



for birds
for people
for ever



Leader Chris Lloyd.

RSPB Reg'd Charity No.207076

Spring Newsletter April 2007

Meg Ward

Sadly Meg died on the 23rd of January 2007. She had had several strokes during the months leading up to her death, and she died in her sleep at the age of 82.

She came to Yorkshire in 1973 to work in Leeds, and found her bungalow in Thorpe Willoughby. There she was close enough to York to join the RSPB Members Group and in 1975 she was elected Secretary. She continued in this position for 15 years, where her experience and efficiency were much appreciated.

Those of you who knew Meg will remember her at slide presentation evenings, on field outings with her binoculars, telescope and sometimes a camera, and helping at fund raising events. Her enthusiasm for birds and bird watching was unending, though it did go a bit too far sometimes. Once we waited anxiously for her on a snow covered Holy Island- she had been watching a red throated diver and not her watch, and we nearly got trapped by the incoming tide at the causeway!

With great care for the detail and in a very resolute way Meg organized holidays in Britain, America and Australia for group members.

Through her, several of us had a fantastic, exciting time in Queensland, traveling from Cairns to Brisbane, meeting delightful people, making lifelong friends and seeing The Australian forests, mountains and deserts along with the brilliant, colourful birds on the way.

Meg had many friends and she delighted us with her knowledge, enthusiasm and interest in all wildlife.

Big Garden Birdwatch 2007

The mild winter affected the number of birds visiting our gardens. Overall the results for North Yorkshire were pretty much the same as the national ones.

However for a few lucky people they had different birds to record, including:-
black-throated thrush
american robin
redkite
little egrets
kingfisher
chough
black redstart.

Ospreys return to Wales.

For the 5th year in a row, ospreys have returned from Africa to Glaslyn near Porthmadog.



Group Trip to Poland

Please see the flyer inside this newsletter for details of how to book on our 2008 trip.

RSPB Members Weekend

This event will be held at York University from April 20th to 22nd. A chance to meet other members from around the country and listen to some talks about what the RSPB is up to on various reserves. Plus art exhibition, plus sales and outings. Details will be in your Birds magazine.

Birds in our garden (and from the bedroom window)

Living on the western edge of the city of York, overlooking fields that stretch away towards the A1237, we enjoy both suburban and more rural birding opportunities.

This December during a spell of heavy rain I watched lapwings, black-headed gulls and a number of common gulls in the fields across from us. I noticed too that after being disturbed when they landed back down, the five common gulls slowly moved together into a clear group that preferred to stick together.

However, I was asked to write about the birds in our garden. The garden is about a quarter of an acre with a good number of substantial trees. A large pond with a stream and waterfall (pumped, of course) provide bathing stations for many birds. My son once produced a photo on his mobile phone of a sparrow hawk bathing at the base of the waterfall! Buzzard and kestrel have been seen flying over as well, of course, as skeins of geese and sometimes swans. And a bird that has frequently caused me rage and sorrow – the grey heron – has sometimes stolen my fish only to leave them dead at the side of the pond. The pond is netted now but the herons still fly over to check the netting is still on!

High summer is a quiet time but in spring goldcrest, greenfinch, blue and coal tit are common. Funnily enough although I frequently see the goldcrest, I've never seen two at once! A pair of siskin spent a couple of days with us last winter and, near the house, near our big feeders a large old evergreen clematis armandii constitutes house sparrow city. We have robins, dunnocks, wrens and blackbirds and rather a lot of magpies. In the last year I've seen song thrushes a little more often which is pleasing; chaffinch are occasional only,

whilst the provision of niger seed has led to daily sightings of goldfinch during most months of the year.

Wood pigeon and collared dove dedicate their lives to emptying our feeders and breed plentifully. Clumsy fliers they often leave a waxy grey imprint of themselves on our kitchen window. A pair of collared doves was nest building this September – I don't know if they raised any young. Talking of nests, we have put up quite a number of nest boxes but there has been little success in persuading birds to use them.

