013, skylarks, yellowhammers and lapwings have seen an excellent increase in numbers. However, specialist birds such as the yellow wagtail and turtledove are still struggling. The money will be used to try and stabilise and reverse the continuing decline of yellow wagtails and turtledoves; a truly worthwhile cause that will protect these vulnerable birds for future generations to enjoy.

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## Let's keep in touch on your terms



*"Saying yes will keep you in touch with everything you love about the RSPB's work and our cause"*

RSPB Chief Executive  
Mike Clarke

The RSPB has a fantastic track record of achieving amazing results for nature. And we couldn't do this without the tremendous support given and actions taken by our members and supporters. This includes you, our fantastic Local Group members. Together, we do great things for nature.

Now we're asking our members and supporters to "Say Yes to the RSPB" and opt in to hearing from us on their terms. It's about them having more control over their relationship with us. It's about strengthening our connection.

We need existing members and supporters to opt in before May 2018 (when new rules come into effect) and give their express permission for us to contact them. If they don't, we won't be able to keep in touch directly about our work and developments, about getting involved, and about supporting the RSPB in other ways - for example, through volunteering, supporting an appeal or taking part in an activity or campaign. We will be able only to contact those people about their membership and/or in their existing role as a volunteer.

**As a member of a Local Group, your support is invaluable to the RSPB.** We'd love you to "Say Yes" and tell us how you want to hear from us in the future. Were we unable to contact you or ask for your help when nature needs it, our ability to work for nature would be greatly diminished.

If you're an RSPB member and receive winter's Nature's Home, make sure you read the letter from Mike and make your opt-in choices online, via our dedicated phone line or by filling in and returning the paper form. If you've already made your choices, thanks very much.

If you aren't a member, as an active supporter you can make your opt-in choices now. Go to [rspb.org.uk/yes](http://rspb.org.uk/yes) or call **0300 777 2610** (open

Monday-Friday, 9am-8pm, calls charged at standard rate). Please also help us by encouraging family and friends who are RSPB members or supporters to make their choices too.

The passion and commitment of our members and supporters keeps the RSPB going in our work for nature. Saying "Yes" will keep us strong. And please do the same for all those other nature conservation charities you might support. We need to stay together to help save nature.

Thank you!



Image by Andy Astbury/Fotolia

## The importance of opt in

It is really important that you read the previous article on this page and act as soon as possible. Please don't put off doing it, as you must opt in to receive information from the RSPB so that we can keep in touch. If you don't opt in we may not be able to contact you or send you information about future events in the Lincoln area. Remember the new European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force on 25 May 2018. After that date the RSPB will not be able to contact you unless you have specifically given your permission.

*Peter Skelson  
Group Leader*

## Newsletter copy date

Thank you to everyone who contributed 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@lincolnrspsb.org.uk](mailto:info@lincolnrspsb.org.uk)

## Inchcolm and Arran Islands, mid April 2017

A short coach break, which we tried to 'birdify', based in the little village of Drymen in Lochlomondside.

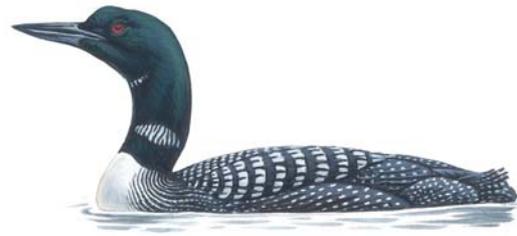
Inchcolm is an uninhabited island in the Firth of Forth noted for its interesting and well-presented semi-ruined abbey, and reached by a small ferry from South Queensferry. At South Queensferry we had our first sighting of eider ducks and across the Forth the massive dark grey hulks of Britain's two newest warships. HM Ships Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales tower above all else in Rosyth Naval Dockyard. This view also includes three world record-breaking bridges, each built in a different century, the rail bridge (19th Century), the road bridge (20th Century), and the Forth crossing (21st Century).

Nearing the island a few puffins and guillemots were on the water but once past the comprehensive visitor centre and museum the birding really began. The higher grassy slopes were literally carpeted with lesser black-backed and herring gulls, like a miniature Bass Rock. Walking amongst them made us appreciate just how big and intimidating these gulls really are. A small cliff face held kittiwakes, a few fulmars, and a rock dove or two. And, yes, we did get a shag on the rocks.

