



Well here we are. It is Spring again and even the weather is Spring-like for once! Summer visitors are turning up in good numbers. We are trying to keep abreast of what's going on in the garden as well. We know we have already had Blackbird, Song Thrush and Robin nesting with evidence of some of our nest boxes being used by Great Tit and Blue Tit. Frog spawn and newts in the pond and lots of butterflies. It can all seem a bit manic at this time of year with everything happening all at once. However, you must remember to take time to enjoy this period and the birds, frogs, wildlife, butterflies etc. that are visiting your gardens as it never seems to last for very long. (Photo: Blackcap by G Turner)



Indoor Meetings & Events

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

11th June	Mark Hope-Urwin	Are Gardens good for Birds or Birdwatchers
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

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 Fairburn Ings, Yorkshire – 15th February 2014 (GT)

High winds and lashing rain overnight didn't bode well for our trip to Yorkshire but we arrived in the dry and miraculously it remained so virtually all day. The wind was still strong but the water birds didn't seem to mind and the small birds found shelter in the trees and bushes near to the visitor centre. Tree Sparrow, Willow Tit & Bullfinch were highlights near the centre and soon after we found a large flock of Goldfinch in the Alders and in with them were some Redpoll as well as a couple of Siskin. Several Sparrowhawks were active around the reserve and we also saw a couple of Buzzard and a Peregrine. The various pools produced a good number of both male & female Goosanders, Goldeneye, Great Crested Grebe and a Kingfisher. An excellent day from a doubtful beginning produced 61 species on the day.

RSPB's Otmoor & Farmoor – 15th March 2014 (GT)

A trip to Oxfordshire today to two new sites for SLB, starting with RSPB Otmoor. Not the easiest of places to find as signage is a bit lacking but we were pleased we visited as the day turned out to be dry sunny and for the time of year, warm. As we walked the trails overlooking the large areas of flat grassland and various pools and dykes we soon saw a large flock of Golden Plover on the ground with a number of Lapwing. Buzzards and Red Kite were plentiful. There were assorted ducks including Pintail to be seen and a singing Chiffchaff was also found. In the afternoon we drove the short distance to the opposite side of Oxford to Farmoor Reservoir, a Thames Water site known for its various sailing and leisure activities. As we walked over the causeway which splits the reservoir into two we scanned the Black Headed Gulls and found a Mediterranean Gull in summer plumage. On the far side of the reservoir the river Thames meanders along and we explored the river bank walk and saw a Kingfisher fly by. Total of 59 species on the day.

Potteric Carr – 12th April 2014 (GT)

Over two years since our last visit to this Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve and we were hoping for a mixture of summer migrants and late staying winter visitors. It was mostly overcast and a bit of a chilly wind was blowing so summer seemed a little far away still but Swallows and Martins swooping low over the water was a welcome sight and the first of the year for some of us. We found Little Egret, Snipe and Avocet around the various marshes and Marsh Tit, Treecreeper and Nuthatch in the woods. There did seem to be an abundance of Blackcap with pairs very evident as well as singing Willow Warbler & numerous Chiffchaff. Spring was here! A number of the group also had a fabulous view of a Bittern approx 100m out from the hide. It flew to the right, was buzzed by gulls and flew left, right in front of them before dropping into reeds. A very respectable total of 66 species for 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

July/August No meetings/trips

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.

Some good news for farmland bird species as this year saw the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) hold the first Big Farmland Bird Count. This important initiative offers a simple means of recording the effect of any conservation schemes currently being initiated by farmers & gamekeepers on their land—such as supplementary feeding or growing wild bird seed crops and game cover crops. It is also a useful way of gaining insight on how well the birds are faring.



Despite it being the wettest winter since records began in 1910 more than 500 farmers, managing nearly half-million acres of UK farmland, rose to the challenge of counting their farmland birds during the second week in February. Farmers who participated in the count represented every county in England, with counts also being returned for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In total, 116 different species were recorded and some of the UK's most rapidly declining species were spotted across the country in the GWCT's farmer led survey. These included Fieldfare, Grey Partridge, House Sparrow, Lapwing, Linnet, Redwing, Skylark, Song Thrush, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer.

In addition to these, there were also sightings of Twite, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Bittern, Waxwing and Great Grey Shrike. It was encouraging to note that six of the red-listed species, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Dunnock, Tree Sparrow, Starling and Lapwing appeared in the top 25 of birds counted. Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch and Pheasants emerged as the birds seen on most farms.

A wide range of farming enterprises took part with the average farm size 924 acres and nearly 80% of those taking part were in Environmental Stewardship. Over-winter feeding, either by providing supplementary food in feeders or through planting wild bird seed mixes proved to be fruitful counting sites for many farmers and enabled them to record impressive numbers of Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting as well as many other seed eating birds.

Within the survey 60% of farmers were providing food specifically for their birds and this is one of the conservation measures which is helping the birds thrive and stay alive on these farms over winter. Full details and results can be found at - www.gwct.org.uk/farming/big-farmland-bird-count/2014-bfbc-results/

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