

BIRDWATCHING

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NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2022

TONIGHT'S MEETING (13th October)

Tonight we welcome the return of Paul Hobson with a talk entitled "Coast and Islands". This talk was originally scheduled for February of this year.

Paul started photography about 40 years ago with a Pentax SLR using slide film. This seems a bit like the Stone Age today but it did teach him a lot about how to operate a camera well, there was no checking on the back screen then!

Paul has won a number of prestigious international awards. He has been highly commended in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2008), a category winner and highly commended in European Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2010 + 14) and Festival de l'Oiseau et de la Nature (voted the public's favourite image in 2013) and has had numerous images featured in British Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2009-14). Paul has visited us on several previous occasions, most recently in November 2018.

I am sure that we will all enjoy this evening's talk and photographs.

Please join me in welcoming Paul for what I am sure will be a very entertaining evening.

COACH TRIPS

Our first coach trip of the season is this weekend on Sunday 16th October to the RSPB Saltholme reserve, departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Saltholme is an RSPB wetland reserve in the industrial heartland of the Tees Valley near Middlesbrough. Large numbers of waders congregate on the reserve at this time of year, as well as large numbers of wildfowl. Raptors are frequently seen hunting in the area. Several feeder areas attract small birds. There is often a Starling murmuration at dusk.

Facilities include hides, an excellent tearoom/restaurant and toilets. Admittance is free for RSPB members (remember to bring your card) or £4 for non-members. We last visited in March 2019.

The coach trip after that is on Sunday 20th November to North Wales and Conway, departing from the Guild at 8am.

Book your seat for both trips at the desk.

Please note : Members of the Bird Group paying by cheque for the weekend away, coach trips or Christmas lunch must now make the cheques payable to - The Guild for Lifelong Learning.

COACH TRIP TO BRANDON MARSH – SUNDAY 08 MAY 2022

Brandon Marsh is a varied 290 acre site south-east of Coventry with numerous pools created by gravel extraction, 9 hides, reedbeds, grassland and woodland. This was our third visit over the last 10 years or so.



Water Rail

On a morning full of promise we left Wilmslow suitably dressed, so imagine our dismay when the sky darkened as we neared Birmingham and it started to rain! Then the M6 was closed so we diverted off, finally arriving 20 minutes later than planned. However Brandon Marsh was dry and with a brightening sky our spirits lifted. After a short talk by the ranger we set off, splitting into three groups.

Stepping out through the courtyard into the reserve most of us opted to visit hides 2 (Jon Baldwin) and 3 (John Walton) first. Walking to hide 2 we were greeted by the cheerful song of a Chiffchaff and so our list was started. We heard Sedge Warbler and a distant Cuckoo calling. As we passed a pool almost dried up, not one but two Water Rails were seen scurrying through the reeds at the water's edge. Was this a good omen for the rest of the day?

Jon Baldwin's hide situated on East Marsh Pool held the usual selection of ducks, Mallard, Tufted, Gadwall and Shovelers. On one of the tiny islands there was an Oystercatcher and Lapwing feeding and a Pied Wagtail running hither and thither. Then we spotted the first of the Common Terns of the day as a Kingfisher flashed past. How good was that?

Walking on to hide 3 we saw a Buzzard being mobbed by a Carrion Crow, and



Common Buzzard

watched a Sparrowhawk lazily circling looking for prey. In an area of bushes and dead branches we found both Blackcap and Garden Warbler.



Common Redshank

John Walton hide provided more waders with Common Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Ringed Plover and another Water Rail. A Common Gull rested on the water, with 4 Common Terns flying overhead and Swifts above them. We opted to stay here for our lunch and enjoyed our sandwiches watching the Kingfisher flying to and fro whilst Reed Warblers popped out briefly from the reeds. The elusive Sedge Warbler finally showed and just as we were leaving a Grey Heron flew in and a Cormorant flew past.

Teal Pool hide (no. 4) gave another Water Rail and once that had disappeared we moved quickly on to Carlton hide (no. 5). As we approached the hide we could hear the murmur of excited voices. Everyone was looking into the distance, into a dead tree, where a male Cuckoo was perched. Some of the group were lucky enough to have been there earlier and seen three Cuckoos!

Scopes were being willingly made available so everyone had good views. We decided to move on to Ted Jury hide (no.6) to be closer to the bird and did indeed get superb views of the Cuckoo through our bins.



Common Tern

We walked on to hides 7 (River Pool) and 8 (West Marsh Pool) both of which had very little to offer, so decided to head for the café and relax with a cup of tea and a cake whilst watching the feeders. Other members of the group had similar ideas as we were not the only ones there!



Common Cuckoo

Without doubt the highlights of the day for everyone were the Cuckoo and Water Rail sightings. How often are you lucky enough to see not one Cuckoo, but to see three !!! And similarly for the Water Rail. Our total count for the day was 57 – not particularly high, but the quality was undeniable.

The journey home was smooth and hassle free as we took the M6 Toll thus avoiding all congestion and delay.

We saw 7 varieties of butterfly; Orange Tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Green-veined White, Peacock, Comma and Green Hairstreak.

Our mammals were Muntjac deer and two very fat rabbits underneath the bird feeders.



Muntjac

Photos by Robert D

BARBARA P

JULIE & DAVE'S AFRICAN ADVENTURE

After 2 years of rescheduled holidays, at last the wait was finally over and in June we flew Ethiopian Airlines via Addis Ababa to Lusaka in Zambia. We stopped for an overnight stay at the Pioneer safari lodge which was very comfortable after a long journey. Our late arrival and early start the next morning only gave us a small window to go birding in the grounds and we managed to see plenty of village and buffalo weavers in the trees making nests and also small flocks of red-billed queleas flitting from bush to bush looking for food.



