

SLB NEWSLETTER

Issue no. 36
Nov 2014

SOUTH LEICESTER BIRDWATCHERS



Here we are beginning Year 9 of SLB, the Committee (see insert for specific roles) would like to thank all those who have renewed their membership, as it goes without saying without members there is no club! We will once again endeavour to arrange a variety of speakers, field trips, organise annual events including the Bird Race, Photographic Competitions and Xmas meal. The 2015 weekend away to Cumbria is already full, however, Sue/Jane are keeping a list of anyone interested in the event of cancellations.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE XMAS MEAL CHANGE OF VENUE

I would advise as a result of a change in ownership at the Kaffir Inn this years meal will now be held at the Bull's Head, Countesthorpe. The date, menu and cost remain the same as the chef from Kaffir Inn/Chef Patron is now working here. Please note deposits and meal choices need to be given to Jane Hibbert by the November indoor meeting at the latest.

Indoor Meetings & Events

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

12 th November	Roy Croucher	Wildlife of Northern France
10 th December	Ben Hall	Photography
14 th January	Chris Hall	Birds of India
11 th February	Steve Magennis	Gulls & more Gulls at Walney Island
11 th March	Alan Firth	RSPB Investigations Talk

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 Minsmere – 13th September 2014 (GT)

An early start coach trip to Minsmere RSPB, Suffolk today for the group of 25. We split into two groups and explored the scrapes, marsh and beach areas in the morning. There were plenty of assorted waders on the scrapes for us to "sort out" including Little Stint, Knot, Dunlin, dozens of Black Tailed Godwits, Spotted and Common Redshank and Snipe. Greenshank and Water Rail were added by one group as well. After lunch we walked through the woodland to Bittern & Island Mere hides. No Bittern at the named hide but a good extended flight view of one at Island Mere - low over the reeds and towards us! A Kingfisher was also found and gave good views including a very nice hovering display. Marsh Harriers and a Hobby were also seen. A good long day out with a total of 69 species for the day.

RSPB Middleton Lakes – 11th October 2014 (GT)

A misty start for our visit to this relatively nearby RSPB reserve and it had certainly developed into a "full day" site since our previous visit in Spring 2012. We started with 6 Swallows overhead as we were leaving the car park and were soon finding a good variety of common birds around the fields and farm buildings and as we went further onto the reserve we encountered woodland, scrapes, open water, river bank and reedbed habitats. There were also some well placed, well stocked bird feeders in the hedgerow which allowed good views of Nuthatches, a variety of Tits and finches and House Sparrows. A couple of light showers in the morning didn't detract from the day and we explored the whole reserve including the new Lookout hide at the far end of the wetland trail - a good place for our lunch stop. Highlights included a good number of Snipe, lots of Water fowl, a Kingfisher and good close views of a pair of Stonechat. A total of 58 species on the day



Volunteer Appeal



As stated at the AGM we are looking for a volunteer to undertake the job of arranging next years club Christmas meal. If you are interested please speak to Graham. If no one comes forward there is a distinct possibility there will be no Christmas Meal 2015. So if you attend this event each year and enjoy yourself then please step forward.

Thank you

Field Trips 2014 -15

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)

January 17th Titchmarsh/Thrapston Gravel Pits, Northants

The River Nene meanders through this complex of former gravel pits. There will be plenty of wintering waterfowl with the males in their finest breeding plumage as the nesting season is just a few weeks ahead. We should have a variety of waders too. No facilities. Cost £2.50

February 14th RSPB Snettisham, Norfolk

Storms wrecked hides more than a year ago but one new one has just been completed so should afford us some comfort whilst viewing, hopefully, lots of wintering waders. No facilities. Cost £2.50

March 14th Upton Warren WT Reserve, Worcs

We head for Worcestershire to explore a site which has good numbers of waders - Avocets should be present. We could also see Water Rail and Peregrine Falcon Toilets at northern end of reserve. Cost £4.50

April 25th RSPB Nagshead, Gloucs

Note this is the last Saturday of the month rather than our usual date. This delay gives the summer visitors a chance to arrive ahead of us and greet us at the gate! Lovely location for Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and plenty of Warblers. We should also see a variety of birds of prey.

Toilets but no café. Cost £2.50 RSPB permit required

May no trip as Cumbria Weekend away arranged 15th – 17th May

June 13th RSPB Coombes Valley, Staffordshire

Picturesque woodland reserve which, at this time of year, should be alive with Warbler song. Pied and Spotted Flycatcher and Redstart breed here.

Toilets but no café. Cost £2.50 RSPB permit required

All booking forms and payments to be returned to Sue Walton please.

Bird Territories by Dave Judson

I recently read an interesting Russian work, "One season in the Taiga" The taiga is the coniferous forest that stretches all the way from Scandinavia to the Pacific coast. between the treeless tundra to the north and the broad leaved forests to the south. The author, Vadim Ryabitsev, set out to spend a summer studying two closely related species, Willow and Arctic Warblers.

Vadim set up camp deep in the woods just before the Warblers returned, the Willows from Africa and the Arctics from Asia. The Russian summer is short, so the breeding season is intensive. He marked out an area of study and, as each male Willow arrived, caught and ringed it. Once free, the birds found a suitable perch and sang to attract mates. Willow males have a "chazhzhzh-chazzhzhzh" sound when threatened by a rival. At the same time the bird twists to and fro on its twig to ward off the rival.

The author carefully surveyed and mapped the study area and mapped where each Willow male set up his territory. It was expected that, where territories are close to each other, conflicts would occur when one male entered another's territory. They are polygon-shaped and at no point did one male's territory touch another's. But, what was unexpected, is that there is a neutral zone between each territory. No bird sang in the neutral zone. This helped to keep conflicts to a minimum, except when a newly arrived male tried to establish its own territory.

The Arctics arrived shortly after the Willows. The Arctic males then established their own territories. Unexpectedly, the larger territories of the Arctics often overlapped those of the Willows, but few conflicts took place. The fact that two closely related species living in the same habitat have conflict free overlapping territories was a new discovery.

Should any member be tempted to repeat the study, be aware that in the taiga it can still snow in June and then there are clouds of insects! Which of course is the attraction for the Warblers and other species.

Winners of the Annual Photographic Competitions



Short Eared
Owl
by
Jan
Thompson



Grass Snake
by
Graham
Turner

The next edition of the Newsletter will be issued in February 2015. If you have a story for inclusion please send copy and photos to Marion at graham.turner@btinternet.com