

SLB NEWSLETTER

Issue no. 26

May 2012

SOUTH LEICESTER BIRDWATCHERS



Well the mornings are getting lighter so Summer must be on it's way although the weather may not have been informed of this fact. By the time you are reading this Newsletter I hope you all have had the opportunity to see or hear a good number of our summer visitors, such as the Yellow Wagtail pictured. (Photo by Graham Turner)



Sometimes when I think about the wonders of birds it amazes me. How do Blue Tits know when to lay in time for the emergence of the green caterpillars? How do some birds like Swallows travel such vast distances without a map? How do young Cuckoos find their way to their overwintering quarters when they don't travel with their parents? As I've said before aren't birds brilliant, get out there and enjoy them!

AGM—Please note the date of the AGM has been changed to the 17th October (3rd Wednesday of the month)

Indoor Meetings

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

June 13th	-	Carl Baggott	-	Spitsbergen
Sept 12th	-	John Jones	-	Skokholme Island
Oct 17th	-	AGM		
Nov 14th	-	Nick Martin	-	Secret Wildlife of the Cairngorms
Dec 12th	-	Sophie Barker	-	The work of N.O.A. and migration

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

Potteric Carr, South Yorks, Saturday 11th February 2012 (GT)

A return visit for the group to this Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve - but with snow on the ground, temperatures below freezing and virtually all open water frozen the likelihood of good numbers of species was not high. The site had been extended since our last visit and we explored all areas during the day. We did however manage to replace quantity with some quality birds as we soon found Siskin feeding on the Alder trees, two Water Rail in one of the few small streams that wasn't frozen as well as an obliging Kingfisher on the main drain. A total of 54 "hard worked for" species for the group on a day when the temperature remained below freezing all day long.

RSPB Middleton Lakes & Kingsbury Water Park, Sat 17th March (PS)

A short trip today and as we arrived at Middleton Lakes the early morning rain had vanished. This is now the nearest RSPB site for us to visit and it appears to have plenty of potential. A small Heronry and a very noisy Rookery and birdfeeders full of activity got the day off to a good start. Pick of the birds on the feeders being Reed Bunting, Coal Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker. On the pools most of the common waterfowl were present. A Kingfisher and a Goosander were seen in flight. Lapwing, Redshank and Oystercatchers the only waders on the reserve. A Yellowhammer was spotted just at the end of our walk around Middleton. At Kingsbury we had good views of Snipe, Goosander, Little Egret, Goldeneye and a perched Kingfisher. Two good sites made for a nice day out and a very respectable 62 species for the day.

College Lake, Herts, Saturday 14th April (GT)

Once a chalk quarry, College Lake was opened to the public only 2 years ago and this was our first visit to the site. A fine day, if a bit of a chilly start, but we were soon seeing some early migrants, including Little Ringed Plover & Swallows and with Ringed Plover seemingly intent on chasing the LRP away we had a good opportunity to identify one from the other. A 2 mile circular walk took in a number of habitats and we managed to add a couple of Yellow Wagtail, a good number of House Martins overhead as

Trip Reports cont'd

College Lake, Herts, Saturday 14th April 2012 cont'd

well as 5 Wheatear together in a field. An early Sedge Warbler was singing from a reed bed and Willow Warblers and Blackcap were abundant. As we were returning to the visitor centre the calls from a couple of Gulls overhead alerted us to a bird of prey, which we had expected to be Red Kite or Buzzard that we had been seeing regularly during the day, but it was an Osprey looking to try its hand at fishing.

Unfortunately it didn't get the chance to but it was a nice end to our visit here.

We decided to call in at nearby Ivinghoe Beacon on the way back and we were rewarded with up to 10 Ring Ouzel on the hill's far slope. An excellent end to the day which produced 64 species and a good number of spring migrants.

Field Trips

May 5th Evening "Nightingale Walk" at Hambleton Wood

A guided evening walk by a member of staff from Rutland Water. This is an excellent site for Nightingales and for Bluebells too! Walk will start at 6.45pm.

Cost £7.50 per person. **NOTE: not our usual Saturday**

June 16th Wicken Fen, Cambs

After a short introductory talk we will spend the day exploring this extensive site. Facilities including a Cafe. Cost £7.75 per person (£2.50 for National Trust members)

September 15th RSPB Frampton Marsh

October 13th Brockholes, Lancs (by coach)

November 17th RSPB Ouse Washes

December 15th Summer Leys Nature Reserve

Please refer to the enclosed booking form for full details of the Autumn trips. Also note that all bookings and payments go to John Palmer.

30 minutes at Eyebrook Reservoir by Graham & Marion Turner

On our April trip to collect the group's seed order from Rectory Farm, even though the weather wasn't too great, we decided we had time to pay a short visit to Eyebrook Reservoir. This is only a couple of minutes drive from the farm and as we neared the brow of a hill and even before we had got within sight of the reservoir we saw two large birds over the road. Having pulled over quickly to get a better view we saw a Short Eared Owl which appeared to be defending its territory against a Red Kite.

A little further on by the edge of the water (which seemed very low for the time of year), we saw two Yellow Wagtails, one a brightly coloured male, both had probably arrived within the past few days. Despite the low water level the reservoir still held good numbers of duck, swan and gulls as well as a lone Redshank. Whilst scanning the shoreline from the comfort of our car (a very convenient hide) we also spotted both Pied and White Wagtail nearby.

A few seconds later we heard the chattering of Hirundines overhead and we saw four Swallows, all with lovely long tail streamers, busily feeding over the reservoir and hedgerows.

We then drove the short distance to the bridge over the reservoir inlet and heard our first Willow Warbler of the year singing in a small plantation seemingly competing with several Chiffchaff.

Not a bad count for half an hours opportunistic visit. This just goes to show that "birding" is often about timing not necessarily about having a wealth of knowledge or the best equipment. Why not get outdoors yourselves, maybe to your local patch, to see what you can spot and then think about sharing a report for the next Newsletter.

Should you wish to receive the Newsletter by email please send your request to Marion on graham.turner@btinternet.com

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).

All seed is of a high quality and supplied by Rectory Farm (who adhere to the principles of farming in an environmentally responsible way). So choose SLB as your seed supplier and you will be also supporting your own bird club.

The next edition of the newsletter will be issued in August 2012