



Linkline

Spring 2015 Issue 48

Newsletter of the Gainsborough Area Group of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

GAINSBOROUGH AREA GROUP'S BIG BIRTHDAY



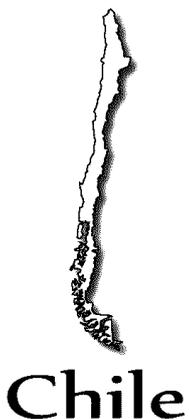
Gainsborough Area Group celebrates its 40th birthday this year. On 6 May 1975 around 40 people gathered at the Old Hall along with personnel from the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation. This organisation was later to become The Lincolnshire and South Humberside Trust for Nature Conservation and, currently, The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The intention of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of forming a Gainsborough Area Group. The members of the LTNC spoke about the aims and objectives of the Trust and of area Groups. David Willey, Reserve Manager at Scotton Common and of the Isle of Axholme reserves, talked about the work involved in caring for such sites. Volunteers were keen to come forward, and a Committee was formed to run the new Area Group. It consisted of: David Willey (Chairman), Anna Willey (Secretary), Paul Slater (Treasurer) plus Simon and June Denton, Joan Gibbons, Gill Newman and Mr and Mrs Hudson. The first Committee Meeting was held on Thursday 15 May 1975 and since then a further 119 Committee meetings have taken place.

The Area Group originally met at the Old Hall but transferred to the Rechabite Hall in 1993 and finally to our present meeting place – Morton Village Hall - in 1998 . It is estimated that during the Area Group's existence there have been over 450 meetings, both indoor talks and outdoor field meetings. It is interesting to note that there have only been 4 Chairmen: David Willey, Michael Barke, Pat Greatorex and Jean Blades - testament to the stability of our Group.

The Committee is planning a celebration event during the summer months. See the next issue of Linkline for more details.

41st year gets off to a flying start

South America was the focus of the first meeting of the New Year when Geoff and Wendy Handford, who pay regular visits to their family in Chile, took us on a journey from the Andes to Atacama. The variety of wildlife, scenery and climate they have encountered was astonishing, but this is unsurprising when one considers that Chile is 3,000 miles from north to south - although only 150 miles from east to west. Geoff's evocative photographs and Wendy's lively and descriptive commentary made for a most enjoyable and informative evening.





Notes From An Uphill Garden – Winter 2014/15

11 November – A female Common Darter dragonfly surprises us by appearing in the garden at this late date. Their flight season, at its peak in August, can sometimes extend into November in mild autumns and even occasionally into December. It settles for a while on the garage wall, flattening itself to absorb what energy it can from the sun-warmed brick.

12 December – Goldfinch on the Teasels and a Blue Tit bathing in the bird bath but both scatter when a female Sparrowhawk swoops silently in over the garage roof. Unable to snatch anything this time, she perches briefly on a low branch at the edge of the wood. There is a momentary impression of her barred breast and fierce, yellow eyes before she moves on. A number of Primrose plants have flowers showing.

Christmas Day – After a long spell of mild weather, wild flowers in bloom include Dog Violet, Primrose, White Dead-nettle and a single, deep pink Herb Robert. Our winter heather and blue Pulmonaria are also starting to flower. A male Tawny hoots in the wood just after midnight.

30 December – Two Goldfinches take seeds from the Teasel heads. One stays much longer than the other, prompting our fears that its easy meal may be its last if the Sparrowhawk is about.

15 January – A scattering of broken shells of Banded Snails, yellow, brown and pinkish-beige, striped with dark brown, on the stone slab by the Bramley tree reveal the recent activity of a Song Thrush.

18 January – The Song Thrush feeds on snails again, thrashing the shells on the path by the garage and on a large stone that weights the base of the bird bath. After its sticky meal, it wipes its beak clean by means of two rapid swipes, left and right, on the leaf litter.

22 January – Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming in the wood for the first time this year, the reverberating sound bringing back to mind the twanging wooden ruler of schooldays.

31 January – Seven Blackbirds in the garden together on a dull, windy and wintry afternoon take it in turns to bathe in the pond, occasionally fighting over the choicest spots around the water's edge and then complete their preening either in the hedge or in the Bramley tree. Effective maintenance of feathers is vitally important in winter to ensure maximum insulation against the cold. It's likely that many of these birds are seasonal visitors from the continent.

1 February – Three of the birdboxes are cleaned out ready for the nesting season. The first, which was used successfully last year, contains a dead but still fresh looking Blue Tit which must have succumbed to old age, disease or cold as recently as the previous night or two. The other boxes, although not used for nesting, nevertheless contain heaps of droppings from roosting birds, showing that they have been valued many times as overnight refuges during the winter.

