



# Linkline

Autumn/Winter 2015 Issue 50

Newsletter of the Gainsborough Area Group of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



## **CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE GAINSBOROUGH AREA GROUP**

Around 40 members gathered in Ken and Hilary Harris's garden on Wednesday 12 August to celebrate the Gainsborough Area Group's 40th anniversary with an Evening Picnic. The weather could not have been more conducive to a successful outdoor party. Although it was warm and balmy there were no stinging or biting insects, no irritating breeze and therefore no sneeze-inducing pollen wafting on the evening air. Hilary and Ken's garden on the edge of Laughton village is a delight with wildlife areas through which the guests wandered from their parked cars to the more 'organised' flower beds and lawns closer to the house and where tables and chairs were set out, making for a relaxed and sociable occasion.

Everyone was pleased to see the Trust's CEO Paul Learoyd, who arrived in good time for the celebrations, despite having spent the day on business in London – and facing the prospect of the long drive back to his home in the Horncastle area when the party was over. Picnic suppers appeared to come in all shapes and sizes from gourmet plated-up salads to hastily assembled cheese sandwiches – and near neighbours and Trust members Liz and Alan Peckham were on hand with their barbecue (and BBQ-ing skills) and cooked a variety of items guests had brought with them. There was a pleasant buzz of conversation and glasses were raised when Paul proposed a toast to the future of the Area Group and thanked those who had kept it running so successfully for 40 years. Chairman of the Area Group, Jean Blades, echoed these sentiments and thanked the Harrises for providing such a splendid venue for the party and all those who had organised it. Finally the four longest subscribing members – Michael Barke, Dan and Gill Bardsley and Joy Bannister - cut the celebration cake which had been made by Joy and beautifully and appropriately decorated by her friend Linda Bowskill. Tea, coffee or hot chocolate accompanied the cake and as darkness fell everyone agreed that the Area Group's 40th birthday had certainly been celebrated in fine style.

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### **SUMMER SIGHTINGS – what you have seen and heard:**



- In mid-July, our correspondent who lives in Laughton Forest reported a Spotted Flycatcher nesting in his garden, which shares a common boundary with the forest. Earlier in the summer he had been amazed to count the nesting sites of 19 different species of bird within his property. All were in use at the same time.
- As well as hosting the Area Group's 40th birthday celebrations, Hilary and Ken Harris have been hosts to innumerable Great Green Bush Crickets this summer, though mercifully these were not in evidence as guests at the party. They have been discovered in the strawberry patch, in the house, on the curtains ..... and even in Hilary's hair!

*[Has anyone else had a visitation from these loud-voiced members of our Orthoptera? – Ed.]*

# TRIBUTE TO TED SMITH

It was with great sadness that the death of Ted Smith CBE, President of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, was announced. Ted, a founder member of the LWT, died on Sunday 13 September at Boston Hospital. He has been described as the architect of the modern Wildlife Trust movement. Back in the 1940s Ted recognised the urgent need to save Lincolnshire's most special places for nature. He fought to save our unspoiled coast, ancient meadows and heaths and to halt the destruction of native woodland. Ted campaigned on almost every front from saving roadside flowers from being sprayed with chemicals to pressing for legislation to protect otters. His influence stretched far beyond Lincolnshire. He travelled the length and breadth of Britain, lecturing on his vision for nature and for local Wildlife Trusts to champion it. Most importantly, he saw the need for local nature organisations which could own land and for them to derive support from a wide section of the community. A short film about Ted was made in 2012 <http://www.lincstrust.org.uk/who-we-are/ted-smith>. We extend sincere sympathy to Ted's family, friends and colleagues. He will be greatly missed.

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## READY, STEADY, GO .....

### 2015/16 INDOOR SEASON GETS UNDER WAY

*The new indoor season got off to a flying (?) start in September with Steve Lovell's illustrated presentation entitled "The Miracle of Migration". Committee member Hilary Harris reports:*

Steve's audience was fascinated by the discoveries that modern technology has revealed about the amazing expeditions our "British" birds undertake whilst we are hunkering down for the winter. We learnt that even some of our gulls go off on holiday to Spain and Africa. Interestingly it turns out that, just like humans, individual birds tracked over two or three years had their own preferred routes which they stuck to each time. We were also impressed by the fact that various species had their regular food and rest stops sorted in advance, making their whole adventure look like a well organised tour to rival the best human package holiday. Thanks to this new information about the migration routes of various species, we now have a better idea of where to look for problems if there is a sudden drop in numbers returning to our shores.

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**DONATION:** At their September meeting, the Committee agreed to make a donation of £200 from Gainsborough Area Group funds to Trust HQ .  
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### Notes From An Uphill Garden – Summer 2015



*Although all thoughts of summer may have possibly faded by now, this extract from our uphill gardeners' diary will, we hope, evoke memories of sun-filled days and balmy evenings.*

29 June – An immature female Four-spot Chaser dragonfly cruises around the garden and wood margin and perches for some time on a bamboo hoop near the pond – a new record for us. Male Large Skipper on the wing, the first for this year. Several rather plaintive calls from within the wood give away a family of Bullfinches, these shy birds more often heard than seen.

4 July – A male Black-tailed Skimmer dragonfly flies in and rests on the gravel path, allowing a good view of its distinctive black-tipped blue abdomen. This is another new record and brings the number of dragon- and damselfly species seen here to ten.

