

Summer 2019

## Field meeting reports

### RSPB Old Moor – 14 October 2018

Our trip in October should have been to Filey but because of the forecast of heavy rain, Mike was advised to cancel it. It was therefore changed to RSPB Old Moor, which most of us were not aware of until we were on the coach. However, despite the poor weather it turned out to be a wonderful day.

We arrived at the reserve at approximately 9.10 am and when we went to the Visitor Centre we were informed that a grey phalarope, which had dropped in over three weeks before, was still there. This is quite a rare bird which most of us had not seen previously. The prospect of seeing this bird was exciting so we decided to go to the appropriate hide immediately. We called in at the Field Pool West hide on the way where we found grey herons, mute swans, coots, moorhens, gadwalls, teals, wigeons, mallards, lapwings, little grebes and cormorants.

We then moved on to the Field Pool East hide and we immediately found the grey phalarope in the open water. We all had great views of the bird through binoculars and telescopes. We stayed in this hide until lunch beckoned and the phalarope remained in the area most of the time. There was a good variety of birds seen from this hide including a spotted redshank feeding close by, common snipe, dunlins, ringed plovers, black-tailed godwits, golden plovers, meadow pipits,

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Grey phalarope

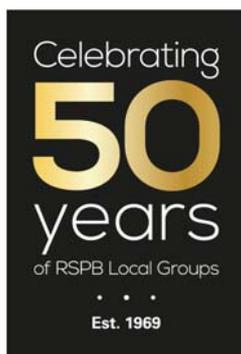


Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Kingfisher

starlings and pied wagtails. On the far bank we spotted a common buzzard, magpie, carrion crows, Canada geese, black-headed gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, a common gull and two green sandpipers. On the water there were shovelers and mallards and a female sparrowhawk flew over disturbing the waders before landing on the mud in front of the hide.

After lunch we visited the Bittern and Reedbed hides where we saw tufted ducks, pochards, great crested grebes, pheasants, blackbirds, woodpigeons, a reed bunting, Cetti's warbler and great tit but the highlight of the afternoon was superb views of a kingfisher. We then returned to the Field Pool East hide for a final look at the grey phalarope. It was still showing well and at one point it flew nearer to the hide. All too soon it was time to return to the coach but not before having a well-deserved drink and cake at the Visitor Centre. Our total bird count for the day was 44.



### Fylde Coast holiday – 29 to 31 October 2018

In October we spent three days on the Fylde Coast in Lancashire. We stayed at the Chadwick Hotel in Lytham St Annes and the weather was cool but dry with sunny periods. We left Lincoln at 7 am and stopped at the services on the M62. Despite the heavy traffic in the Manchester area we made good time and arrived at RSPB Marshside, Southport at lunchtime. From the viewing areas at the Visitor

Centre we saw Canada geese, pink-footed geese, wigeons, shovelers, lapwings, redshanks, black-tailed godwits, curlews, starlings, black-headed gulls, redwings, a kestrel, merlin, and skylark.

We then did a circular walk of the reserve and we found four cattle egrets in a field near the main road. Also in this area there were teals, mallards, shelducks, moorhens, greylag geese, golden plovers, carrion crows, jackdaws, magpies, woodpigeons, lesser black-backed gulls and herring gulls. The adjacent trees and bushes contained goldfinches, chaffinches, great tits, house sparrows, a robin, dunnock, wren and sparrowhawk. When we walked across the golf course we saw meadow pipits, blackbirds and magpies and in the marsh we saw pintails, gadwalls, a grey heron, little egret, little grebe, mute swan, marsh harrier and buzzard. Our walk back to the Visitor Centre was along the coast and large numbers of oystercatchers were seen on the shoreline. Cormorants were flying over as well as a small flock of linnets and a common gull. We then returned to the coach and set off for our hotel. After our meal Len, who is a volunteer at Marton Mere Nature Reserve, joined us. Mike had arranged for him to be our guide over the next two days and he informed us of the agenda.

