



Where has the time gone this year? This is our newsletter where we wish you a Merry Xmas! With that in mind, have you booked to come along to our festive meal in December? Hopefully, you picked up a booking form at the AGM, or you will receive one in the post.

As we've mentioned, we would like to announce your sightings of birds in the local area or on 'your patch'. Please jot them down (what, where and when) and hand them to a committee member before we start a meeting.

If you believe the newspapers, we are in for a cold winter (the Bewick Swans are 2 weeks early!), so don't forget to keep your garden bird feeders topped up and put out fresh water - you'll be rewarded.

### Indoor Meetings

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

#### **November 14th 2007 - "British Birds of Prey"**

An audio visual show by Nick Williams

#### **December 12th 2007 - Christmas Dinner**

To be held at The Manor, Glen Parva. Booking forms available.

#### **January 9th 2008 - "Little Brown Jobs"**

A talk by Jeff Baker of the BTO

#### **February 13th 2008 - "Birdlife on Britain's Smaller Islands"**

An illustrated talk by Christopher Hall

#### **March 12th 2008 - Waders**

An illustrated talk by Barry Raine.

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..

Thank you to everyone for attending the AGM. The committee were getting worried that they may not have required number of people to change the Constitution! You'll soon receive a revised copy for your reference.

To briefly recap the main points of the AGM:

80% of the membership attended and voted to amend the Constitution as proposed, with the addition that the committee could co-opt further serving officers as required.

Financially, we are in a very sound position after our first year. This has been mainly due to us generating revenue through our trips – we did more than originally planned and they were more successful than we thought they'd be! Our final yearly membership was also 50% more than forecast. There was a significant contribution from the commission generated from our seed sales. A separate investment account is to be set up to earn interest on available funds. A copy of the year's accounts was given out.

Your elected committee officers are:

Paul Inchley (Chairman)

John Palmer (Treasurer/Membership Secretary)

Paul Seaton, Dennis Taylor, Graham Turner and Rona McGreevy.

Thanks were given to retiring committee member Martin Williamson, for his work over the past year. Martin oversaw speaker booking and seed sales.

Under any other business, we asked for ideas for projects where we could direct some of our surplus funds. A nest box scheme seemed to hold popular views with several people. It is our intention over the next few months to consider various plans and instigate some of our potential plans! Please feel free to discuss any other ideas you have with committee members.

Concluding the meeting, we then took a coffee break and took part in a 'name the bird' and a picture quiz – thanks to John Palmer for using a selection of his own photos.

## Random Jottings...

As you've just read, we have had a very successful AGM and after our first year, I think it can be said once again that it's been extremely rewarding. There's a lot to look forward to in the next 12 months as well.

When the committee asked if I would do a 'review of the year' for the meeting, I thought it would be a bit of fun to put some numbers together. But did anyone expect the results? Here's just a brief recap.

There were 13 field trips, one weekend, three evening walks, an Osprey Cruise and a bird ringing demonstration. We saw a total of 144 different species on those trips and travelled around 1850 miles to see them all.

Ten indoor meetings with six different speakers – and you drunk over 700 cups of tea and coffee (well done to Mez and the helpers!)

And you bought around two tonnes of seed – there's a lot of happy (and fat) birds out there!

So, what else has been happening? Have you had any good sightings of migrating birds? There's the obvious signs where we start to see Fieldfare and Redwing arrive and the influx of geese and ducks, but have you noticed anything on your doorstep?

As I threw back the bedroom curtains the other morning, there were eight Blackbirds in the garden. If I've seen 2 in the past few weeks, I've been lucky. So are these my winter visitors? Now I have 15 collared doves – there's recently been 8 or 9 feeding, but 2 of them are distinctive in their plumage and I've not seen them. It been quiet with only a handful of Starlings and now there's around 100 to be seen (my record is 450+ in the garden at one time!)

So you may think you've got the same old birds all year round, but have a closer look, you may be able to tell that you've actually got winter visitors.