Martial Eagle

On our first outing into the park we saw a martial eagle with prey in its talons which looked like a baby crocodile. As we arrived



Superb Starling

The next morning after a very early start we headed to the airport for a flight to our first destination Flat Dogs camp in South Luangwa valley. Our home for the next 5 days was a luxurious tent next to a watering hole where birds and animals came to drink. South Luangwa is well known for its birding with over 300 varieties to go at (we had a good go).

near a pond we saw yellow-billed and marabou storks, hamerkop, pied kingfishers, african jacanas, spotted thick-knee, spoonbills, cattle egrets, sacred and hadada ibis, plus an african fish eagle flying upto its nest. So all in all not a bad start to the day.

Our next few days had the same routine - up at 5am, have tea and toast then out for 6am on game drive. The birds were playing ball with numerous different species seen such as meves's starling, blacksmith and spur-winged lapwing, kori bustard, helmeted guineafowl, swainson's francolin, double-banded sandgrouse, and soaring above us was crowned eagle. Later that day as we headed into open savannah, Julie spotted a dark chanting-goshawk which hasn't been seen in Zambia for over 10 years. Our guide was over the moon to see it.



Meves's Starling



Saddle-billed Stork

The game drives lasted until about 10.30am and by then the sun was getting very warm, so we headed back to the tent for a well earned breakfast and rest. We spotted in bushes near our tent a few new species such as a red-faced cisticola ,also jameson's firefinch, green-winged pytilia, yellow-bellied waxbill, and in the open near the watering hole white-fronted bee-eaters Later in the day a western banded snake eagle sat high in a tree observing its surroundings.



Yellow-bellied Waxbill

Most days were the same with new birds being seen such as village indigo bird, woodland kingfisher, senegal coucal, lilain's lovebirds and violet-backed starlings. Back down near a pond we saw a african openbill, spur-winged goose, cape teal, kittlitz's plover, goliath, squacco and black heron plus a saddle-billed stork.

On day 5 we left Flat Dogs camp and headed for our next camp which was located in the national park and this was called Nkonzi bush camp. This was located next to a dry river bed and the area was of small trees and scrub brush giving a different environment than previously. This is where we could go on walking game drives. Yes, you read that right - walking in the bush and evening drives as well.



Grey Go-away Birds

Over the next few days the birds that were seen were go-away birds , brown-hooded kingfisher, ground, red-billed and trumpeter hornbills, white helmetsrike, rattling cisticola, robin-chat meyer's parrot, little bee-eater, lilac-breasted roller, greater honeyguide, sooty chat, and fork-tailed drongo.

We also saw on our first nighttime drive a temminck's courser with 3 chicks and a square-tailed nightjar sat in the middle of the road.

On our safari walks there was just Julie, myself, Gavin who owned the camp, and Isaac our armed ranger who kept us safe and he was also an amazing bird spotter. More species



Greater Striped Swallow

were seen such as blue-eared starling, common bulbul, giant kingfisher, hooded vulture, and steppe, tawny and wahlberg's eagle. Doves were in abundance, notably laughing, african mourning and emerald spotted, Also seen was green pigeon, hoopoe, and one of my favourites, an eastern paradise whydah.



Eastern Paradise Whydah

Walking safaris are a speciality here in the national park and is a memory which will stay with us forever. These give you a chance to photograph the birds up close and I was lucky enough to get close to a saddle-billed stork before it took off and close enough to a greater-striped swallow sat on a branch. It was an amazing bird to see and photograph.

Oh and we also saw plenty of big game, but it's the birds which were the stars.

With this and a heavy heart we departed on day 10 for our long journey home vowing to return very soon.



Yellow-billed Stork

JULIE & DAVE

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

This year's Christmas lunch will be held on Saturday 10th December at the Spinner & Bergamot pub/restaurant in Comberbach at 12:30pm after a morning of birding at Marbury Country Park from 9:30am until 12noon. If you are interested in going then please add your name to the list at the desk. A £10 deposit, cash only, will be required at the October indoor meeting to secure your booking.

A 2 course meal costs £23.95 and a 3 course meal costs £27.95.

The Christmas menu is available on the pub website at <http://www.spinnerandbergamot.co.uk/>. Copies will be available at the October meeting.

Final details to follow in the November newsletter.

CAR PARKING FOR COACH TRIPS

Now that we are once again enjoying our coach trips, it seems an appropriate time to remind all our members about parking at the Guild on a Sunday.

Do not park in the car park in front of the Guild. Park only in the rear car park or along the side. Avoid obstructing the yellow cross-hatched areas, which must be left clear for turning. You can also park on Bourne Street taking care to avoid obstructing the residents' driveways.

Do not park in the Quakers' car park.

Do not park on Windsor Avenue at any time.

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

Our next indoor meeting is on Thursday 3rd of November when our speaker will be Kieth Offord with a talk entitled "Skydancers".

IMPORTANT NOTICE : The December indoor meeting will take place on Thursday 1st December, NOT the 8th December as stated in the membership card.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Still required – your articles for the newsletter. Tell us all about that birding holiday of a lifetime or that unusual visitor to your garden bird table. Send any interesting photos you have taken on our coach trips.

Deadline is the Friday before the meeting.