Finally, a couple of memorable occasions. Until a few years ago we had a fruit cage in our garden where we grew soft fruit to make jams and wines. One morning the cat was running excitedly around the perimeter of the cage and we located a woodcock hiding in one corner. We were able to release it safely. A chiffchaff (or was it a willow warbler?) visited us last summer and a handsome male pheasant came once. We have seen deer, presumably straying from Askham Bog, in the fields across. But the best thing is that you never know just what you might spot one day...

Chris Downes.

Chris is deputy head teacher at Millthorpe school and opens his garden each year to visitors in aid of charity.



Leaders Comments;

Spring is here at last, although there wasn't much winter was there! Chiff chaffs are back, and yellow hammers and skylarks are calling.

Spare a thought for the females of the bird species, they use up huge amounts of calcium in producing the eggs. If you have access to any oystershell grit, it will help produce stronger eggs.

The old school of thought of stopping feeding the birds now spring has arrived is further disputed. Putting out high energy foods such as sunflower seed kernels will increase the chances of more young birds fledging.

Seed eating species such as house sparrows, finches and buntings will feed their nestlings on insects and invertebrates for rapid growth, the availability of your freely available supply of bird food helps the adults survive during the warmer months when nature's berry and seed foods are long gone.

That said, it is apparent that fewer numbers of birds were being recorded during the winter months on two counts, the abundant European crop of berries providing food and stemming the usual migration to our shores for winter food, and our own birds finding more food in the country side rather than visiting our gardens.

A few RSPB achievements from 2006.

The 200th nature reserve at Sutton Fen. Income from Landfill Tax topped £10m. 1146 calling corncrakes in Scotland, plus 4 in England.

The crucial grant for the visitor centre obtained for the new RSPB Saltholme reserve on Teesside, expected to open 2008.

H5N1 Avian Influenza.

Although it's been quiet over the winter (apart from the dubious Norfolk scare), there have been no European positive tests since August 2006. New migrations and warmer weather could spark an outbreak. Be on the

lookout for and don't be embarrassed to report any unusual dead/diseased bird sightings.

Fundraising and Memberships.

Some of you will be aware that our group are most active in many areas of support to the RSPB. We raise and donate substantial amounts of money. Thanks to the co-ordination role of Don Hoad, we have well exceeded our £8,000 target donations this year.

Our group is also credited with 24 RSPB memberships (at the last count), 3rd highest out of 80 reporting local groups. Again largely down to the co-ordinating efforts of Don and Anne.

Thank you to all who have rallied to Don's call for support, and I hope we can rely on you support again. And anyone else who could spend as little as an hour, or more if you are able, to support us at our events – please let Don have your details.

There is no doubt in the eyes of the RSPB that the local groups provide a vital role in "flying the flag", and are the local face of the RSPB.

2008 trip to Poland.

Look out for details of next years trip to Poland, kindly arranged by Bird Holidays after our super trip to Andalucia with them last year, and at a good discount on price – strictly first come first served – don't leave it too late.

So here's to a wonderful spring and summers bird watching, and hoping that our birds fare well.

Chris

York RSPB Local Group Committee

Your local group is run on your behalf by a small committee who are elected by the group members at the annual general meeting each year.

Their names are published on each years programme along with the jobs that they do. The following pen portraits are designed to give members a bit more information as to what each person does.

I am the speaker's secretary. Each year I try to give the audience a varied, interesting programme. I am always interested in any speakers, heard at other venues by members, to be considered for the RSPB York Group. You can always find me behind the bird food stall at meetings.
Terry Millett.

Terry Millett



The person with Terry behind the bird food stall is her husband John, who organises the bird food sales for the group.

They are the first to arrive at the indoor meetings and ensure that the room is suitably organised for the meeting. John puts out the RSPB signs, sorts out the sound system and the projector for the speakers. Terry welcomes the speaker and checks that everything is ok. They both then sort out the bird food. At the end of the evening they then have to

pack everything away into their car and take it back home.

Another couple who work hard for the local group is Anne and Don Hoad. Don organises the fund raising activities for the group and is always looking out for people to help man the various events he has booked. This year he has organised some very successful collections at supermarkets and is very keen to recruit more volunteers.

