

SLB NEWSLETTER

Issue no. 35

Aug 2014

SOUTH LEICESTER BIRDWATCHERS



I hope you are all enjoying your summer break without too many complaints about the weather apart from possibly it being too hot at times! I am sure the birds must feel the heat too. Having only a short period of time in which to find a mate, build their nests and raise young, and for those species who have more than one brood having to repeat this all over again there is no time to stop and contemplate their navels! However, they must be coping as the garden does seem to have an influx of young Blue and Great Tits, all very yellow in colour, speckled Robins, young Blackbirds and very vocal young Tawny Owls shouting to be fed. It is hard to think our summer visitors will soon be leaving us for another year. Oh well it is all part of the lifecycle of birds.



Indoor Meetings & Events

Our forthcoming programme of indoor meetings, with guest speakers is:

10th September	Paul Fuller	Strange name for a bird
8th October	AGM & Annual Photographic Competition	
12th November	Roy Croucher	Wildlife of Northern France
10th December	Ben Hall	Photography
14th January	Chris Hall	Birds of India

Meetings start at 7.30pm (doors open from 7pm) finishing at approx. 9.30pm. Please attend early if you wish to book trips, speak to the Committee or order seed.

For further information on the South Leicester Birdwatchers, please contact Graham Turner on 01455 282854 or e-mail graham.turner@btinternet.com

Trip Reports

Devon & Dartmoor Weekend – 16th – 18th May 2014 (GT)

Day 1

A group of 27 left Blaby early for our weekend away, this time to Devon. We arrived at our first site RSPB Darts Farm mid morning. The group explored the area including a gentle stroll to RSPB Bowling Green Marsh a short distance away. Alongside the river Exe estuary we soon had views of a number of Little Egret and a large flock of Black Tailed Godwits. We also had a Ruff and several Whimbrel along the way. Weather was sunny all morning and remained so for our afternoon visit to Haldon Forest Park a short coach ride away. We followed the Discovery trail through the woods where we had views of a Spotted Flycatcher, Nuthatch and several Siskin. We then walked to the raptor viewpoint where despite the lack of raptors we had views of Raven. A total of 65 species for the day.

Day 2

We enjoyed a hearty breakfast at our hotel situated beside the estuary and then we set off with the intention of visiting Prawle Point. However, the narrowness of the Devon roads and a full size coach don't mix too well and after several unsuccessful attempts to reach our intended site we decided to go straight to Slapton Leys NR instead. The sun was blazing down as we explored the site – Great Crested Grebe, Stonechat & Reed Warbler were soon added to our list. By mid afternoon we decided to head to RSPB Labrador Bay in search of Cirl Bunting, having missed an opportunity by not going to Prawle Point we were keen to make amends. Thankfully we were rewarded handsomely! Within 50 metres of the car park we saw our first Cirl Bunting, a female, on the hedgerow in front of us. We then had at least 4 singing males, seemingly competing with each other. All the group had great views of these birds both in trees and hedges with the backdrop of a clear blue sky and the open sea beyond. A memorable place and a memorable bird! A total of 62 species for the day.

Day 3

First site today was Yarnar Woods a short drive from our hotel. As we set off we soon heard and then had good views of Wood Warbler as well as Treecreeper and distant Cuckoo. A walk deeper into the woods produced the sought after Pied Flycatchers, several pairs at or near nest boxes showing well to all. Our last site for the weekend was RSPB Ham Wall. A first visit for the group but I doubt it will be our last. We had the bonus of a RSPB volunteer guide to explore the site with and we were not disappointed by the quality of birds we found. Highlights included several Hobbies in the sky together, a Nightingale which gave a brief song but surprisingly a better view, a Bittern in flight long enough for all the group to have a good view and two Great White Egrets, one a flight view the other catching eels before it dived back into the reeds. What a way to complete our weekend that had hardly had a cloud in the sky at all for the whole 3 days. A total of 68 birds for the day and 95 for the trip.