The next morning Len met us at the hotel and we made our way to his local reserve, Marton Mere. Cetti's warblers were singing and some of us caught a glimpse of an otter swimming. Most of the birds we saw were the same as the previous day with the addition of tufted ducks, pochards, rooks, two stock doves, long-tailed tits, blue tits, a coal tit, song thrush, greenfinch and common snipe. We had a lovely morning and we were made very welcome when we called at the Centre. The lady served us with tea and coffee and supplied a selection of delicious homemade cakes.



Common snipe



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In the afternoon we went to the Ribble Marsh where we managed to find some new birds. We again saw a merlin, sparrowhawk, kestrel, buzzard and marsh harrier, as well as a few wildfowl and waders. However, new birds for our list included collard doves, whooper swans, a reed bunting, great black-backed gull and great white egret.

On our final day we visited the Lune and Wyre estuaries and the Conder River. We collected Len on the way. Again there were the usual waders, wildfowl and gulls. A marsh harrier was spotted and we added mute swan, great black-backed gull and pheasant to our list. New wildfowl and waders included a goldeneye, goosanders, dunlin, turnstones, knot and curlew sandpiper. This brought our total birds seen over the three days to 73.

We then started on the journey back to Lincoln but not before saying cheerio to Len and thanking him for his excellent service. He would not accept any payment for his time so we gave him a substantial donation towards Marton Mere Nature Reserve.

After the usual stop at the services we arrived back in Lincoln at approximately 9.30 pm. Thank you Mike and Carol for arranging another lovely holiday. The weather and hotel were good and we all had an excellent time.

### Wells & Holkham – 18 November 2018

Our penultimate trip of the year was to Wells Next the Sea and Holkham on the North Norfolk coast. When we arrived at Wells beach it was a sunny day with a cloudless sky, although the wind was very cold. We immediately saw skeins of pink-footed and Brent geese as well as cormorants, herring gulls, common gulls, great blacked-backed gulls and lesser black-backed gulls. Among the many waders we saw on the beach were turnstones, oystercatchers, curlews, redshanks, dunlins, grey plovers, bar-

tailed godwits and ringed plovers. While we were observing a grey seal a red kite flew across a few yards in front of us and its colours were stunning in the superb light. We then moved to Wells Wood and the Dell where we found jays, magpies, jackdaws, carrion crows, woodpigeons and blackbirds. A small flock of fieldfares and redwings flew over and in the various trees we spotted blue tits, great tits, a dunnock, bullfinch, siskins and redpolls. Among the redpolls a solitary Arctic redpoll was also identified. On the small pools there were mallards, tufted ducks, a mute swan, little grebe, little egret and grey heron.

The coach then collected us and took us to Holkham Gap. First of all we went into Holkham Park and walked alongside the lake. There were pheasants, greylag geese and Egyptian geese on the parkland and on the lake we saw great crested grebes, shovelers, pochards, gadwalls, teals, coots, moorhens and black-headed gulls. A buzzard was spotted high in the sky and a heron was perched on the top of a tree. Starlings, a pied wagtail, robin and nuthatch were also seen.

We then walked to Holkham Gap and in the fields bordering Lady Ann's Drive we saw a large flock of wigeons and lapwings and the red kite appeared again. On the beach we found the shore larks and snow buntings and those who went down to the sea saw gannets, eider ducks, goldeneyes and a marsh harrier. The total birds seen on the day was 61.

### Carsington Water – 16 December 2018

Our final trip of the year was to Carsington Water near Ashbourne in Derbyshire. This reservoir was only completed in 1991 and it is owned and operated by Severn Trent Water. Since then it has become one of the premier



Shore lark



Redwing

birdwatching sites in the country. We arrived mid morning and the weather was dry and cold with sunny periods. After a look in the Centre we headed for the reservoir dam wall. There were a small number of Canada geese on the grass areas and among them we spotted two barnacle geese. In the wooded regions there were woodpigeons, jackdaws, magpies, chaffinches, blackbirds, robins, house sparrows, goldfinches, blue tits and long-tailed tits.