His wife Anne looks after your local group membership. She usually sits at the back of the hall at indoor meetings so that anyone with any membership enquiries can contact her.

Anne and Don are also the driving force behind your groups name gathering and national recruitment success. Please talk to them if you would like to be involved with this kind of work.

The local group is also fortunate enough to have another couple who devote hours to working on our behalf. Chris and Anne Lloyd do numerous jobs between them.

Chris is the leader of the group and his role covers jobs such as chairing the monthly committee meetings, introducing speakers and making announcements at indoor meetings, organising helpers for the RSPB members weekend, liaising with the RSPB staff at headquarters and regional offices.

Anne manages the sales of goods for the local group, and can be found behind the sales desk at the indoor meetings. Anne and Chris also take sales goods to events such as Blacktoft Sands open days.

The above descriptions are brief but hopefully give members some idea as to the things that committee members do on their behalf.

Places to go... birds to see

If you are thinking of venturing out this coming spring/summer then we have some pleasant places to visit not too far away.

The RSPB manages Tindale Tarn as part of its Geltsdale reserve, and is planning to provide a visitor centre and trails in the future.

There is a small car park in Tindale at NY616594, and from here visitors can start a 5.6 mile circular route. The route around the tarn could reward your visit with views of black grouse, grey partridge, curlew, snipe, stonechat and reed bunting. The tarn is visited in winter by whooper swans and wigeon.

Not far away from Tindale Tarn are Allen Banks and Staward Gorge. From a National Trust pay and display car park at NY797641 visitors can start a 3 mile linear walk.

Woodland has grown in the area since medieval times and the trees play home to not only birds but also longhorn beetles.

Redstart, wood warbler, pied flycatcher and blackcap provide a pleasant background sound to the area. Other birds that might be seen include great spotted woodpecker, treecreeper, nuthatch, long-tailed and willow tit and red squirrels can also be seen.

For those who like a climb how's about a visit to Dufton Pike.

There is a car park in Dufton at NY689249 from which you can access a 4.3 mile circular route.

Buzzards can be seen soaring above Dufton Pike and wheatears are known

to visit the area as well in summer. Ring ouzels may also be seen in the area.

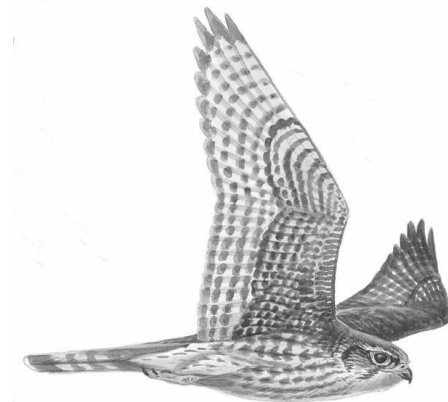
Derwent reservoir can reward the visitor with not only good views of waterbirds but also the chance to see red squirrels. Wigeon and pintail join the resident flocks of birds in winter and artificial holts have been built around the reservoir for otters.

Pow Hill Country Park has some wheel chair friendly paths. NZ 013516.

If all of the previous places sound a little much like hard work then you could try your luck at bird watching from your car.

On the A686 there is a large lay by at NY744515 where you can stop and look at across Ouston Fell. Many of the birds in the area have their own distinctive sounds such as golden plover and curlew. A visit at dusk could reward you with the sound of either drumming snipe or roding woodcock.

And for those with keen eyesight there is always the chance of seeing merlin hunting across the moors and fells.



hen harrier by Mike Langman (rspb images)

Wherever you go, whatever you see, please spare the time to jot down a few notes and send them to me, so that I can include them in future newsletters.

Barry Bishop

News from RSPB Leighton Moss nature reserve

Over the winter our visitors have been treated to sightings of our flagship bird, the bittern every day or so, often flying across the top of the reeds or walking around the edges of the pools. Although our young birds left at the end of the summer, our resident adult bitterns were joined by birds from the continent. Our wardens and volunteers are carrying out surveys at dawn and dusk to listen out for our resident male which usually booms from mid February until around June.

