

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2024

TONIGHT'S MEETING (7th November)

Tonight we welcome the return of Mike Roberts who will give a talk entitled "Ardnamurchan – Almost an Island".

Mike has talked to the group several times, the last visit being in October 2021. He has been a wildlife photographer for many years. He has worked on the environment since the early Eighties, trained as a Forester and worked as a Ranger in the Mersey Valley where he carried out and developed numerous conservation, landscape and access projects. Tonight's talk takes us further afield to the west of Scotland.

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

COACH TRIPS

The next coach trip is on Sunday 24th November to Martin Mere and Lunt Meadows departing from the Guild at 8am.

Regular members should be familiar with the WWT reserve at Martin Mere which attracts large numbers of wintering wildfowl, waders, and usually a few raptors. An entrance fee is charged here (currently £14-03 at the group rate), so members of the WWT should bring their cards for free entry [join the WWT here and your entry is free]. Toilets and an excellent restaurant and shop are available here.

Lunt Meadows Nature Reserve, run by the Wildlife Trust For Lancashire, is a recently new venue for us. This wetland nature reserve, nestled along the meandering River Alt in North Merseyside, wasn't always the wildlife wonderland it is today. Between 2012 and 2014 it was intensively farmed arable land, and only when it was bought by the Environment Agency for use as a flood storage reservoir did Lunt Meadows become a real destination for bird watchers. Several hides overlook the pools where wildfowl and waders can be seen. Other possibilities here are Marsh Harriers and Owls (Short-eared and Barn).

A number of paths run around the reserve – these are unsurfaced and can be rough underfoot. Wellies are recommended in winter months and wet periods. Entrance is free but there are no facilities here.

Book your seat at the desk.

Our December outing is the car trip to Dunham Massey followed by Christmas lunch.

CAR PARKING FOR SUNDAY COACH TRIPS

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

Do not park in the car park in front of the Guild. This must be left vacant for the Quakers use for their Sunday morning service. 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.

COACH TRIP BOOKING

The coach company that we use has now amended its booking conditions and requires that should we cancel later than 2 weeks before the trip date we would be liable to a 25% late cancellation fee. Obviously, this is not a situation that we would allow to happen. However, it does place additional pressure on Steve who must make the decision about whether there are enough to make the trip financially viable. Up till now he has tried to be as flexible as possible but in future if insufficient numbers have committed before two weeks from the trip date the trip would have to be cancelled and Steve then refund the members money with all the additional work that entails.

Bearing this in mind could we ask all who intend booking a particular trip, all the dates of which are on the membership card, to book and pay as early as possible thus ensuring the viability of the field trips and making Steve's much easier.

The coach field trips are an integral part of the success of the Group and does at £30 per trip represent very good value for money

Please help out and book your trip places as early as possible.

STUART M

OCTOBER MEETING FEEDBACK

Just when we had our largest turnout for a number of years, forty five, we had the misfortune of our speaker being missing. For those of you for whom it was your first meeting, I hope you were not disappointed and look forward to seeing you at future meetings.

Jeff Clarke, whose talk "Why they Flock" was to have been, has been in touch with Jenny to give his apologies. He was mortified when he realised what had happened. He inadvertently made the error of deleting certain files on his electronic diary including his record of our booking. Hopefully he will be able to give us this talk sometime soon, he is a good speaker.

Thanks must go to Dave S for stepping in at short notice and providing a very entertaining presentation.

Jeff's absence however did provide us with the opportunity for the whole group to share thoughts and ideas on the running of the group. As a Committee we have taken points raised on board and here is some initial feedback.

Regarding the problem within the hall of hearing the speakers, this has been taken up with the Guild and the response is that there will be some ways of improving the situation. Hopefully for our next monthly meeting this can be put into practice.

Increasing the number of impromptu car meetups for local reserves, more sharing of members photographs/shot videos and the possibility of car sharing all need a bit more consideration. However, some initial response is to encourage all members to consider, where possible to sign up for the Cheshire Birders WhatsApp group. The membership is open to paid up members of the Birdwatching Group and is a very easy and efficient means of communicating information to the whole group very quickly. Any member can post photographs of sightings, arrange potential ad hoc meetups they want to share, giving information as to where and when to meet and can also provide information on willingness to car share as either driver, passenger or indeed a combination of both. The app is set up so please do make the full use of it to communicate your birding information and questions.

If you have not already done so, consider joining the Cheshire Birders group. To do so contact Dave S, the groups administrator on 07983392685, he will run you through what to do to get connected.

If you are not into using Apps and prefer more conventional communication do not forget submitting pictures short articles and birding experiences for use in the Newsletter. Robert D, the Editor, is always open for contributions.

On the car share issue there are already some members who already have share arrangements amongst themselves and indeed the Group did, for the two car trips the committee arrange, have a pick up point at the guild premises for those who wanted or needed transport. We will look at reintroducing this for next year's trips.