*Dennis Taylor*

The next issue of the newsletter will appear in February

## An Hour at Clifford Hill Gravel Pits Northampton

Not the most picturesque place in the county of Northants and certainly not the tidiest (litter is a problem), but the birds seem to like it. Clifford Hill is situated about two miles from the city centre and is easy to find just off the A45 - enter via the Billings Road. It's a site probably at its best during the winter months, although a visit at anytime of year would hopefully produce some good birds.

You will need to cross over the River Nene via a lock (not as difficult as it sounds). Then there is a bridge leading down to the main lake on the reserve. I always go round the lake in an anti-clockwise direction, sticking to the raised bank which reduces the risk of putting the birds up. It's worth checking the Nene - I have seen Kingfisher here on several occasions, flying low over the water. Lapwing and Golden Plover are regulars during the winter months and normally in good numbers. There are also good counts of Greylag and Canada Geese, along with Mute Swans. Ducks are well represented with Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Mallard, Pochard, Gadwall and Goldeneye in smaller numbers.

December and January will see Goosander arrive, with Clifford Hill being a reliable site most years for this sawbill and our other regular inland sawbill, the Smew.

This is a good site for passage waders and as I write (19/9/07) a Pectoral Sandpiper has put in an appearance at the pits. There is always the odd wader about but nothing in any great numbers. But on the gull front there are always plenty mainly Black Headed with some Common and Lesser Black Backs, and of course Cormorants are resident all year round.

A site well worth a visit if you have an hour or two to spare and only 30 miles from Blaby

*Paul Seaton*

*Please support our seed sales! 2 & 5kg bags will be available at meetings for you to buy on the night.*

## Field Trips - Winter Program

**17th November 2007 - WWT Martin Mere, Lancashire**

Please note that the bus leaves at 7.00am prompt! Fully booked.

**15th December 2007 - Pitsford Reservoir, Brixworth, Northamptonshire**

Cost is £3.00 per person includes permit for the day. 7.30am start.

**27th December 2007 - Hollowell and Ravensthorpe Reservoirs, Northants**

Cost is £2.00 per person includes permit for the day. 8.30am start.

Places on both trips still available.

All trips leave from Blaby Scout Centre, at the times shown.

**Three Counties Weekend Away 2008**

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May: we will depart around 7.00/7.15am and head off to the county of Essex (there will be a breakfast stop, this will be arranged nearer the time). Our first port of call will be Fingringhoe Wick - an Essex Wildlife Trust Reserve which can host up to 40 singing Nightingales. If time allows we will also visit Abbots Hall Farm - another Essex Wildlife Trust Reserve - just 8 miles away. We then head to The Cedars Hotel, Stowmarket, Suffolk. This will be our base for the weekend.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May: after breakfast we head for RSPB Minsmere, Suffolk - the flagship reserve of the RSPB. An excellent site with varied habitat. In particular, we will be on the lookout for Bittern and Dartford Warblers, but anything could turn up at this reserve. It is the intention to spend the whole day here.

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May: our first stop of the day will be the Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve at Weeting Heath, probably the best site in England for Stone Curlew and a chance of Woodlark. We then move on to RSPB Lakenheath with their brand new visitor centre recently opened. Possible Golden Oriole here, although they are late arriving migrants, so fingers crossed. And, of course, Common Crane has bred successfully for the first time at Lakenheath this year.

Booking forms available (deposit of £55.00 required), but places are filling up fast! See Paul Seaton for more details.

## 2008 Field Trips

**12<sup>th</sup> January 2008 - Far Ings, Barton, Lincolnshire**

A National Nature Reserve situated on the banks of the River Humber, with varied habitat of scrapes, open water, meadow and scrub. Facilities include seven hides, a brand new visitor centre and toilets on site.

Cost £3.00, which includes permit for the day

**15<sup>th</sup> February 2008 - Potteric Carr, Doncaster, South Yorkshire**

A Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve situated just South East of Doncaster. The terrain includes marsh and areas of open water. This is one of the best sites in England to try to find the elusive Bittern and February is probably the best month for sightings. Facilities here include 12 hides, a visitor centre, café and toilets.