The major reedbed work to remove over 80 years of sediment has been completed over the winter and the quality of the water has improved. There has been an increase in fish, which we think has encouraged otters to return to the reserve and hopefully will help to increase the numbers of bitterns. Two nearby sites, are being returned to marsh and reedfen. The reeds that have been planted are establishing themselves well and the sites have been rich in birdlife over the winter.

John Wilson continues to monitor our bearded tit population and they appear to be surviving and feeding well over the winter. Another bird of interest has been a visiting male hen harrier that was around for a couple of weeks in the New Year.

It's been a slightly different winter for the outdoor team as they have had a holiday from the winter reedcutting due to the high water levels. They have focused instead on upgrading most of the paths to a high standard and working on Warton Crag. We have been managing a section there for twenty years now! It's nationally important butterfly populations rely on the flower-rich limestone grassland, which is at threat from other invading vegetation.

Each year our wardens, along with volunteers, remove encroaching bracken and scrub to keep areas open to allow the butterflies to feed and breed in the summer. There are many butterfly species that visit the Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but Warton Crag is well known for having the extremely rare high brown fritillary.

We are extremely pleased to tell you that Leighton Moss now has a Wildlife Explorer Group! Thanks to such an enthusiastic bunch of leaders the group kicked off at the end of January. It was a fun filled day, with 23 children joining in with games and birdwatching for the Big Garden Birdwatch. The group has had a good response with a waiting list of nearly twenty children. So a big thanks again to all the leaders who are doing a superb job!

We are currently in need of tearoom assistant volunteers, so if you know of anyone who may be interested in helping for a minimum of half a day a week then please call Gill Saunders, our catering manager on 01524 703016 for more information.

We look forward to seeing you on your next visit!

Jen Walker



High brown fritillary copyright David Mower

'What's on'
at RSPB Leighton Moss nature
reserve 2007

Regular events at a glance:

Binocular and telescope demonstrations

An opportunity to try binoculars and telescopes for yourself and to receive impartial advice. Free admission to the demonstration. 10.00 – 4.00pm on the following dates

Sat 12 and Sun 13 May

Sat 23 and Sun 24 June

Sat 8 and Sun 9 September

Sat 20 and Sun 21 October

Sat 1 and Sun 2 December

Please contact 01524 701601 or email

leighton.moss@rspb.org.uk for further information or to book on the events.

Normal events charges (unless otherwise stated) cost: RSPB members: adults £2, children £1, family £4, non-members: adults £4.50, children £2, family £9 (includes entry to nature trails for the day). Events are free if you come by public transport or bike (excludes some events but discounts will apply).

April

Easter mystery!

Sun 1 to Sun 15 April

9.30 am - 5 pm

Visit the reserve this Easter and pick up the Easter Mystery Quiz. Normal admission charges apply.

May

Wednesday walkabout

Wed 2 May

11 am-1 pm

Learn more about Leighton Moss and all its wonderful wildlife. Cost: RSPB members: adults £2, children £1, family £4, non-members: adults £4.50, children £2, family £9 (includes entry to nature trails for the day).

Bitterns at bedtime

Thurs 3 May

7.30 pm onwards

Dusk is one of the best times to hear the amazing boom of the male bittern. Cost: RSPB members: adults £2, children £1, family £4, non-members: adults £4.50, children £2, family £9 (includes entry to nature trails for the day).

Dawn chorus

Sun 6 May

4 -7.30 am

The reedbed at dawn is an experience not to be missed. Booking essential. Cost: £10 (RSPB members £8) including a full English breakfast.

Spring fair

Sat 12 and Sun 13 May

10 am – 4 pm

A weekend not to be missed! Lots of activities and stalls to browse, as well as a binoculars and telescopes demonstration. Please park at the Warton Stock car track and use the park and ride. Cost: £1 admission for everyone visiting the fair.

Pond dipping for adults and buffet

Tues 15 May 7-9.30pm

By popular demand, an evening of pond dipping for adults only! Learn more about the creatures that live under the water in the reedbed pools.

Booking essential. Cost: £12 (RSPB Members £10).