The following day we headed west in varying degrees of Scotch mist and fog in places which caused concern over ferry sailings. Arrival at Ardrossan, however, was in the clear and we had a good crossing to Arran where we spent some time in the woods of Brodick Castle which were full of rhododendrons and camellias and where we ticked, among other things, goldcrest and grey wagtails. Near the exit from the castle



Lesser black-backed gull



Great northern diver

a pair of very dark red squirrels showed briefly on the road before disappearing into the woods.

We then did a circular tour of the Northern half of the island around to Blackwaterfoot on the south west coast before cutting across the island back to Brodick. The shoreline was always interesting with grey seals, eiders, shelducks, oystercatchers, gannets, and an odd common sandpiper or two. The 'bird of the day' was a great northern diver seen very close inshore.

One stop was at the island's distillery where we opted to go for a walk along the banks of a nearby trout stream and found the first hooded crows of the trip and another grey wagtail. Back in the distillery shop a non-birding passenger called us out to say that 'an eagle' had been sighted. When we got outside the bird had disappeared into cloud but eventually two birds reappeared and, you've guessed it, they were a pair of common buzzards.

Our final day began with a cruise round Loch Katrine where we saw a pair of ospreys stood on their nest. The boatmen said this was the bird's second year in residence and that, unusually, both birds had returned on the same day.

Another highlight of this mini-cruise was provided by Tam the boat's barman who produced beakers of hot chocolate liberally laced with brandy! Delicious!

In the afternoon we had a cruise round Loch Lomond, which was very peaceful and pleasant but almost devoid of wildlife apart from mallards, lesser black-backed gulls, and greylag geese.

The only swallows seen during the trip were at Greta Green on the homeward journey. No other hirundines were seen.

*Les Oiseaux  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## Field meetings reports

### Hickling Broad - 11 June 2017

Our June trip was to Hickling Broad in Norfolk, which is home to the swallowtail butterfly. Mike had arranged a boat trip but because of the numbers it had to be done in two sessions, half of us in the morning and the rest of us in the afternoon. Also, it was necessary to use two boats each time. Soon after arriving the first group made their way to the water trail departure point and those remaining set off to explore part of the reserve on foot.

There were Cetti's, reed and sedge warblers singing in the reedbeds and swallows, swifts and black-headed gulls flying over. We also saw a reed warbler, male reed bunting, yellowhammer, robin, blackbird, great tit, skylarks, pied wagtails and house sparrows. We found a hovering kestrel and we had close views of a hobby catching dragonflies over the reedbeds. Four marsh harriers were also hunting above the reeds. The wildfowl seen included mute swans, mallards, greylag and Egyptian geese but the only waders were oystercatchers and lapwings. Other birds noted were a grey heron, coots, woodpigeons, carrion crows and magpies. We then returned to the Centre and whilst having our lunch in the picnic area we spotted a willow warbler.

After lunch our group boarded the boats and we were soon heading out on the broad and observing great crested grebes and little egrets. We visited the 60 ft high Tree Tower where everyone climbed to the top and were amazed by the wonderful views. We also went to a hide overlooking one of the scrapes and we saw gadwalls, shelducks, shovelers, four black-tailed godwits, two curlews, four greenshanks and a few avocets. On the return journey we spotted common terns, cormorants, lesser



Spoonbills

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black-backed gulls, a single bearded tit in the reeds and a crane flying in the distance. When we walked back to the Centre we saw chaffinches, common whitethroats and blackcaps.

In addition, six spoonbills, a bittern, kingfisher, cuckoo, stock dove and grasshopper warbler were seen, which brought the total number to 50 species. Other wildlife included roe deer, muntjacs, Norfolk hawk, dragonflies and many swallowtail butterflies, which everybody managed to see.

### North Cave and Kiplingcotes - 13 August 2017

In August we visited two reserves in Yorkshire. The first one was North Cave, which consists of six lakes, reedbeds, grassland, woodland and scrub. It was a lovely warm day and during our walk around the reserve we recorded 31 species of birds. There were swallows, sand martins and a solitary swift flying over the reedbeds and on the lakes we saw mute swans, a black swan, greylag geese, Egyptian geese, mallards, a shelduck, gadwalls, tufted ducks and pochards. Other water birds seen were coots, moorhens, great crested grebes and little egrets but the only waders we found were common snipe, oystercatchers and

lapwings. We also spotted a kestrel, common buzzard, hobby, robin, dunnoek, reed warbler, common whitethroat, goldfinches, woodpigeons and starlings. However, the star bird was a male redstart, which was showing very well in a field, only a few yards away from us.