When we reached the reservoir we saw pied wagtails on the grass banks and redshanks and lapwings feeding on the mud at the water's edge. There were mallards, tufted ducks, teals, wigeons, coots, mute swans, cormorants, great crested grebes and little grebes on the water with some black-headed and great black-backed gulls flying over. From the dam wall we scanned the reservoir with our telescopes and we found a male goldeneye, pochards, shoveler and goosanders. When we returned to the Centre we saw a mistle thrush, dunnock and collared doves.

After lunch we set off along the northern edge of the reservoir where there is a hide and viewing area. Along the way we had excellent views of redwings and at the hide the feeders were enticing nuthatches, male and female bullfinches, tree sparrows, a reed bunting, willow tit, coal tit and great tits. There was a well-camouflaged common snipe on the water's edge as well as a pheasant and moorhen. Gadwall, a ruff, great spotted woodpecker, kestrel and Iceland gull were also seen and a raven was heard. The total bird count for the day was 54 species and one fox and we had a very enjoyable time.

*Ray Daniels  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## January weekend in Northumberland

In January 2019 we spent three days in the wonderful county of Northumberland. We stayed at the White Swan Hotel, Alnwick and we visited Druridge Bay Country Park and Chevington Marsh, NWT Hauxley and WWT Washington. After our usual stop at the motorway services we arrived at Druridge Bay Country Park at midday. Druridge Bay extends for six miles along the coast and is fringed by sand dunes and a narrow sandy beach. Inland there are small areas of open water and mixed woodland.

Around the Visitor Centre we saw carrion crows, jackdaws, woodpigeons, chaffinches, coal tits, blue tits, great tits, long-tailed tits, robins and tree sparrows. In the sand dunes and rough vegetation we spotted a stonechat, wren, kestrel, pheasants and approximately 50 twites. The twites were flying around the dunes but they eventually landed on the beach where we had excellent views.

On the foreshore we found curlews, sanderlings, redshanks, turnstones, oystercatchers, herring gulls, black-headed gulls, pied wagtails and a rock pipit. Offshore there were common scoters, a red-breasted merganser, guillemot, great northern diver, cormorants and eider ducks. The open water contained mute swans, mallards, tufted ducks, wigeons, teals, a pintail and goldeneye. Other water birds included moorhens, coots, lapwings and little grebes. We also saw a stoat from one of the hides and a large skein of greylag geese flew over. After a lovely afternoon we set off for our hotel at Alnwick.

The next day, Sunday, we went to NWT Hauxley, which is just a bit further north of Druridge Bay Country Park. It is centred upon



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an artificial freshwater pool and has areas of reedbeds and scrub. This reserve is a good place for red squirrels and most of us managed to see one at some point during the day. As it was a similar environment to the previous day we again saw the same species of birds but we did manage to find several new ones for our list.

We saw a sparrowhawk, grey heron, collared dove, willow tit, goldcrest, meadow pipits, goldfinches, blackbirds and bullfinches. New waterfowl and waders included shelducks, Canada geese, gadwalls, pink-footed geese and three black-tailed godwits. It was a very windy day, which made it difficult to keep our telescopes steady when we went onto the beach. However, it was worth the effort because we found many new waders such as bar-tailed godwits, purple sandpipers, grey plovers, turnstones, ringed plovers and dunlins. We also spotted a shag, guillemot, great black-backed and lesser black-backed gulls. When we returned to the hotel we saw a barn owl flying along the road just outside Alnwick, which was a fitting end to a great day.

