

SLB NEWSLETTER

Issue no. 22

May 2011

SOUTH LEICESTER BIRDWATCHERS



The recent weather makes you feel Summer is well and truly on its way. Let's hope you are all managing to see or hear your fair share of summer visitors.

As the bird numbers are increasing every day it won't be long before everything is here and busy breeding.

Remember May is the best time to hear the dawn chorus even if you only do it from the comfort of your bed it is a great experience so set those alarm clocks and happy listening!

Hopefully some of you will already have seen a handsome Wheatear (right)



Indoor Meetings

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

- May 11th** - **Tony Bates** - Folklore of Woodland & Hedgerows
June 8th - **Steve Cale** - The Art of Birds
September 14th - **Allan Parker** - Potteric Carr Nature Reserve
October 12th - **AGM** & Annual photographic competition
November 9th - **Roy Croucher** - Managing the Countryside for Wildlife
December 14th - **David Garner**

Meetings start at 7.30pm (doors open from 7.00), finishing at approx. 9.30pm.

Please attend early if you wish to book trips, speak to the committee or order seed.

If you would like to help or can contribute in any way towards the compilation of the newsletter, please contact Marion on 01455 282854, or e-mail graham.turner@btinternet.com

For further information on the South Leicester Birdwatchers, please contact Paul Seaton on 07969 387914, or e-mail paul.lseaton@gmail.com

Trip Reports

Carsington Water, Derbyshire - 12th February 2011 (PS)

The weather stayed fine for us again. A first visit to this site for the group. The day started well with Tree Sparrow and Barnacle Geese near the Visitor Centre. The hide down at the Education Centre proved to be very cosy and quite productive with Dunlin, Redshank, Lapwing, among the usual array of ducks was one lonely Ruddy Duck. John P and I had a very brief glimpse of a Great Northern Diver. It seemed for most of the day that the Diver would continue to elude us but then for those who braved the long walk to the dam end of the reservoir there was a very good close up view.

A good day out with a list of 50 species

Snettisham Coastal Park & Ken Hill Wood, Norfolk - 12th March 2011 (GT)

Snettisham Coastal Park was the group's first East Coast trip of the year and it turned out to be a good day for geese. As we stood looking out to sea across the Wash several distance skeins of geese were spotted and then more and more skeins heading our way. As we walked along the coast wave after wave of Pink Footed geese flew overhead, wiffing to lose height and then dropping into the fields just inland of us. Totals must have been in the thousands. A lone Whooper Swan was also with the Pink Feet. Several Buzzards and a pair of Marsh Harriers were soaring above the nearby woods and a single Tree Sparrow on bushes by the sea seemed a little out of place.

After lunch on the beach - yes the weather was good, we drove the short distance to Ken Hill Wood for an afternoon walk. Splitting into two groups we managed to have excellent views of Nuthatch (including one excavating a nest hole) and Treecreeper, brief views of a flock of Siskin and also two Chiffchaff that were feeding so busily they may well have just arrived from warmer climes.

A total of 65 species on a day that will remain long in the memory for "the geese".

Seaforth Nature Reserve, Liverpool Docks & Hilbre Island, Dee Estuary - 16th April 2011 (PS)

An early start for our day out to Liverpool to two of England's unique nature reserves. Having avoided being detained by the police we entered Liverpool docks and made our way to the Seaforth reserve, a very small oasis in the middle of a concrete jungle. There were hundreds of Redshank and Oystercatchers present along with Dunlin and Black Tailed Godwits in summer breeding plumage. We had good views of Grey Wagtail, Common Sandpiper and Goldeneye.

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Summer visitors included Wheatear, Sandwich and Common Terns. A really good selection of birds from a gem of a reserve.

After lunch we all set off for Hilbre Island, a two mile walk in to the Dee Estuary, a little wet on the feet for those with the wrong footwear! We added Great Black Backed Gull, Meadow Pipit, Curlew and Turnstones. Good views of the Common and Grey Seal colony were had on the way to and from the island. A nice sunny day, a new experience for most and an ice cream to finish the day off.

Field Trips

May 20th/21st/22nd Dorset Weekend (fully booked)

June 11th Redgrave and Lopham Fen, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Another new site for us to explore as we head in to The Fens. Over 50 bird species breed here including Grasshopper Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Turtle Dove and Hobby. There is a visitor centre and a good number of trails to follow around the site. Cost £4.00

September 17th RSPB Titchwell, Norfolk

It's been a long while and there have been major changes. So worth a look. Cost £2.00 per person assuming you are an RSPB member

October 22nd Boston, Lincolnshire. All aboard the "Boston Belle"

We depart Boston harbour at 12.30 for a 3 to 4 hour cruise around The Wash on an official South Lincs RSPB organised trip. Taking in Frieston and Frampton reserves but viewed from the water.

Cost will be £16.00 each assuming you are an RSPB member. **Note this is not our normal Saturday.**

November 12th WWT Slimbridge, Gloucestershire.

A late autumn visit for wintering geese and swans. Heated hides and food should keep us busy for the day.

Cost will be £11.00 each

December 17th Ladywalk Reservoir and Whitacre Heath Nature West Midlands

A local trip to the Tame Valley area. We will visit the West Midland Bird Club site of Ladywalk Reservoir with Whitacre Heath nature reserve after lunch.

Cost will be £4.00 per person.

Please refer to the booking forms for full details of the trips. Also note that all bookings and payments should now go to John Palmer.

A few days in Norfolk by John & Sue Palmer

For Sue and myself March is the start of the caravanning season so why not start with a trip to Norfolk birding and chilling out. We use a site between Fakenham and Wells and we knew the signs were good when a Redshank flew over before we had the kettle on.

The first visit was to Sculthorpe. On the first feeder were various Tits and Finches including Marsh Tit and Long-tailed. From the first hide we had great views of four male Brambling and surprisingly two SLB Jane's, who were wardening at Wells YHA and making the most of it! The birding was disturbed by two rapid fly-throughs by the resident Sparrowhawk. Onto the second hide for more, or possibly the same, Bramblings and good views of a Water Rail. Later we had excellent views of Common, Lesser Redpoll and Siskin, and at one stage they were all on the same feeder. Brilliant! So we can hardly complain that we missed a Goshawk which is resident in the area and was noted on the sightings board. A great little reserve at this time of year.

The next afternoon we arrived at Cley. It was quiet but we found a Mediterranean Gull in with the Black-headed. There were a few Pink Footed Geese and still large flocks of Brent Geese and a few early Avocets which were great to see.

We were apprehensive about Titchwell, it has changed a lot and the new banks will need time to mature. However the new hide is excellent and we may have to hold a raffle for the swivel chairs on our Autumn visit! A fabulous selection of birds including Eider, Common Scoter and Red Breasted Merganser out at sea, with Knot, Grey Plover, Turnstone and Sanderling on the beach. The reserve had Little Stint, Water Pipit, Spotted Redshank and a lovely flock of Twite, plus Bearded Reedlings. So Titchwell remains one of our best reserves.

Going back to the caravan on the last afternoon a bird was flying down the lane ahead of us so I slowed down so as not to disturb it. It dropped onto the verge and watched us as I drove past - a fabulous close-up view of a Barn Owl!

It is the unexpected, and the sheer variety of birds that makes Norfolk so great. A great trip to our favourite area and 79 ticks, no wonder we keep going back. Why not try it in March sometime?

Please support our seed sales! 2 & 5kg bags will be available at meetings for you to buy on the night. You can also buy seed in advance for collection at the following meeting (ask for an order form).

The next issue of the newsletter will be issued in August 2011