



How's your summer break going? We hope your not missing your group trips & meetings too much - only a few weeks to go and we start our third year.

You will find enclosed with this newsletter a membership renewal form and an order form for our latest project - the SLB 2009 desk calendar. Please complete and return as soon as possible please

AGM Photographic Competition

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we will be holding a member's slide show and photographic competition at our AGM in October. The first half of the evening will be dedicated to the Annual General Meeting itself, details of which will be sent out to you in the next few weeks.

After a quick cup of tea or coffee (and maybe a slice of cake) at the interval, we'll get down to the serious business of the evening! First of all, there will be the competition, so here's the rules:

Enter one or two (max.) photos that you have taken yourself, of any subject and composition, as long as it's a bird. The pictures will be shown in a random order and it's photographer will not be named. The audience will be asked to vote for their favourite and the picture polling the most votes will win a prize (and possibly a coveted trophy!)

The member's slide show will follow. If you can submit up to 20 photos, then we'll show them - we know that there are quite a few of you who take some really good shots, so between us, let's put on a great show!

Please submit your entries (clearly stated) and slide show pictures on CD to Dennis by, or at, the September meeting. If your pictures are not in digital format, please discuss with Dennis.

If you would like to help or can contribute in any way towards the compilation of the newsletter, please contact Dennis

Teeside, The Farne Islands & Northumberland Weekend

22nd/23rd/24th May 2009

Plans are now in motion for our weekend trip in May. We will be visiting The Farne Islands and staying 2 nights at a hotel in Bamburgh.

Itinerary will be: RSPB Saltholme, Teeside on the Friday. This is a new reserve due to open at the end of 2008. Saturday will be spent on The Farne Islands - we will be using Billy Shiels boat on the All Day Birdwatch tour. Sunday will be spent at a Northumberland Wildlife Trust Reserve - probably Big Waters at Seaton Burn.

Approximate cost for the weekend will be £220.00 each. Please note that we will be using Paul James Coaches for this weekend away.

Full details and booking forms available at our September meeting - bring your chequebook! We expect this trip to be extremely popular, so please book early.

2009 Field Trips

Our programme of trips for 2009 is shaping up nicely with many new venues. Details and booking forms will be in the next newsletter.

Trip numbers:

The committee are aware that due to the club's success, the attendance on trips has been rising steadily but feel that if our groups get too big it will cause a number of problems - ie pressure on reserve facilities, difficulty in sharing information and more cars and drivers being required.

The committee is therefore considering limiting numbers to 30 per trip and a policy needs to be in place for the Spring 2009 bookings. If you have any views or ideas please e-mail a member of the committee or bring ideas to the AGM in October, when a decision will be made.

The next issue of the newsletter will be November 2008

Meet the Committee

Well you've seen them at meetings and on trips, so you know what they look like. Perhaps you may like to know a little about them - the members of the committee. Let's start at the top, with the Chairman...

Name: Alan Paul Inchley, but called Paul because I didn't look like an Alan when I was born.

Wife & Kids: Been married to Mezz since 1996, I have two boys aged 28 & 26, Mezz has two boys 30 & 28.

Pets: A Cairn Terrier called Scruffy, aged 11 and the family goldfish called Fang

Favourite Tipple: Being tee-total it has to be a fluffy cappuccino coffee.

Hobbies: Watching any sport, playing bowls and bird watching.

Live: I've lived in Wigston since 1987, but would love to relocate to the countryside.

Local Patch: Don't really have one, because I don't wish to be tied down to any one place.

Top Birding Site: Probably Rutland Water, due to the variety of species.

Favourite Bird: Well, I have two - the beautiful colours of the Goldfinch and Swifts, because when you see or hear them, you know summer is coming.

Rarest Bird Seen: Hoopoe.

Most Memorable Moment: Well, it must be our trip to Martin Mere.