On Monday we left the hotel and started our journey home but on the way we called at Washington WWT, which was only an hour from

Alnwick. This reserve is on the banks of the River Wear and consists of brackish and freshwater pools, reedbeds and woodland. A small area also contains a collection of over one hundred species of wildfowl. The feeders near the Visitor Centre were enticing various tits and chaffinches and after a brief look at the captive birds we set off to explore the wild area. We visited all the hides and we managed to find some new birds for our list. They were a common snipe, song thrush, jay and redwings but the highlight of the day was when we visited the feeding station at the Hawthorn Wood hide. As soon as we walked into the hide we were astonished at the variety and number of birds on the various feeders and in the trees. There were nuthatches, treecreepers, redpolls (including a mealy redpoll), bullfinches, bramblings, siskins, a reed bunting, willow tit, two great spotted woodpeckers and pheasants feeding on the ground. It was an amazing sight and probably the best feeding station we have come across during our extensive travels.

All too soon it was time to resume our journey back to Lincoln. We had a wonderful time, the weather and hotel were good and we saw a variety of birds. As usual it was a well-organised trip and our thanks go to Mike and Carol for all their hard work.

*Ray Daniels  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## The missing photos

Our RSPB Images database is an excellent resource for photos of birds and wildlife. We are able to use many of the photos in our communications (signs, posters, leaflets, newsletters, etc.), though many images come with a price tag. Although there are some photos, which have been donated to the RSPB



Bewick's swan

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



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that are free for use, we are looking to expand this pool for internal use. In particular, there are some species, which don't have a single free photo available in the gallery.

The ones we are currently looking for are Bewick's swan, Egyptian goose, gadwall, scaup, long-tailed duck, velvet scoter, smew and red-breasted merganser.

If you have a high-quality photo of any of these species, which you are willing to let the RSPB use (with photo credit of course), please email them to: [drew.lyness@rspb.org.uk](mailto:drew.lyness@rspb.org.uk)

## Quotable quotes

"One of the great pleasures of birdwatching is the quiet enjoyment of the absolute ordinary"

*Simon Barnes,  
Birdwatcher and Author*

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## Spoon-billed sandpiper

“Well, that’s Bird of the Trip sorted!”

I can’t remember which one of us said it, but all twelve of us probably thought it. We were on the first day of a Rockjumper Thailand Highlights tour and had just made our first stop at the renowned salt pans at Pak Thale. In front of us were probably a thousand waders, mainly lesser and greater sand plovers with a scattering of broad-billed, marsh and terek sandpipers, red-necked and long-toed stints. After a few moments, the flock parted and there it was – a solitary winter-plumaged spoon-billed sandpiper.

All our telescopes were focussed on the same bird, as we concentrated on one of the rarest waders on the planet. It was about the same size as the accompanying red-necked stints but displayed its unique spatulate bill. In summer plumage it would have had a red-brown head, neck and breast with dark brown streaks with blackish upper parts fringed with buff and pale rufous. In November, the bird before us was clearly in non-breeding plumage and lacked the reddish coloration, appearing brownish-grey above and white below.

Breeding in the Russian Arctic, these tiny sandpipers, known affectionately as “Spoonies”, migrate along the East Asian Flyway to winter in small numbers in southern and Southeast Asia. Their population was thought to lie within the range of 2,000 to 2,800 pairs in the 1970s but this has dropped to less than 500 individuals,



Spoon-billed sandpiper (arrowed) and lesser sand plovers

Photo: Benny Baeten

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with BirdLife International now listing the bird as “critically endangered”.

This is based on the fact that “Spoonies” have an extremely small population that is undergoing a very rapid decline caused primarily by habitat loss in its breeding, passage and wintering grounds, compounded by disturbance, pollution, hunting and the effects of climate change. Juvenile recruitment has, until recently, been very low, leading to fears that this small population is ageing rapidly, making the threat of extinction very real.

A consortium of organisations in Europe and Asia is now involved in research and conservation activities, especially in Russia, where the main breeding areas are closely monitored each breeding season and many birds are individually marked, to permit identification on passage and in winter without re-trapping. Our bird did not appear to have been ringed and certainly did not carry a coloured leg-flag.

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.

A captive rearing and breeding programme commenced in 2011, with eggs collected in the Russian Arctic sent to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust facilities in the UK for incubation. In addition, since 2012, a programme called "head-starting" has been implemented on the breeding grounds, which involves eggs being hatched and young raised in captivity close to the breeding sites, with the youngsters released to migrate south with wild-bred juveniles.

