

SLB NEWSLETTER

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SOUTH LEICESTER BIRDWATCHERS



Although you may still be enjoying good views of our overwintering visitors who are yet to leave for their breeding grounds, Spring is fast approaching (well hopefully it is!), when we can all look forward to hearing, and seeing, the return of our Summer visitors.

Now is a good time to start thinking about cleaning out your nest boxes and completing any necessary repairs before the birds return to your "des res". If the box was successfully occupied last year then all well and good but if not why don't you consider re-siting it.

Remember you can always have a variety of "homes" on offer with open fronted boxes for Robins or Spotted Flycatcher, tit boxes with different sized holes for Blue and Great Tits, special under eaves boxes for the likes of House Martin and for the more ambitious, owl or kestrel boxes.



Indoor Meetings & Events

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

13th March	Tim Mackrill	The Osprey Project
10th April	Danny Green	Wildlife of the East Midlands
8th May	Gary Prescott	Biking Birder
12th June	David Tideswell	Garden Birds of Spring & Summer

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.

Trip Reports

RSPB Ouse Washes Saturday 17th November 2012 (GT)

The water levels were high at the Ouse Washes RSPB reserve and with a lot of overnight rain expectations for the day's birding weren't high. However we were lucky to enjoy a rain free visit and even had some afternoon sun.

Highlights were a number of views of Whooper Swan including in flight, a good selection of duck including two fine male Pintail, large flocks of Golden Plover and Lapwing and at least two Barn Owl flying over the road shortly after we left the reserve for our journey home. A total of 61 "hard worked for" species on the day.

Summer Leys Saturday 15th December 2012 (SW)

A return visit to Summer Leys, a place we last visited just as the club was starting over 6 years ago! It was a lovely winter's day as we set off in one group of 17, for the 2 mile walk around the reserve. Stopping at the first hide we had good views of all the usual ducks, including some good views of male and female Goldeneye. On the path towards the feeding station it was good to see lots of small birds, including Siskin, Redpoll, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting. Further round the trail a few were lucky enough to see a Grey Wagtail and we all had lovely views of Redwing and Fieldfare. After lunch eaten at the picnic benches in the sunshine we left for a short visit to Pitsford Reservoir. On arriving we found you now have to pay to park by the causeway! We set off into the nature reserve where some of us had lovely views of a Green Woodpecker feeding on the ground with lots more Fieldfare and Redwing. After speaking to another visitor who told us about a Great White Egret and several Little Egrets in a flooded field behind the reservoir we set off to find them! Luckily Paul spotted them and we all had good views of the Great White Egret, Little Egrets and at least 10 Herons all together! A great end to the day and a total of 56 species.

Clumber Park Saturday 12th January 2013 (GT)

We arrived early at Clumber Park and were rewarded with Redpoll in the car park and reports that our target bird, Hawfinch, were showing well near the chapel. With a little patience most of the group had reasonable views in good light of up to 3 individuals. A walk along the lake side and back through the woods produced a good number of water fowl and Nuthatch, Treecreeper and Marsh Tit. After lunch we went back to view the lake from the road bridge in the park and soon found at least 4 Mandarin, a couple of Goosanders and also 2 Grey Wagtail flew over. 49 species on the day.

Field Trips—2013

February 13th **Holkham**

It's been a while since the club last visited Holkham and February is a good time to see the large flocks of geese and also shore birds, waders and ducks - there are two hides and a large area of beach! Cost £2.50. In addition there is a parking charge at Lady Ann's Drive.

March 16th **RSPB Leighton Moss**

An RSPB site the club has not visited before and although this will be a long day it is a lovely reserve to visit, there are various trails and lots of hides, including two overlooking Morecambe Bay. Full facilities include a visitor centre and a very good cafe. This trip will be by coach. Cost £23.50.

April 13th **Gibraltar Point**

A site the club have visited before, but not in the spring. There could be a good chance of early migrants as well as other species on the pools, scrapes and sea. There are toilet facilities and visitor centre with a cafe. Permit included in the price, Cost £5.00.

May 11th **Paxton Pits**

A return visit to this Cambridgeshire reserve and a good time to see and hear Nightingales. There is a small visitor centre with toilet facilities as well as various trails and hides. Entry fee and free hot drink included in the price. Cost £5.00.

June 15th **RSPB Lakenheath Fen**

A site we have visited before as part of a weekend trip, but always worth another day out! There is a chance of seeing Golden Oriole, Common Crane and many other species. Full facilities with visitor centre and cafe. Cost £2.50.

All forms and payments returned to John Palmer please.

Wanted: Your Group Needs You!

As you may have heard some of the existing Committee will be standing down at this years AGM thereby creating some vacant positions. If you are interested in helping with the running of the club and maintaining the existing level of programmes and trips then please speak to an existing Committee member as soon as possible.

Feed the birds By Graham & Marion Turner

We all enjoy birds and bird watching but during the winter months birds can struggle to find enough food to survive. In particularly bad spells of weather survival through to the next day may be in doubt for some individuals, The recent snowy weather and subsequent frozen ground has made it particularly tough on ground feeding birds but those that favour feeding on berries also need a little help.



The importance of feeding a range of different types of food has been amply illustrated recently in our garden with both Redwing & Nuthatch being regular visitors - most unusual for us during the milder winters of recent years. Three Redwing and a Song Thrush were seen picking through the snow and leaf litter trying to find a morsel and were also busily pecking away at the apples we had provided. The Nuthatch fed on mixed seed on the large feeding table being joined by as many as four Robins at any one time. The regular flocks of Greenfinch & Goldfinch enjoyed the black sunflower seed from the feeders whilst the Chaffinch, Dunnock and feral doves soon "hoovered" up the spillage. Another infrequent visitor we were able to enjoy was the Reed Bunting, with both male & female seen at different times - again enjoying the bird table offerings. Also having a separate feeder for peanuts attracted a variety of tits with Great, Blue, Coal and Long Tailed all being seen.

Some important things to remember:- try to keep the food supply topped-up but not to the extent where food is going mouldy on the tables and during the harshest weather feeding twice a day, first thing in the morning and then again during the early afternoon: a supply of fresh water should be available not only for drinking but also bathing and making sure feeders remain clean to prevent the spread of disease when larger numbers of birds congregate together.

Keep feeding beyond the winter months and the birds will reward you by returning again and again to an area they know will be worth the effort for them and best of all you will be able to watch them from the comfort of your own home.