We then travelled to Kiplingcotes and Rifle Butts Quarry, which are excellent sites for flowers and butterflies. We did see some additional birds, namely house martins, linnets, carrion crows, rooks, a magpie, blue tit, pied wagtail and sparrowhawk. This brought the total bird species seen to 39.

Most of the flowers had finished but we found a good variety of butterflies. They included green-veined whites, small whites, commas, common blues, speckled woods, peacocks, red admirals, small tortoiseshells, painted ladies, gatekeepers, meadow browns, walls, a small copper and a brown Argus was spotted by Mike Catchpole.

### Redgrave & Lopham Fen - 9 July 2017

In July we went to Redgrave and Lopham Fen, which is a Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve and one of the haunts of Britain's largest spider, the fen raft spider. Mike Catchpole eventually found a fine specimen and we were all given the opportunity to view it. Prior to this we walked around the reserve, it was sunny and very warm and there were many insects such as cardinal beetles, grasshoppers, dragonflies and a good variety of wild flowers.

We saw a green woodpecker, treecreeper, jay, carrion crows and woodpigeons. The raptors noted included a marsh harrier, buzzard, hobby, sparrowhawk and three kestrels. There were a few black-headed gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, a mute swan, little egret, mallards, tufted ducks, three little grebes and a kingfisher. We also spotted linnets, reed buntings, blackbirds, a common whitethroat, sedge warbler, reed warbler, dunnoek, robin, blue tit and great tit.



Fen raft spider



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This brought the total species seen to 30 but finding the fen raft spider was probably the highlight of the day.

*Ray Daniels*  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

## Donation to our local reserves

Thanks to the wonderful support of our members we were able to make a further donation of £6,000 to some of our most threatened nature reserves in eastern England. The money has been divided equally between reedbed reserves, coast and marine reserves and lowland heathland.

### Reedbed

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.



Water vole

## 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 pressure from human activity and development at sea. 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.

## Bird rings

If you find a dead bird with a leg ring please report it, as it will provide valuable information about the birds movements and life cycle. You

should make a note of where and when the bird was found and the number on the metal bird ring and report your findings on-line at <https://bto.org>. Or, if you prefer, post the ring to the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU. By reporting the finding you will be contributing to the work of the ringing scheme. You will also receive a report back giving details of the ringing scheme, the bird species and where and when the ring was fitted. A typical report received by one of our members who sent in details of a leg ring found in Brant Broughton is shown below:

Ringling Scheme: London Ring Number: **Z073290** Species of bird: House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

This bird was **ringed** by Bowden & Ball as age at least 1 year, sex unknown on 03-May-2016 10:00:00 at Marston Sewage Works, Lincolnshire, UK

OS Map reference SK9042 accuracy 0, co-ordinates 52deg 57min N 0deg-39min W accuracy 0.

It was **found** on 26-Sep-2017 time unknown at Brant Broughton, Lincolnshire, UK

OS Map reference SK9154 accuracy 0, co-ordinates 53deg 4min N 0deg-38min W accuracy 0.

**Finding condition:** Dead for more than a week, not fresh

Finding circumstances: Bird found

Extra Information: -

It was found 511 days after it was ringed, 12 km from the ringing site, direction N.

Bird Ringing in Britain & Ireland is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Each year over 900,000 birds are ringed by over 2,500 highly trained bird ringers, most of whom are volunteers. They follow a careful training process that can take several years to complete to ensure that they have the necessary skills to catch and ring birds. The bird's welfare is always the most important consideration during ringing activities.

Ringing began over 100 years ago to study the movements of birds. While it continues to generate information about movements, it also allows us to study how many young birds leave

the nest and survive to breed as adults, as well as how many adults live from year to year and how many birds disperse to different breeding sites. Collection of this information helps us to understand why bird populations increase or decrease - vital information for conservation. Details of how many birds have been caught and where and when they have been found are available on the BTO website at: [www.bto.org/ringing-report](http://www.bto.org/ringing-report).