Later that evening, whilst reflecting on the day's events in the bar, I thought back to my first trip to Southeast Asia in 2005.

I had been invited by my employers to attend a four-day training course in Hong Kong in September that year. I jumped at the chance and decided to stay on for a week after the course finished in the hope of catching up with some eastern waders at the famed Mai Po wetland reserve. At about this time, my wife, Susanne, and our daughter, Stefanie, decided that they were also due a week's holiday, so they joined me for the second week and we thoroughly enjoyed a bit of site-seeing and shopping, coupled with birding visits to Kowloon Park in the centre of Hong Kong.

We hired a local guide to take us to Mai Po although he did warn us that the tides were not really high enough to deliver a great wader spectacle, whilst we were there. None the less, we decided to go for it and despite almost constant heavy rain, had quite a reasonable day with a nice selection of egrets and herons, a few migrants but no concentrations of waders!

As he departed our guide said "Shame you're not here on Saturday as the tides are much better!" After he had gone, I reminded my wife that our flight home on Saturday did not leave until nearly midnight, so we had time to witness the 2.4 metre tide at 9 am and still get to the

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Spotted redshank

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airport in good time. She had had her fill of Mai Po, but I did secure a pass out for the morning, on the understanding that I was back in time for a late lunch.

In my eagerness to be at the right spot in time for the tide, I actually arrived before the visitor centre opened and had to make the decision to enter the reserve without a permit as the permit office was also closed. This is not something I make a habit of doing, but as the saying goes "time and tide wait for no man" and the potential wader spectacle with a good number of life birds was drawing me on.

As I entered the reserve there were two choices – the boardwalk overlooking the mudflats and the Chinese mainland or a hide within the reserve overlooking a pool, where the waders were likely to spend time over the high tide. There was a military style sign at the entrance to the boardwalk, forbidding entrance to this sensitive site to those without permits and threatening all sorts of sanctions if this instruction was not obeyed. Bearing in mind the sensitivities between China and Hong Kong in 2005, I decided to opt for the wader pool and had a fabulous morning as different waders from the East Asian Flyway dropped in.

A couple of thousand waders appeared in front of the hide over the high tide and whilst these included a lot of species I was familiar with – greenshank, marsh sandpiper, black and bar-tailed godwits, common and spotted redshanks, dunlin, curlew sandpiper, lesser and greater sand plovers and red knot – there were others which I had not seen before. These included great knot, Asian dowitcher, red-necked stint, grey-tailed tattler and an immaculate grey-headed lapwing.

Other goodies included black-faced spoonbill, yellow bittern, eastern imperial eagle, black-naped orioles, black-capped kingfisher and a nice selection of flycatchers. As I walked back to the visitor centre I was feeling quite chuffed with myself. I had managed to see a spectacular high tide roost, picked up a good number of life birds and was likely to get back to our hotel by the allotted time! I made a donation at the visitor centre to cover the cost of the permit I had failed to buy earlier in the morning and got ready to head out when I just glanced at the bird notice board to see if I had missed anything and in large writing on the board were the immortal words “SPOON-BILLED SANDPIPER ON THE BOARDWALK”

I was amazed how quickly euphoria could turn to despair and I spent a very uncomfortable journey on the Metro back to our hotel, where I was reunited with the family and had to share the pleasure of so many new birds with the disappointment of missing out on one of the rarest waders on the planet!

Thankfully, our latest trip delivered the goods and “Spoonie” is now firmly on my life list, along with Nordmann’s or spotted greenshank, which we also saw towards the end of that first day in Thailand. At the end of the tour, our bird list was in excess of 350 and I had something in



Photo: Peter Skelton

Common redshank



Curlew sandpiper

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)

the region of 70 life birds, depending upon which list you use.

Thank you, Rockjumper, for a wonderful introduction to Thailand and for helping me to realise a long-held ambition to see spoon-billed sandpiper.