Wednesday walkabout

Wed 16 and 23 May 11am -1pm

Learn more about Leighton Moss and all its wonderful wildlife. Cost: RSPB members: adults £2, children £1, family £4, non-members: adults £4.50, children £2, family £9 (includes entry to nature trails for the day).

Birding for beginners: passerines and overtures

Sun 27 May 7.30 -10.30am

Join us on a guided walk to learn how to pick out the different bird songs in the woodland and around the reedbeds, followed by a bacon or veggie bap and a hot drink. No experience necessary. Booking essential. Cost: £7 (RSPB members £5).

Family activity: pond dipping

Tues 29 May

Choose from 10.30 am-12 noon, 1 – 2.30 pm or 3- 4.30 pm

Explore the underworld after a short walk to see the water birds. Booking essential. Cost: £3.50 per child (RSPB Wildlife Explorer members £2.50). Children must be over 5 years old and accompanied by an adult (adults free).

Family guided walk: barking mad!

Wed 30 May 11am -12.30pm

Learn about the trees of Leighton Moss during National Tree Week and look for the wildlife that live in the woods. Booking essential. Cost: RSPB members: adults £2, children £1, family £4, non-members: adults £4.50, children £2, family £9 (includes entry to nature trails for the day).

Family activity: moths, minibeasts and masks

Thurs 31 May

Choose from 10.30 am-12 noon, 1 – 2.30 pm or 3- 4.30 pm

Check out some moths, discover loads of minibeasts and make a creepy-crawlie mask. Booking essential. Cost: £3.50 per child (RSPB Wildlife Explorer members £2.50). Children must be over 5 years old and accompanied by an adult (adults free).

Local trip – January

Members met at St. Johns to decide where to go for the day – great northern divers at Filey was tempting, but the weather forecast not so good on the coast, so we opted to go to Potteric Carr, near Doncaster, where there had been regular sightings of bittern.

Access through the reserve is now through the BTCV building with a small YWT shop. We walked to the first hide overlooking Decoy Pool, where bitterns had been sighted within the past week, but not for us today.

We followed the path across the railway and to the hide overlooking Low Ellers Marsh, where GNER trains pass at 125mph, fortunately not so many on a Sunday morning. Here we picked up most of the duck species including gadwall, teal, shoveler and pochard.

The path continues through an eerie woodland until eventually there are views over a huge wetland area currently under development. Signs for the future look promising with flocks of golden plover and lapwing. A look over Piper marsh gave us more ducks, but no sign of bittern seen on previous visits.

We reached the new Field Centre/café where we had lunch – soup and bacon sandwiches – highly recommended. After lunch, a close inspection of a flock of birds in the nearby trees revealed linnets and redpoll, soon followed by bullfinch and great spotted woodpecker to add to the list. The path eventually leads back through woodland to the field centre and exit.

We had a good days birding. Potteric Carr is an excellent reserve with varied habitat, plenty of hides, and provides year round interest. Hard to believe it's only 2 miles from the centre of Doncaster and close to the M18.

Trip to Donna Nook and the North Lincolnshire Coast.

Our February trip was the first visit by the group to the Lincolnshire coast for many years. First stop was Covenham Reservoir,

part used for water sports, but the south and eastern sides being disturbance free. Access to this side is by steps up the grassed bank, leading to a path around the reservoir. There were large numbers of great crested grebe and goldeneye in wonderful plumage, and a large roost of black headed and common gulls.

We then headed off for the coast – Donna Nook, an area backed by sand dunes, an extensive area of sand and mud flats used by the RAF for practice bombing on some days. A flock of small birds took some time to identify, but proved to be mostly pipits and linnets. This is also an excellent place to see seals and pups out on the sand banks near the shore.

We moved on up the coast to Horseshoe Point for lunch, overlooking the salt marsh. We saw 4 little egrets (now regularly over wintering – 11 this winter). The tide was a long way out so we had a walk over the marshes, the waders were distant, but large flocks of brent geese were flying in and out of the fields. Walking back along the flood bank we had excellent views of a barn owl quartering the marshes and fields.

Our last stop was Humberston, at the south end of Cleethorpes. A man made lake had ducks and close views of two ruff. Access through the dunes to the beach revealed large numbers of distant and not so distant waders.