Some interesting facts discovered from ringing data....

Oldest bird - Manx shearwater, 50 years 11 months

Furthest travelled - Arctic tern from Wales to Australia 18,000 km

Strangest recovery - Osprey ring found in stomach of a crocodile in The Gambia!

## Future coach trips

### RSPB Fairburn Ings, 18 February

Fairburn Ings is situated near Castleford, West Yorkshire. The reserve is an area of open water, wet grassland, reedbeds and wet woodland. The former coal spoil heaps have been restored to dry grassland, deciduous woodland and lagoons. A wide variety of wildlife can be seen on the reserve throughout the year. In February we should hope to see large numbers of wildfowl including goldeneye, goosander and maybe smew. The wet grassland favours wigeon and wintering waders, which attract peregrine falcons. Wintering thrushes should still be around along with woodland birds in the hedgerows and on the various feeding stations. The visitor centre has a shop, refreshments and



Photo Peter Skelson

The Major Oak, Sherwood Forest

toilets. There are five hides and viewing platforms on the nature trails. An excellent reserve for our first outing of the year.

### RSPB Titchwell Marsh - 18 March

Titchwell Marsh is on the North Norfolk Coast and is specially protected as an area of outstanding natural beauty. The reserve consists of reedbed, freshwater and saline lagoons, woodland and grassland.

The coastal habitats include saltmarsh, shingle and sand dunes.

The area is rich in wildlife and is situated where anything can turn up. March is when the first spring migrants will be arriving such as sand martins, swallows and wheatears. There are always a good variety of wading birds and wildfowl to be seen on the lagoons. If the weather is reasonably mild we may hear an early booming bittern and singing chiffchaff. On the sea they should still be flocks of scoters, mergansers and eider ducks. There is a superb visitor centre with shop, café and toilets. There are four hides giving excellent views of all the birds along with feeding stations close to the picnic area and visitor centre. There are three trails on the reserve all with decent walking surfaces. A great day's bird watching to look forward to.



Tom Marshall (rspb-images.com)

Wheatear

### Sherwood Forest, 15 April

Located near Mansfield, Sherwood Forest is an internationally important National Nature Reserve. The site contains more than 1,000 ancient oaks many in excess of 500 years old. This year the RSPB will be opening a brand-new visitor centre and managing the woodland and heathland within Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve. Our visit in April will coincide with the influx of summer migrants including redstarts and blackcaps. Resident birds include both lesser and great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatch, tree creeper, marsh tit and a host of other woodland species. The visitor centre will have all the usual facilities. Come with us to see a wide variety of wildlife and find out what the future holds for this exciting project.

Colin Goulding  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

## RSPB cafés win prestigious national awards

- All eleven of the RSPB's nature reserve cafés have gained at least the Bronze award in the Soil Association's 'Food for Life Served Here' scheme serving fresh, local and honest food
- Two of these cafés have also attained the Gold 'Food for Life Served Here' award
- The award scheme celebrates locally sourced, additive and GM free, sustainable food which meets animal welfare standards and makes healthy eating easy

When you visit an RSPB nature reserve café, you can now be sure that you can make healthy choices, and that what you're eating and drinking is good for the planet. In total, all eleven of the charity's cafés eligible for the Soil Association's 'Food for Life Served Here' scheme have successfully achieved awards. Nine cafés have gained the Bronze award in the scheme, with two attaining the Gold award.

As a conservation charity, the RSPB is keen to lead by example when it comes to serving food that makes a difference. This means reducing the impact of nature reserve catering on the environment, for example cutting the high carbon emissions usually involved in transporting food over long distances.

At RSPB Minsmere, the fresh 'Marybelle' milk comes from a local dairy just 12 miles away. It's used in the café's delicious lattes, and in their cream teas. RSPB Loch Leven's tasty organic cakes are all made in-house. And at the Gold award-winning RSPB Newport Wetlands café in South Wales local family farms deliver organic eggs, bacon and sausages.

Chris Kent, the RSPB's Catering Development Manager, said "We're absolutely thrilled to have our cafés gain these awards. We champion local suppliers who share our values, and can help us reduce food miles. So when you visit one of our award-winning cafés you can choose to eat food that is good for you, good for the planet and good for animal welfare."