*David Cohen*  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

## Used postage stamps - IMPORTANT INFORMATION

A huge thank you if you have been collecting stamps over the years, all your hard work has made a considerable difference to our work to save the Albatross. Following a press release on 30 November from The Charity Commission, and subsequent stories in the national press regarding the fraudulent use of used postage stamps, we have been reviewing our current Albatross Stamp Appeal scheme.

We are determined to avoid any risk to our fundraising activity and to continue to raise money to save albatrosses from extinction. We have decided to cease collection of used bulk postage stamps immediately but continue to ask our supporters to donate stamp collections, first day covers and albums. A specialist auction house we have worked with for some years will auction these collectible items monthly. All funds raised, minus auction costs, will continue to support our Albatross Task Force work. Auctioned stamps have already raised many thousands of pounds over the last decade.

### How the updated Albatross Stamp Appeal scheme will work

We will ask supporters to donate their old unwanted stamp collections, first day covers and albums and ask donors to send them to us at RSPB Stamps, The Lodge, Sandy Beds SG19 2DL or, drop them off at their nearest

RSPB reserve or office. Our contracted specialist auction house will continue to collect donations from The Lodge every month and re-lot them for optimum value for their monthly auctions. This well-established fundraising channel will continue to grow and raise thousands of pounds for albatross conservation every year thanks to our generous supporters.

Please note that our auction house is also a specialist of collectable coins, medals and small memorabilia – so these items are also very welcome donations and will help us grow fundraising income for albatross conservation.

The RSPB has responded promptly to the alert issued by the Charity Commission on 30th November 2018. This alert expressed concern regarding stamp fraud in relationship to used postage stamps, some arising from charity appeals, and was covered in the national press. The RSPB is determined to assure itself, and our supporters, that any materials collected to raise funds on its behalf are not used for fraudulent purposes.

Please dispose of your stamps in your appropriate local waste and recycling systems.

We cannot give the already collected stamps to another charity because The Charity Commission's advice applies to all charities so we are unable to pass on the stamps to another charity. Thank you all for your support and assistance with these changes.

## Volunteers wanted

Volunteers are wanted to show people the nesting herons at Hartsholme Country Park on any of three weekends from Saturday 20 April to Sunday 5 May. You can choose either a morning (10.30 am to 1.30 pm) or an afternoon (1.30 pm to 4.30 pm) session - or all day if you really keen! No previous experience is required as you will be volunteering alongside experienced volunteers, you just need to enjoy meeting and speaking to people. If you are interested in helping please contact any committee member or email [info@lincolnrspb.org.uk](mailto:info@lincolnrspb.org.uk)

Volunteers are also needed to take over bird food sales at our indoor meetings.

For more information about volunteering with the group please speak to any committee member or send an email to:

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## The brambling bonanza

Were you one of the lucky ones to see a brambling in your garden during Big Garden Birdwatch this year? It's safe to say, their numbers went through the roof this winter, as we experienced a continental influx! Flocks of up to 500 were seen in the region, with The Lodge, Titchwell and Minsmere all reporting usually high numbers of these quirky, Scandinavian finches. They travelled to our shores in search of beech mast (their prime winter survival food), but in tough times, they are also quite partial to sunflower hearts so were attracted to several gardens this winter. It always pays to keep your feeders topped up as you never know what may turn up in your garden.



Brambling

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)

## Falklands 2018

My trip to the Falklands started with an overnight flight from RAF Brize Norton to Mount Pleasant via Cape Verde. After a transfer to Darwin there was only enough time for a brief look around before the evening meal and darkness. There were hares everywhere and several bird species to be seen.