Wish List: Many wishes but would dearly love to see a Bee-eater. That's for a start, then

Buy and Sell

If you have anything that you want to sell or would like to buy, let us know and we'll put a note in the newsletter - free of charge!

Please support our seed sales! 2 & 5kg bags will be available at meetings for you to buy on the night. You can also buy seed in advance for collection at the following meeting (ask for an order form).

Random Jottings...

Well, it's summer. Supposedly. We're always complaining that we never get the hot summer days and warm evenings that we seemed to get years ago. I read a book some time ago and it said that to a bird, there are only three seasons. Winter you have to survive. Spring is for raising a family and Autumn is preparing for the months ahead. Funny how Spring and Summer are really one season to the animals – maybe they know something!

I can't really complain as I got some fine weather on my expedition to Scotland at the beginning of June. Three years ago, every time I stopped somewhere, the first bird I heard was a Cuckoo. This year, I was inundated with Willow Warblers!

One of my target birds was the White Tailed Eagle. Just to make sure that I got my tick, I visited the RSPB Eagle Watch on Mull. Last year, the bottom fell out of the nest after some heavy rain and the chicks were lost, but after locating to a new site nearby, they've successfully raised chicks this year. The RSPB have built a new, rather splendid, viewing hide and education room to watch the birds.

I didn't know what to expect. Although we were a good quarter of a mile away, when the first eagle appeared, it looked enormous! Although it just sat in the tree waiting, you were captivated by this bird. Then it's partner arrived and gave a bit of a flying display around the tops of the trees. If you've seen such a bird, in it's correct habitat, you know that words such as awesome, majestic, powerful and graceful really can't sum up what you feel. It was just an honour to watch such a bird. A couple of days before I'd seen a Golden Eagle soaring above, but the White Tailed just seemed that much more impressive – I can still see it now!

But my star bird was a female Crossbill. Whilst I was trying to get a glimpse of a Goldcrest that I could hear, I just happened to turn around, see a bird at the top of a conifer and voila! - a 'lifer' for me and all the more special when it's a bird that's seen unexpectedly.

Anyway, over to you now. I've rambled on for paragraphs over the past few newsletters about a few experiences - some simple, some mysterious (it was a Badger that dug my lawn up!) and some obvious. I hope that you've had similar experiences. I know you have and I want to include them in this column. Just jot down a few lines and pass them to me...

Dennis Taylor

Indoor Meetings

Our forthcoming programme of indoor meetings, with guest speakers, will be:

September 10th 2008 - Birding on the North Norfolk Coast

An illustrated talk by Allan Parker

October 9th 2008 - Annual General Meeting

Our AGM and a members photographic evening and competition.

November 13th 2008 - Leicestershire Through The Seasons

By 'Photographer of the Year 2007', Danny Green

December 11th 2008 - Christmas Dinner

Provisionally booked at The Shires, Peatling Parva. Details TBA.

Dates for 2009 meetings:

January 13th, February 11th, March 11th, April 8th, May 13th, June 10th, September 9th, October 14th, November 11th, December TBA.

Doors are open from 7.00pm, meetings start at 7.30pm, finishing at approx. 9.30pm.

Please attend early if you wish to renew your membership, book trips or order seed etc..

Nest Box Scheme Update

Well, we've been keeping an eye on the nest boxes and there doesn't seem to be much activity at the moment. Sad to say, the open fronted boxes did not attract any nesting birds at all!

We have had success with the Tit & colony boxes and we know there were birds raising young in at least 2 boxes.

We will be organising a site visit to inspect the boxes and look at what's inside. We'll also give them a good clean out as well. If you'd like to go along and help, let Dennis or Paul S. know. We'll organise something around the end of September.

There will also be a photo presentation of all our efforts at the AGM.

Three Counties Weekend—May 9,10, 11th

Our second weekend away as a group started well with everyone arriving safely at Tesco, Braintree - a hot breakfast at a reasonable price is always a good start to any day! We then set off for our first reserve of the weekend, Fingringhoe Wick.