9 February – First sighting of a Peacock butterfly, tempted out from hibernation by some welcome warm sunshine.

Thank you to our Uphill members for yet another extraction from their diary. It has a strong, latter-day Parson Woodforde feel to it which makes for delightful reading – Ed

WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN AND HEARD

Notes from Members' winter diaries...



- On 28 November Brian Hedley noted 2 Ravens flying south over Trent Port (Marton) and on 6 December there was a Peregrine, a Little Owl and over 250 Redwings in the same area.
- Towards the end of last year tractors with huge trailer loads of topsoil were being carted along Laughton beckside into fields off Scotter Road, Laughton. This very noisy and disturbing activity went on for several days, shattering the peace of this usually tranquil area. During this time member Kevin Wilbur, whose property lies alongside the beck in the opposite direction, was pleased to see a Kingfisher skimming along his section of the beck. Forty or so years ago this was a common sight here, but these colourful little birds sadly dwindled in number and finally disappeared. However, once the carting ceased the Kingfisher was no longer in evidence. It is assumed that it had been disturbed from its usual habitat along the 'wild' part of the beck and had sought temporary sanctuary in the Wilburs' relatively peaceful garden.
- Roe deer have also sought winter sanctuary - in the fields of Miscanthus to the south of Laughton village. As this tall, dense crop is not harvested (for bio-fuel) until early spring it provides valuable cover for many species of wildlife at a time when naturally occurring shelter can be scarce. Villagers whose homes overlook the Miscanthus fields report seeing as many as 10 deer emerge in daylight from the standing crop and cross over the Blyton road (once narrowly avoiding a Stagecoach bus!) into the more open fields. The herd is usually split into two groups of 5 deer. Maybe this is a case of safety in smaller numbers!
- Brian Hedley also reports, with regret, a Water Shrew found dead in his garden at Marton on 9 January – presumably the victim of a neighbour's cat. Not surprisingly this was the first record here for this scarce Lincolnshire mammal.
- And to end with an amusing little tale from Brian: a Weasel, with prey in mouth, was spotted running in between the legs of my tripod whilst I was trying to see the reported Great Grey Shrike at Blyton on New Year's Day.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted items for this column – please keep your observations coming in, either by phone, e-mail or snail mail, please. Sorry, but I cannot guarantee to remember word-of-mouth messages and would be grateful if these could be followed up by a reminder in one of the ways suggested above. Please also see our website for some beautiful - usually local – photographs. Log onto www.gainsboroughwildlifetrust.webs.com.

A big 'THANK YOU' to those who submit items for this site, your involvement is very much appreciated – Ed.



Dates For Your Diary – Indoor Meetings

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL: AGM, Supper and Update from Strawberry Farm.

Come along for an evening of food, fun and friendship. The AGM is notoriously a short but efficient procedure and afterwards there will be a miscellany of entertainment including an update from Strawberry Farm.

SALES STALL: Plants - labelled potted up, indoor and outdoor varieties, please.

WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER: Have you ever wondered how birds find their way to and from distant summer and winter habitats? Do they have a built-in compass, or even a satnav? This is Steve Lovell's topic tonight when he talks to us about 'The Miracle of Migration'.

SALES STALL: Trust Christmas goods and Bring & Buy.

All indoor meetings are held at Morton Village Hall (DN21 3AL) and begin at 7.30pm. Admission is by donation at the door (minimum £1.00) which includes tea/coffee and biscuits. Raffle, sales table and good company.

Dates For Your Diary – Outdoor Meetings

WEDNESDAY 6 MAY: Visit to Rush Furlong, LWT Nature Reserve near Haxey.

Rush Furlong is a fragment of the extensive system of strip farming in the Isle of Axholme. It has been managed by no other means than hay cutting as far back as can be traced. There is a rich variety of flora – over 60 species of flowering plants have been recorded. Meet at the reserve at 7pm for a 7.15pm start. The reserve lies to the east of the A161 just north of Haxey. Park on the road and walk up the track to access the reserve. OS Sheet: 112. Grid Ref: SE781004. Sorry, no postcode or dogs!

LATER IN THE SUMMER: A visit to Andrew Parsons' farm at Sutton on Trent.

Andrew was the speaker on farming with wildlife at our September meeting last year. Unfortunately, at the time of going to press, we have not been able to arrange a date and time for this event. If you are interested in visiting the farm please get in touch with Joy. Her contact details are in the panel below.



Bird Food Sales:

Our local distributor is Clare Holmes. Regular customers are still welcome to call at her home as before, but if you wish to buy bird food from the stall at indoor meetings please pre-order from her in good time - 01427 613128 - and she will bring your order to the meeting. In the past Clare has often lugged quantities of bird food to meetings, sales have been poor... and she has had to lug the stuff home again. By pre-ordering you will save Clare much time and effort.

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 gjban786@btinternet.com



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