Early next morning we were taken to the airstrip (a field with a windsock and a shed for the fire appliance trailer). After a short flight in the tiny eight-seater plane we arrived on Bleaker Island, a low lying island with a working sheep farm, a small tourist lodge, a self-catering lodge and a population of five (plus two Chilean workers in the tourist season). We were shown some of the best wildlife watching spots, and then had three days to wander around. There were nesting colonies of three penguin species (gentoo, Magellanic and southern rockhopper). Rock and imperial shag colonies were also seen and steamer ducks, ruddy-headed, upland and kelp geese all had young. There were numerous other birds about including speckled teal, crested duck, Chiloé



Striated caracara

wigeon, black-crowned night heron, giant petrel, turkey vulture, striated caracara, skua, sheathbill, two species of oystercatcher, three gull species, South American tern, dark-faced ground tyrant, Falkland pipit, black-chinned siskin and black-throated finch. Bleaker island was also notable for white-tufted and silvery grebe, white-rumped sandpipers and a lively colony of southern sea lions.

We spent the next three days on Sea Lion Island, a designated wildlife reserve. We had a guided four-wheel drive orientation tour and had excellent views of both wren species, snipe, rufous-chested dotterel and two-banded plovers. We stopped near the HMS Sheffield memorial and in amongst the colonies of rockhoppers we spotted a couple of macaroni penguins. There were many birds out at sea, but identification was difficult due to gale force winds, but we did manage to spot sooty shearwater, albatross, fulmars and Cape petrel. We spent the rest of the time on Sea Lion Island walking along the shoreline, on the



King penguin and chick

heathland, or struggling through mountainous tussac. We saw many of the same birds as before plus Falkland thrush, peregrine, and a single king penguin (it was moulting and barely moved for 3 days). The highlight however, was the numerous southern elephant seals - sleeping, sparring, suckling and mating. The males were pestered mercilessly by tussac-birds pecking at wounds and at sea the seals were at risk from a pod of orcas (a pup and a female were taken close to the shore). Skuas, striated caracara, and turkey vultures were scavenging at every opportunity but the giant petrels were literally top of the pecking order especially on an elephant seal carcass!

Next stop was Carcass Island, a much hillier island with a farm and a population of four (plus three Chilean seasonal workers). We had a trip by boat to the neighbouring island of West Point where despite the foggy conditions we had excellent views of a mixed colony of black-browed albatross and rockhopper penguins. It was fascinating to sit and watch the albatross, trying to land or take off in the crowded colony, and to see the eggs as the pairs swapped over on the raised nest mounds. Carcass Island was also notable for Peale's dolphins, our first sighting of a variable hawk, several colourful



Albatross with egg

long-tailed meadow larks and the sheer number of striated caracara plus a couple of southern caracara.

Then on to Pebble Island, which had been a thriving sheep farm but now most of the buildings and machinery are abandoned. Due to the size of the island we had two full day four wheel drive guided tours that included visits to the HMS Coventry Memorial and a couple of Argentinian plane crash sites. We saw sea lions, Commerson's dolphins surfing and the 'usual birdlife', including several good views of the variable hawk, but also our first sightings of black-necked swans and yellow-billed pintail. There were numerous penguin colonies including a colony of rockhoppers and imperial shags together. The shags were carrying such a huge beakfull of nest material they could barely see to walk or fly. We also spotted a hybrid macaroni/rockhopper penguin and saw night herons nesting on a cliff and a distant view of a petrels nesting. At our request we were taken to a recent mass pilot whale stranding. The scavengers were having a field day especially as the scientists who left a couple of days before had taken large tissue samples which gave easy access to the carcasses!

Our last flight was to Stanley, which felt like a busy metropolis with roads, traffic, shops and a museum. From there we visited Volunteer Point - mainly to see the large king penguin colony. The immature penguins and many of the adults were moulting and looked quite tatty. Some of the youngsters that had already moulted were taking their first swim and were very clumsy especially trying to get out of the surf.

I found the Falklands a fascinating place to visit on many different levels including historically and culturally, the smaller islands were considerably more isolated than I had expected. We were too early for most of the flowering plants. The highlight was certainly the wildlife.



Black-throated finch



Elephant seal

Not perhaps the number of bird species (less than 60) but how close it was possible to get or in many cases how close it would come to you.

