

SLB NEWSLETTER

Issue no. 33

Feb 2014

SOUTH LEICESTER BIRDWATCHERS



The RSPB always say that bird populations are a very good indicator of the health of the countryside so with that in mind I hope that some of you took part in the Great Garden Birdwatch last month. No need for wellies or having to dress up like the "Michelin man" to keep warm all you need is a pair of binoculars and settle down in the comfort of your own home to count the birds in your garden. Hopefully the birds were busy feeding on the your SLB seeds that had enticed them into your garden rather than the neighbours! We sat for 1 hour on Saturday am and recorded 17 species including a highest count of 8 Redwing.

Hoping that Spring is just around the corner remember to renovate and clean any bird boxes you may have around the garden and the feeders could always have a spring clean too whilst you are out there.



Indoor Meetings & Events

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

12th Mar	David Lingard	Italian birds and the work of LIPU
9th April	Ron Kilsby	RSPB films
14th May	Roger Keightley	The Gambia
11th June	Mark Hope-Urwin	Are Gardens good for Birds or Birdwatchers

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

RSPB Newport Wetlands 16th November 2013 (GT).

It was an early start from Blaby on a cold grey morning for our coach trip to South Wales - Newport Wetlands RSPB to be exact which was a new site for SLB. A penduline tit has been present near the visitor centre about a week earlier so anything could turn up on the day.

We split into two groups and set off in opposite directions to explore the site. Peregrine, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel were seen and there were a lot of Stonechat pairs in evidence.

There were the usual ducks including a lone female Scaup and waders on the estuary but as the light began to fade the highlight was the vast starling roost. Estimated numbers were 10,000+ putting on an excellent noisy display before suddenly diving into the reedbeds for the night. A spectacular end to a good days birding. 55 species on the day.

Fineshade Woods & Eyebrook Reservoir 14th December 2013 (DJ).

We made good time to be at Fineshades for an 0830 start and set off on the 3 mile circuit along the well-made trails. We made a good start with Treecreeper and several Goldcrest but much of the woodland was quiet although once we got to the one hide we had more success. There were fine close-up views of several Marsh Tits plus two Great Spotted Woodpeckers on the same tree. One other highlight was a male Bullfinch with the low sun at just the right elevation to show him to advantage. Red Kite are well established in this area and one we saw clearly had a wing tag.

We then made our way to Eyebrook and the reservoir performed well for us. Some of the party took advantage of the dry conditions to walk a complete circuit. There were rafts of the usual water species and several Goldeneye were found but we also had two real highlights. Near the dam wall a Velvet Scoter was only 20m or so offshore and we could enjoy it to the full and later we picked out a fine male Smew. A total of 55 species on the day.

RSPB's Frampton Marsh & Freiston Shore 11th January 2014 (GT).

Our first trip of 2014 saw us off to Lincolnshire to two RSPB sites, Freiston Shore & Frampton Marsh on a cold but thankfully sunny day. We started at Freiston Shore in the morning and as the light was very good we enjoyed excellent views of large numbers of Wigeon and Brent Geese and there were a lot of Redshank busily feeding plus a Turnstone with a group of Snipe. An unexpected Great Northern Diver was also found in the pool and we all had good views. In the afternoon we moved to the nearby Frampton Marsh reserve and were soon watching a small flock of Snow Bunting from the visitors centre. From the Reedbed hide we found a juvenile male Scaup which we could compare with the Tufted and other duck and amongst the Brent Geese flocks we found a Barnacle

Trip Reports cont'd

RSPB's Frampton Marsh & Freiston Shore 11th January 2014 (GT). Cont'd
Goose as well as an escapee Australian Wood Duck. There were also huge flocks of Golden Plover and Lapwing which given the continued good light conditions made for a thrilling sight as they twisted and turned above us. We then spotted a Peregrine on the ground on the saltmarsh which then set about hunting and we watched as it hotly pursued a group of Teal which just managed to evade capture. As we left the reserve a Short-Eared Owl flew down the track in front of us to round off a very good day. A total of 65 species on the day.

Field Trips—2014

February 15th RSPB Fairburn Ings, Yorkshire

More than 4 years since the group visited this excellent site comprising a group of shallow lakes in the Aire Valley with a riverbank walk. Wintering swans and plenty of waterfowl. Visitor Centre. Cost £2.50

March 15th RSPBs Otmoor and Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire

A first visit to these two RSPB reserves. Otmoor has reedbeds, scrubland and mature woodland. Bittern is a possibility. Hunting Peregrine, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl and Merlin have all been recorded here. Farmoor is a reservoir site with a trail alongside the River Thames. Plenty of waterfowl to see. No facilities at Otmoor. Toilets at Farmoor. Cost £2.50

April 12th Potteric Carr NR, South Yorkshire

When we went to this site in January 2012, all the lagoons were frozen over. It was uncomfortably cold! As Spring visitors, we could see passage waders as well as numerous waterfowl. Bittern is a strong possibility. There should also be plenty of avian Spring visitors. Toilets at Visitor Centre and Café. Cost £6.50 (or £2.50 if you are a member of LRWT. LRWT cards will be required on the day)

June 14th RSPBs Fen Drayton & Ouse Fen, Cambridgeshire

On these RSPB wetland reserves, dragonflies should ensure there are Hobbies as well as other raptors. Various warblers and Cuckoo frequent the site. No facilities. Cost £2.50

All forms and payments returned to Sue Walton please.

Whatever next ?? by Marion Turner

Following on from my Racing pigeon story in the last issue, which brought a smile to a few of you, I got thinking of other unusual birds we have had in our garden over the years. We had a strange episode at Christmas time a few years ago when during the same week that we had visits from a budgie and a Macaw, both of which we assumed had escaped from homes in the village, I was shocked when the next day I arrived home to find a full grown turkey on the front lawn feeding with our usual garden birds! Not knowing of any turkey farms in the area I shooed it into our garage to keep it safe. Having checked with our neighbour they suggested it may be from the house at the top of road. So I walked up the road to No. 1 and was pleased when they said yes it was theirs and that they had "saved" it from a Christmas market a few days earlier but hadn't realised it had left their garden. She told me the turkey would follow me anywhere for a slice of bread so off I went back home got some bread and opened up the garage and sure enough the bird followed me with an occasional peck at the bread I was holding back up the road to the safety of its home. Anyway I think it must have been very nervous in there (because of all the turkey poo on the garage floor), which was just as well otherwise I don't think Graham would have believed my tale!



Five interesting facts about wild Turkeys :- They can fly for short bursts at up to speeds of 55 mph, It is only the male that makes the "gobble" sound, They sleep in groups in trees to avoid predators, By rotating their heads the turkey has a 360° field of vision known as periscopic vision. Turkeys swallow stones which stay in their gizzards to aid food digestion.

NOTICES

Devon & Dartmoor Weekend

Please note the balance of payment for the weekend trip is due at the April indoor meeting or before should you wish. Please ensure payment is made to Sue Walton. Any queries please contact Sue.

SLB 24hr Bird Race - 9/10th May 2014

For further information on how to take part please speak to Jools & pay entry fee of £2.50 p/person to Sue Walton in advance of the date. Registration for the event will take place at 6pm on 9th May in the Parish Centre Car Park then it is up to each team to decide whereabouts they wish to visit within Leicestershire & Rutland. Good luck!

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