5 July – Caterpillar of the Vapourer Moth rests on a Dogwood leaf. It is a spectacular creature, grey and orange-red body with many large tufts of long hairs, some black, some white and a few on the back bright yellow, giving the appearance of humps on the back, “horns” and a “tail”. The colours are a warning to would-be predators as the caterpillar arms its long hairs by brushing them against toxin-producing glands at its rear.

22 July – At breakfast the garden full of the energy of juvenile birds – about a dozen Blue Tits, four Blackbirds, several House Sparrows and Chaffinches, and on the bird bath a Great Tit, a Goldfinch and a Blackcap, topped with a rusty crown. The Blue Tits manage to be everywhere at once, zigzagging back and forth, perching briefly on any convenient stem, poking their noses in the nest boxes, investigating the pond and visiting the bird bath (up to five nudging and crowding round its edge at once). A multitude of Water Plantain stems have emerged from the pond, branching into a fine tracery now covered in a constellation of tiny white flowers.

28 July – A Green Woodpecker has been calling in the wood regularly for several days, sounding like someone working a rusty hinge. A youngster setting out its new territory? Marjoram in full flower, attracting many bees and the first of the Gatekeepers.

1 August – Purple Hairstreak settles on the gravel in front of the conservatory. Other butterflies on the wing include Brimstone, Large White, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Gatekeeper and two Holly Blues that whirl around one another in a tussle for dominance. A blood-red male Common Darter dragonfly alights on the sun-warmed path.

3 August – Two Purple Hairstreaks settle in the garden, one, a female, on a patch of newly-turned earth. She spends some time sucking up water and salts from the damp soil and is so intent on her task that she is oblivious to the very closest approach. It is possible to see that she has a metallic blue-green body, visible through the covering of long hairs, bright orange tips to her antennae and a pale yellow proboscis.

26 August – A Southern Hawker dragonfly flies around the garden and bangs against the conservatory window as we eat. Several tiny, delta-winged Mint Moths active around the clumps of Marjoram. No doubt they also lay their eggs on the Water Mint near the pond, and maybe on the Self-heal and Bugle, other members of the Mint family in the garden.

30 August – Four Earth Ball fungi have appeared, one on the path and three in the borders, the first record of these. The tough brown skin has a crazy-paving like pattern of cracks, showing a paler flesh beneath. One has already split open, revealing a dark brown spongy mass inside, which releases a wisp of spores at the slightest touch.

28 Sept – At 2.30 in the morning, we sit in the garden, muffled against the cold, to watch the total eclipse of the Moon. Gradually its disc turns a beautiful coppery red and the reduction in its brightness allows the Milky Way to be seen more easily. Throughout the forty or so minutes of observing this, we are serenaded by the repeated call and answer of Tawny Owls, probably three individuals and now near, now far, though never visible. We imagine small birds chilled by this sound but many must be safely roosting inside holes in trees, or perhaps, we like to think, in some of our nest boxes.

*[Anonymous Uphill Gardeners, thank you once again for allowing us to share the happenings in your fascinating garden - Ed.]*

An enormous 'THANK YOU' to those of you who deliver the Trust mailings three times a year. This task saves the LWT many, many £££££s. Please be aware that your efforts are greatly appreciated.



## Dates for your diary

### **Indoor meetings from November 2015 to April 2016.**

**WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2015:** Former teacher Chris du Feu combines his interests in education and wildlife when he comes to speak to us on “Little People in the Wildlife Classroom”.

**WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2016:** “Mackerel and Mares’ Tails” - Dave and Lynda Ulyett spend a lot of time on their yacht, sailing in the Humber Estuary and also often venturing out into the North Sea. They don’t rely exclusively on the BBC Shipping Forecasts for weather information. Come aboard and discover how this is backed up by their observations and knowledge of cloud formations and weather lore, all beautifully described and illustrated.

**WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2016:** Geoff’s back! By popular request, Trust Chairman Geoff Trinder pays his annual visit to our Area Group. No traveller’s tales tonight - just a wave of the photographic wizard’s wand and Hey Presto - we’re all set for an evening of “Animal Magic”!

**WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL 2016:** AGM and supper – plus Stuart Watson’s fascinating 1950’s film of cattle being transported from Kenya to Ethiopia ..... by air!

*All indoor meetings are held at Morton Village Hall (postcode DN21 3AL) and begin at 7.30pm. Members and non-members, adults and children equally welcome. Admission is by donation (minimum £1.50 which includes tea/coffee and biscuits). Raffle, sales table and bird food sales (please pre-order – see panel of prices).*

*Volunteers to serve refreshments and clear up afterwards are much appreciated.*



## Bird Food Sales:

Welcome to Lesley Collingwood, our new bird food distributor who lives at 7 Willingham Road, Lea (postcode DN21 5EH). Customers are welcome to call, but if you prefer to pre-order your bird food and collect it at indoor meetings, please ring her on 07963 310108. Thank you to Lesley for agreeing to take on this important task, and huge thanks to Clare Holmes who was our bird food sales officer for 18 years, during which time she sold an estimated £23,000-worth of goods on behalf of the Trust. Take a bow, Clare, star that you are!

Weight	Peanuts	Mixed seed	Black sunflowers	Niger seed	Sunflower hearts
Kg	£	£	£	£	£
2.5	6.75	3.00	4.15	5.30	5.50
5	12.50	5.25	7.30	9.20	10.25
20	-	20.00	26.00	-	40.00
25	55.00	-	-	42.00	-
Fat Balls	30p each				
Charcoal	4.75 per bag				

*Please note supplies and prices are subject to availability and change.*

Please send your wildlife sightings or other info to the Editor, Joy Bannister, 01427 628457 or gjb786@btinternet.com



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