One last issue I keep banging the drum about, that of membership. Our membership has steadily and continues to slowly grow, we now have 57 fully paid up members, a healthy increase since the Covid years, a pretty bleak period. Our best ambassadors for increasing membership is via yourselves and word of mouth. If you do know of family and friends interested in birding do encourage to come along to one of our meetings and perhaps consider membership. We will make them very welcome.

Happy birding,

STUART M

LONG-TAILED TITS

Since February a pair of Long-tailed Tits have been visiting daily (and still do) – feeding on the fat balls mainly just outside our kitchen sink window. What is unusual is that one of them, during the visit nearly always flies on to one of the window leading strips (using his tiny claws) and taps on the glass with his beak. The sound is quite loud such that if we are anywhere in the room, you have to look at the bird (which does not faze the bird at all). Have you any idea why it is doing this? Or heard anything like this before? It is as though it is wanting us to know that it is back, to make sure we keep up the supply. It is the magpies mainly who arrive daily too for their breakfast and who mainly consume the balls – dropping lots of pieces on the patio underneath the feeder in the process – for the dunnocks, robins, blackbirds and wood pigeons to eat.

Another episode to report happened a few days ago. A female mallard flew in, to land on our front lawn. A pair of robins are nesting in a hedge nearby. One of the robins (presumably the male) took exception. It began attacking the mallard though the duck is a thousand times its size. It stood in front of the duck a few feet away and kept flying up to its head. The duck kept turning away and podding in a different direction. This happened for at least ten minutes until the mallard flew off. Job done! It was quite remarkable to watch this tiny bird attack such a huge opponent.

PETER M

RACING PIGEON INCIDENT

Ever wondered what you should do if you find a dead or injured racing pigeon in your garden? One of our members found himself in such a situation during the summer. Below is his report sent to the Royal Pigeon Racing Association.

Report to Royal Pigeon Racing Association 9/5/24

Pigeon arrived a few days ago. It walked around our patio under a fat ball feeder and picked up all the crumbs from the feeder dislodged by two magpies, tits, robins and dunnocks which are regular and constant feeders. The pigeon chased off larger wood pigeons which regularly sweep up these crumbs along with other small birds. From time to time it went walking around our quite large garden pecking at the lawns from time to time. But it always came back to the feeder for these crumbs. It was very tame-not disturbed at all by our approach. Unfortunately between 6 am, when I was having

breakfast watching the pigeon from our kitchen window, and 9-30 am (when my wife went to open our garage main door for the gardener) she was horrified to see the carcass lying in on the drive in front of the doors. Its body had been ripped open and substantially eaten, leaving head, wings and feet intact, but feathers everywhere. So sad as I was, I thought I should contact your organisation for help on what to do.

There were two rings, one on each leg - - a green one with the ID number and a blue one with no writing on it. Those I took off and have kept them.

Because of the time death happened, I suspect the culprit is one of several cats which visit us all the time. It seems unlikely to have been one of the foxes that often pass through our garden usually at night (lighting up our security lamps). Please get back to me. I have disposed of the carcass in our green bin. Do you want it preserved? If so tell me before next Friday.

PETER M

You can find details and advice as to what to do on the Royal Pigeon Racing Association website at www.rpra.org

PROGRAMME AMENDMENTS

The December meeting will commence with a short talk on Tasmania followed by the Christmas buffet. However we have decided to have a restricted buffet of (deluxe) mince pies and (non-alcoholic) drinks.

This year we have decided to have our main buffet at the April meeting. The meeting will commence with the AGM as usual, then there will be a short 1 hour talk followed by the buffet. To accommodate this will necessitate a change to the advertised talk. Instead of "Galapagos" the subject of the talk will now be "Romania – Carpathian Mountains and the Danube Delta".

I am pleased to announce that Group member Peter B has kindly stepped in to be the speaker at our February meeting on 6th. The subject of Peter's talk will be "Brazil – the Lightning Tour". Many thanks to Peter.

FESTIVE LUNCH

Can all those booked on the Christmas lunch bring back their menu forms with their choices highlighted. Dave will be sitting at the desk at tonight's indoor meeting.

We still have availability so if you are interested just let Dave know. Anyone else is most welcome. We look forward to seeing you all on the day and hopefully excellent bird sightings at Dunham Massey followed by a wonderful Christmas lunch.

More details to follow

JULIE

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

The next indoor meeting will be on Thursday 5th December at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Group member and former Chairman Brian D with a talk entitled "Tasmania in Spring".

Following the talk (approx 1 hour) we will have our Christmas buffet with deluxe mince pies and drinks. There will be a cover charge of £2 per person if you wish to attend the buffet.

Hope to see you all then.

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.



Water Rail at Spurn. Full report next month