Cost £3.50, which includes permit for the day.

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2008 - Snettisham, Norfolk**

A visit to this reserve is usually pretty good and even better on the day of a high tide and today is that day. There is a high tide due around midday, which hopefully should force thousands of waders close in to shore for us to view. Facilities here include four hides. There are no toilets but we can normally use those on the local caravan site.

Cost £2.00 for the day assuming you are an RSPB member

**12<sup>th</sup> April 2008 - The Christopher Cadbury Reserve, Upton Warren, Worcestershire**

A Worcestershire Wildlife Trust reserve, regarded as the best bird watching site in the county. Varied habitats, there are seven hides on site but no visitor centre or toilets. This is a small reserve, so if time allows, we may also visit the Wyre Forest nr Bewdley (this may incur a small additional cost - payable on the day).

Cost £3.00 including permit for the day.

**17th May 2008 - Paxton Pits, Little Paxton, Huntingdonshire**

Lakes, meadow, grassland, scrub and woodland. Facilities include hides, toilets and visitor centre. One of the best places in the country to hear and see Nightingale.

Cost £4.50 including permit for the day

**14<sup>th</sup> June 2008 - RSPB Ouse Washes, Manea, Cambridgeshire**

An area of lowland wet grassland and open water. There are up to 70 species of bird that breed on the reserve. There are ten hides on site, a visitor centre (which is unmanned?) and toilet facilities are available.

Cost £2.00 for the day, assuming you are an RSPB member.

### Find The Birds

As editor, I often get odd pieces of mail. Here's one of them!...

Dear Ed,

Starting early we took it easily and at the Bell Inn, Eton, we picked up Jack Dawling and Ernest. One chatted a lot, so time passed swiftly, but rain on the motorway was a grave nuisance. After lunch I decided to hand over the wheel and steal an hour's sleep, before reaching Ullswater at midnight in gale force winds.

Next morning on to Scotland, where our hotel is in as fine a glen as I have seen, with rushing stream at the bottom of a steep lovers' lane. It is all that is now left of an old mill, but it is now renovated, and very smart inside – no other one for miles around! Eric rows, though awkwardly leaving Anne to doze in the stern. Excellent food – no good for taking off inches from the waist or keeping wide awake. Nothing is wanting, except perhaps regular kilts and pipers.

Love from all,

Ardelle.

*P.S. I haven't forgotten that it is a bird watching holiday. So far we have spotted 30 different kinds and I have mentioned them all in this letter. You will, for instance, find 'redstart' in the first three words if you look hard enough. Since we have spotted 30, see how many you can spot.*

Last Newsletter's picture quiz answers : a baby Robin and a Corn Bunting.

### 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!

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



Short Eared Owl

Photo :  
Dennis Taylor

### Field Trip Sightings

A quick recap on the highlights of our recent field trips.

11th August - Osprey Cruise - Rutland Water

A lovely day out with excellent evening weather. Osprey sightings were getting desperate until one was spotted on the horizon by Tim Makrill with 5 minutes to go. It flew directly overhead giving a wonderful view never to be forgotten.

15th September - Blithfield Reservoir (50 species)

Again, a fine day with plenty of sunshine. Goosander, Ruddy Duck, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, 25+ Snipe, Kingfisher and Chiffchaff.

13th October - Cley (85 species)

Who could have asked for a better day? Superb weather and lots of birds. Here's some of the 'ticks': Red Throated Diver, Pink Footed, Barnacle & Brent Geese (as well as a Bar Headed!), Pintail, Marsh Harrier, Ruff, Black & Bar Tailed Godwits, Spotted Redshank, Sandwich Tern, Razorbill, Guillemot, Kingfisher, Stonechat, Fieldfare, Cetti's Warbler and Bearded Tit.

If you would like a full tick list for any of our past field trips, please let Dennis know which you require. A master list of each trip is available for viewing at each meeting.