Harry Greenfield, RSPB Land Use Policy Officer, said "The majority of the UK's countryside is used for farming, so farmers can make a huge contribution when it comes to conservation. In fact many farmers make superb efforts to make space for nature on their land alongside food production. Knowing where

food comes from and how it is produced means that we can recognise the great job that wildlife friendly farmers are doing."



RSPB café at Leighton Moss reserve

Rich Watts, Senior 'Food for Life Served Here' Manager at the Soil Association, said: "Food for Life Served Here' is seeing real growth across the visitor attraction sector, with caterers recognising that visitors place real value on eating local, fresh and honest food - 'Food for Life Served Here' is a great way to demonstrate a commitment to honest, ethical and sustainable food and also helps venues to reduce their environmental impact by looking closer to home for produce.

"The RSPB has done a fantastic job in achieving 'Food for Life Served Here' across eleven of its sites, and it's particularly pleasing to see some of those venues have gone the extra mile to achieve the Gold award level. It's achievements like theirs that will encourage other big organisations to review their food offer - delivering good food on a large scale is achievable and we look forward to working more with the RSPB to build on their success."

To attain the Bronze award, cafés need to have reached a certain set of standards. At least three quarters of the food on the menus should be freshly prepared on site or in a local kitchen. All meat served must be from farms, which meet, as a minimum, the UK's welfare standards. Due to its environmental impact, the RSPB aims to reduce the amount of meat consumed by offering tasty alternatives; however meat on the café 'Food for Life Served Here' menus is UK farm assured through the Red Tractor scheme.

Eggs should be from free-range hens and menus must be free of any endangered fish featured on the Marine Conservation Society's 'fish to avoid' list. Food is also free from additives like aspartame, MSG, artificial trans fats and GM ingredients. Finally, seasonal ingredients produced outdoors in the UK are used in the menus.

To gain the Gold award, at least 15% of ingredients used by a café must be organic. Organic farming can benefit wildlife through

sympathetic management of hedges and varied crop rotations, boosting numbers of birds and insects, for example.

In addition to gaining the 'Food for Life Served Here' awards, the RSPB's cafés also serve bird friendly coffee grown especially for the organisation in coffee plantations in Nicaragua, which make

space for nature. At present the RSPB do not serve any tuna in cafés because there is not a catering source that covers all aspects of sustainability, for example fish stock status, fishing methods and bycatch. The RSPB continues to work with suppliers to improve sustainability standards to bring them in line with some of the tuna that is now available in supermarkets.

## Dates for your diary

### JANUARY

#### 13 - 15 THREE DAYS in West Sussex

visiting WWT Arundel, RSPB Pagham Harbour and RSPB Pulborough Brooks. £160 in a double or twin room or £200 in a single room. Cost includes all coach travel, entry to WWT and two nights half board at the Chichester Park Hotel, Chichester.

**27 - 29 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

#### 8 INDOOR MEETING Birdwatching in Italy and the work of LIPU by David Lingard.

David runs LIPU-UK ([www.lipu-uk.org](http://www.lipu-uk.org)) supporting the work of LIPU, the Italian League for Bird Protection and the BirdLife Partner in Italy. Sponsored by a Group member who wishes to remain anonymous.

#### 18 COACH TRIP to RSPB Fairburn Ings.

Redwings and fieldfares will be stripping the last berries from the bushes, while on the lakes wildfowl such as goldeneyes, goosanders and smews gather to feed and display. Leave Lincoln 8.30 am. Leave reserve 4 pm. Adults £17. H, NT, S, VC, WC.

### MARCH

**8 INDOOR MEETING The Wildlife of the Seychelles** by Christopher Hall. Sponsored by London Camera Exchange, Lincoln.

**18 COACH TRIP to RSPB Titchwell Marsh**, one of the RSPB's best known nature reserves. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £18.50. H, NT, S, VC, WC.

### APRIL

**6 - 8 RSPB WEEKEND**, East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham. See the winter issue of *Nature's Home* magazine or contact RSPB HQ T: 01767 680551.

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

**8 COUNTRYSIDE LINCS** - an event for all the family at Lincolnshire Showground. 10 am to 4 pm.

**12 INDOOR MEETING Oman: Land of a Thousand Eagles** by Chris Ward ([www.cwardphotography.co.uk](http://www.cwardphotography.co.uk)). Sponsored by Michael Carter Travel.

*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>