Trip Reports cont'd

RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes – 14th June 2014 (GT)

A new site for the group consisting of numerous lakes with intersecting trails and a busway through the middle! The morning walk, about 3 miles, was around Elney Lake where despite the early drizzle warblers were plentiful as were breeding Common Tern. We managed to hear Turtle Dove, Garden Warbler and Cuckoo all in a short space of time. At one of the various viewpoints we were watching a hunting Hobby and lots of Hirundines when we saw what we initially thought was a deer in the water but it turned out to be a fox swimming from an island to the shore carrying in its jaws an unfortunate young coot!

The weather picked up for the afternoon when we explored Ferry Lagoon where among other things we added Kingfisher to our list. Total 64 species on the day at a site we are likely to return to in the future.

Field Trips 2014 -15

September 13th RSPB Minsmere, Suffolk

This flagship RSPB Reserve is on the Suffolk coast. A wonderful site covering lagoons, reedbeds, woodland and shoreline. We will travel by coach and need to make an early start so that we can make the most of the day. Coach will depart from outside the British Legion Club at 6.30am. Visitor Centre. Cost £25

October 11th RSPB Middleton Lakes, Staffordshire

We made a spring visit to this relatively new RSPB reserve over 2 years ago. There should be plenty of waterfowl, waders, finches and hopefully the odd Kingfisher flashing along the River Tame. Toilets & drinks available. Cost £2.50

November 15th RSPB Dearne Valley—Old Moor, South Yorkshire

There are scrapes and reed beds at this RSPB site. We will see plenty of ducks and waders. A Bittern is always a possibility. The reserve has a good café. Cost £2.50

December 13th Rutland Water, Rutland

We often drive straight past the Oakham turn off the A47. High time the club spent a day at our nearest reserve. Even on a short mid-Winter day we will be unlucky if we don't see over 50 species of birds. Facilities (but no café). Cost £6.30 (or £2.50 if you have a Rutland Water permit. Permits will be required on the day)

All booking forms and payments to be returned to Sue Walton please.

The things you see! By Dave Judson

Like many members who went on the SLB trip to RSPB Otmoor, Trina and I used the A43 to M40 junction route. Two weeks previously we had made exactly the same journey, this time whilst on our way to Heathrow. We hadn't seen Red Kite so far this year, so thought we could use the car as a mobile hide and add a fairly spectacular species to our year list. Well, we certainly did that. This is best done only by the passenger; craning one's neck skywards whilst driving at 70 mph (-ish) is definitely not safe.

However, it wasn't just the kites we added to our list! After an hour or so we pulled into the Cherwell Valley service area. After finishing our drinks, we came back towards the car and heard quite a commotion. A nearby van had its rear doors open and there was an open cage inside. The driver was stood a few feet away and on his arm was perched a Golden Eagle! Tethered of course and a magnificent sight. There was quite a crowd so we didn't get to ask where he was taking it. He seemed to know what he was doing so fingers crossed he was properly licensed. I fear it is not quite legitimate to include on our list, but so what?

Oh, and after getting to Heathrow, we flew to Rome. One of the main attractions is the Roman Forum, ruins of the ancient city. It's deliberately left a bit scruffy and overgrown and so, in the heart of one of Europe's great cities, we saw Redstart, Black Redstart, Serin, Rock Sparrow and our star bird, a male Blue Rock Thrush – all in one afternoon! If our recent speaker on the work of LIPU did not convince you to go to Italy, hopefully this will - culture, sunshine, excellent food and drink, good birding all in one trip.



Annual Photographic Competition



We will be holding our annual photographic competition after the AGM proceedings at the October meeting. This year, there will be 2 competitions - the first category will feature our usual 'Birds' photos and the second 'British Wildlife'. The new category is to feature individual plants, insects and animals, etc. There will be a maximum entry of 2 photos per category per person. Please submit your photos by email to Dennis Taylor (dt2@sky.com) or on disc at the September meeting.

Prizes will be awarded to the winner of each category!

The next edition of the Newsletter will be issued in November 2014. If you have a story for inclusion please send copy and photos to Marion at graham.turner@btinternet.com