Thirteen members enjoyed a good day; but bird species were a little disappointing as 2 trips earlier in the year had produced black throated diver and twite; and the tide was out – a long way on this coast – if only we could read the tide tables a year in advance!
Anne & Chris Lloyd

Trip Venues May to November

Teesdale Sunday 20th May : dep 08.00

We hope to go and find Black Grouse plus other upland birds which should include dipper, curlew, lapwing, redstart and many others. We also hope to look at the wildflowers of the area.



black grouse by chris gomersall (RSPB images)

Teesside Sunday 23rd September

Hartlepool will be our first port of call to look at gulls, waders and other birds around the headland. We will then go to North Gare to look at waders and other birds with a chance of godwits and twite. The last time we were there, we turned up a hen harrier over the golf course. Our last port of call will be Seal Sands where we hope to find ducks, waders and passerines among rough fields.



hen harrier by Mike Langman, (RSPB images)

East Coast Saturday 20th October

We are going to first Filey first to look for divers, gulls, waders, sea ducks and passerines in the bushes. Then depending what is around on the day we will decide where to go for the rest of the day.



arctic tern by chris gomersall (RSPB images)

Fairburn Ings Sunday 25th November

This is an RSPB reserve near Castleford with open water, woodland and scrub. We should see a good selection of ducks, geese, waders plus smaller birds in the woodland and scrub. The reserve has a good visitor centre with a good selection of optics and bird books.

This picture of a bittern was taken by Michael Dunn at Potteric Carr.



FUTURE EVENTS

MAY.

Sun 13th 10.00am Local walk at Hagg Wood. OS ref. 679529.

Tues 15th 7.30pm. Indoor meeting
John Hornbuckle, Birds of Japan.

Sun 20th outing to Teesdale by car.

JUNE.

Tues 12th 7.00pm Local walk at Strensall Common. OS ref 648612

JULY.

Sun 15th 10.00am. Local walk at Nunnington. OS ref 668794

AUGUST.

Sun 12th 6.30pm. Local walk at Beningborough Os ref 511598

SEPTEMBER.

Sat 8th 10.00am Local walk at Kirkham Abbey OS ref 732654

Tues 11th 7.30pm Indoor meeting.

Stuart Meredith, The Wonder of Waders.

BOOKING FORM

Details of how to book for the Group's forthcoming outdoor events.

Please find below booking forms for Group outings between May to November 2007. Although we currently go by car, we need to know numbers to enable us to make transport arrangements, so please book in the usual way - by filling in your details on the form for the trips you wish to go on and send your form to Colin Rafton, 32 Thirkleby Way, Osbaldwick, York , YO10 3QA. Strong shoes or boots will be required on all the trips as well as a packed lunch. Please try to book as early as possible but **NO LATER THAN TEN DAYS** before the trip. Colin will not acknowledge your booking - if you do not hear from him assume that you have a seat – if required. In case you are unable to go with the trip after booking, please inform Colin on York 413941.

Please note: RSPB membership cards are required to gain entry to all RSPB Reserves. Also no admission fees are included in the cost of trips.

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----- -- **FAIRBURN INGS** Date: Sunday 25th November 2007
Leader: Colin Rafton

Meet: 9am at St Johns College. By car

I wish to book..... Places . I have a car / I will need a lift.

Name _____ Address _____

_____ Tel _____

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EAST COAST Date: Saturday 20th October 2007 Leader: Ken
Searstone

Meet: 9am at St Johns College. By car

I wish to bookplaces . I have a car / I will need a lift.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Tel _____

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TEESSIDE Date: Sunday 23rd September 2007 Leader: Colin Rafton

Meet: 9am at St Johns College. By car

I wish to bookplaces . I have a car / I will need a lift.

Name _____ Address _____

_____Tel

✂-----

TEESDALE
Anne Lloyd

Date : Sunday 20th May 2007

Leader : Chris &

Meet : **8am** at St Johns College. By car

I wish to bookplaces . I have a car / I will need a lift.

Name _____

Address _____

_____Tel

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