Fingringhoe Wick, Essex WT

On arrival, there were good views of Whitethroat on the hawthorn bushes and the feeders near the centre had some of the common finches and tits. Once the sun cream had been applied we split into two groups to explore the site. It wasn't long before Nightingales were heard and in a few cases glimpsed briefly. As the day went on it was clear that there were a good number of them at this site, which was the main reason for visiting here. On the estuary and marshes there was the usual collection - Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Lapwing, Shelduck and Hirundines. A Whimbrel was a nice find, only to be surpassed by 50+ flying over later in the afternoon. Jane H and a few others watched 3 Kingfishers whilst eating lunch. But for me the bird of the day was a beautiful Turtle Dove - well-spotted Stan!

Thoroughly contented with a successful first day, we retired for our first night at the hotel in Stowmarket.

RSPB Minsmere, Suffolk

Another scorching hot day and it certainly fetched the birders out in good numbers! It made some of the hides rather crowded but the birds we saw made up for this small inconvenience. I knew it was going to be good when we had excellent views of Sand Martin, Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler and Sedge Warbler before we got to the first hide. From then on there was never a dull moment and it turned out to be a very late lunch! Some in my group had good views of Bittern flying over the reeds. Other sightings from the morning included Bearded Reedling, Little Tern, Godwits, Stonechat, and Barnacle Geese (a resident population?), with Grey Plover and Knot both in full breeding plumage. The reed beds and woods in the afternoon were not quite so productive but we still added Little Egret, Tree Creeper, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Jay to name a few.

At the end of the day a couple of carloads went to Westleton Heath and picked up Woodlark, Dartford Warbler and the rarest bird of the weekend - a Spectacled Warbler. A total of 95 for the day between us all. I suspect it will be many years before we see that many in a day again (in the UK that is).

NWT Weeting Heath/RSPB Lakenheath

A third day of continuous sunshine. We arrived at Weeting Heath on the lookout for Woodlark and they duly obliged. As expected the Stone Curlew were not seen, as they were breeding almost off the reserve. Most of us did manage to pick up the Spotted Flycatchers in the woods though.

Then a short drive to RSPB Lakenheath. A nice stroll around this site produced some new birds for the weekend. There was a very short burst of song from a Grasshopper Warbler, but not seen. Garganey was seen next to the reeds. We then had quite a lot of Hobbies (20+) which is the most I have ever seen at one site. The Cuckoo which had been calling from the moment we arrived was spotted towards the top of one of the Poplar trees. And to finish the weekend off, Golden Oriole was heard calling - a beautiful sound. And Angie managed to see a male Oriole briefly!
A very nice and enjoyable weekend was had by all. Good food, good birds. good weather and good company - a very rare combination!

2008 Field Trips

Saturday 13th September - Spurn Point, Humberside.

A new destination for the group and of course the right time of year for the odd rarity to appear. There is a car park/toilets/café available. Due to this reserve being in a very exposed position this trip will be subject to change in the event of bad weather - ie wet and windy!

Cost £2.00 (+ £3.00 vehicle access charge)

Saturday 11th October - RSPB Titchwell, Norfolk - FULLY BOOKED.

Saturday 15th November - WWT London - FULLY BOOKED.

Saturday 13th December - Eyebrook Reservoir / Fineshades Woods / Red Kite Roost Walk - FULLY BOOKED.

Saturday 27th December - Watermead Country Park, Leicester.

We last did this trip Xmas 2006 and it proved to be an excellent day out. The Starlings coming into roost were fantastic. Add to that Goosander, Plovers, and Kingfisher. Hopefully they will be all awaiting us again. Facilities include toilets and hides. This is a full day. 8.30am start, meet at Watermead.

Cost £2.00

Bird Eye-dentification

An straight forward quiz! Just name the bird...