*Fiona Wallace  
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

## RSPB going solar

The team at Minsmere has been busy installing new PV solar panels. The RSPB is committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions from energy use in its buildings by 50% by 2020, and these new panels at Minsmere are part of our wider green energy programme.

There are plans for solar panels at Arne, Bempton Cliffs, Leighton Moss, The Lodge reserve, Old Moor and Saltholme. Some solar panels will be installed on roofs, such as at Arne, Leighton Moss and Old Moor. At Minsmere, the panels have been installed on the ground on the northern edge of the car park.

Even on a dull wet winter day, Minsmere's panels will produce some electricity, but they'll really come into their own on the long sunny days of summer. It is estimated that they will supply up to 90% of the visitor centre's electricity. They'll also save money for the RSPB, as for every £1 worth of energy we generate, it will be £1 less of electricity we have to buy from the National Grid.

All the currently planned solar installations should be completed by April 2019 and will have a warranted lifespan of 25 years. Whilst carbon savings are important, we also hope to take advantage of last remaining government Feed-in-Tariff scheme, which will support the investment and help us deliver more for nature. You can find out more about our work to promote green energy more widely through our Renewable Energy Campaign on the RSPB website. Go to [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) and search for renewable-energy-campaign

## Dates for your diary

### APRIL

**11 INDOOR MEETING** *Birds Without Borders; the Challenge of Migration* by **Peter Holden**. Sponsored by Michael Carter Travel.

**14 COACH TRIP** to **RSPB St Aiden's Nature Park**. Have your camera at the ready to take advantage of the amazing views and wonderful wildlife including bitterns, avocets, black-necked grebes, skylarks and meadow pipits. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £20. NT, VC, WC.

### MAY

**5 DAWN CHORUS** at **Whisby Nature Park**. Meet in the car park at 4.30 am. The walk is free and need not be booked in advance. An optional breakfast at 8 am costs £5.50 but this must be booked and paid for in full by 25 April.

**9 INDOOR MEETING** *The Garden* by **Paul Hobson** ([www.paulhobson.co.uk](http://www.paulhobson.co.uk)). A look at how successful Britain's gardens can be for wildlife. A Sponsor is required for this talk.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** The Group's AGM will be held at 9 pm following the talk and break for refreshments. Free admission from 8.45 pm for people only attending the AGM.

**19 COACH TRIP** to **RSPB Fowlmere and Ouse Fen**. Fowlmere is one of the best reserves for breeding turtle doves. H, NT, VC, WC. Ouse Fen is still in its early stages but, when complete, it will be the biggest reedbed in the UK. Currently no on-site facilities at Ouse Fen but a toilet is available on the coach and we will have a comfort stop en route. Leave Lincoln 7.30 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £24.

### JUNE

**1 - 8 A WEEK IN WALES** visiting RSPB reserves at Conwy, Ynys Hir, South Stack and Lake Vyrnwy and North Wales Wildlife Trust Cemlyn Bay, with a free day mid-week. Cancellation insurance is *not* included. Further details on request.

**12 AFTERNOON BIRDWATCH** at **RSPB Langford Lowfields**. Meet at 1 pm in the reserve's car park.

**23 COACH TRIP** to **Bolton Abbey Strid Wood**, Wharfedale. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £26 including admission charge. C, VC, WC.

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

### JULY

**14 COACH TRIP** to **Paxton Pits**, a reserve famous for its nightingales. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £20. H, NT, VC, WC.

### AUGUST

**11 COACH TRIP** to **Cley Marsh**, Norfolk Wildlife Trust's oldest and best known nature reserve. Leave Lincoln 8 am. Leave reserve 5 pm. Adults £29 including admission charge. C, H, NT, VC, WC.

**16 - 18 BIRDFAIR 2019** at **Rutland Water**. Details from the Events Team at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. T: 01767 680551.

### SEPTEMBER

**12 INDOOR MEETING** *Butterbumps, Thick-knees and Tanglepickers* by **Steve Rowland**. 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.

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