



Linkline

Summer 2012, Issue 40

Newsletter of the Gainsborough Area Group of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



AREA GROUP TEAM REMAINS THE SAME

At the Area Group's Annual General Meeting in April there were no new nominations for Officers or Committee, so as all existing members were willing to stand for re-election, the team remains unchanged. There is still a vacancy for a Chairman but Jean Blades, Vice-chairman, will continue to front meetings and chair Committee meetings and we are most grateful to her for this. Similarly, we currently have no Refreshments Officer but Joy Bannister ensures that supplies are brought to each meeting and relies on the help of volunteers in the kitchen to serve refreshments ...and to clear away and wash up afterwards. Many thanks to those who so willingly come forward at each meeting.

The elected team is:

Chairman	Vacant
Vice-chairman	Jean Blades
Secretary/Linkline Editor	Joy Bannister
Treasurer/Programme Secretary	Linda Woodward
Mailing/Membership/Sales Officer	Hilary Harris
Birdfood Sales	Clare Holmes
Publicity Officer/Linkline Producer	Dave Stockley
Raffle Organiser	Richard Williamson
Door Warden	Graham Bannister
Refreshments Officer	Vacant
Reserve Manager (Scotton Common)	Roly Barber (Ex-officio member of the Area Group Committee)

The AGM was a happy occasion both socially and informatively, with 41 members and guests present. The actual business part of the meeting was over in 12 minutes (not quite a record for brevity!) and this was followed by an update on Beckingham Marshes given by RSPB Warden Paul Bennett. A supper of homemade soup, bread rolls, plum bread and cheese followed before the evening concluded with a fascinating presentation by Richard Williamson and Richard Wiltshire. Cameras are set up regularly at strategic points around the Williamsons' farms at Morton and Thonock and we were privileged to see the variety of wildlife caught by the lens - much of it at night-time - including rabbits, foxes, badgers, polecats and, of course, the famous Strawberry Farm barn owls.

Contact Jean on 01427 838325, Joy on 01427 628457 or e-mail her at gjban786@btinternet.com



Linda's Beckingham Marshes Report:

On Wednesday evening 2nd May, around 35 people met at the Willow Works, Beckingham for a visit to the new RSPB Beckingham Marshes reserve with Warden Paul Bennett.

This followed on from an indoor meeting the preceding month when Paul gave us a very interesting talk on the progress made to date at the reserve (and some of the problems encountered on the way!). He pointed out some of the things he'd talked about and even showed us how his plover worked!

A viewing platform with information panels has been installed on the site, and in the Summer a short circular walk to this is due to open to the public, which will be accessed from the Willow Works area.

For more information re the proposed opening (when available), photos of the reserve and to read the latest on what Paul has seen, pay a visit to:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/placestovisit/beckinghammarshes/default.aspx>

WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN..... AND HEARD:



* Spotted on shrubs in the afternoon sun in a Laughton garden in mid-May - several Adela Reaumurella - green/metallic moths with very long, grey hair-like antenna. This was a new sighting in this area.

* A Cuckoo was heard calling for the first time this year on the edge of Laughton Forest at 6.50am on Monday 30 April, a beautiful sunny morning. [*Not the first cuckoo - see Notes from an Uphill Garden - ED.*]

* A Pied Wagtail has nested about 4 feet from the ground in a creeping hydrangea in a Lea garden, undeterred by the noise and bustle of the nearby A156. At the time of writing (end of May) the offspring are fledged and very active!

* Earlier in the spring a Red Kite was observed hovering above the River Trent at Susworth.

* Adders were reported to be abroad in Laughton Forest during the warm weather in mid-March. They were usually seen basking in the sunshine on the forest roads which have been resurfaced with limestone chippings and then flattened down, making a warm and comfortable snakey sunlounger!

* Following the very dry spell of weather in March two strange sponge-like fungus specimens, about the size of tennis balls, appeared in a Laughton orchard. The owners of the property have lived there for 37 years but have never seen anything like this before. They have been identified as *Morchella esculenta* and are said to be 'a highly esteemed edible fungus' - but no-one has yet been brave enough to verify this!



Notes From An Uphill Garden:

a further extract from the diary of two Area Group members whose garden in uphill Gainsborough, which is planned with wildlife in mind, backs on to some old woodland:

2012

7 February – Snow has been lying for several days. A Redwing sits in the hedge, half asleep in the bright sunshine, feathers puffed out against the cold.

9 February – The freeze continues. Each morning, we have been standing on the ice of the pond an old milk container filled with warm water and secured by string, to melt its way through and maintain a patch of open water. A Robin has quickly become accustomed to this, coming down to drink from the freshly opened hole soon after the bottle has been put in place.

24 February – A second warm and Spring-like day and our first sighting of a Bumble Bee, feeding on *Pulmonaria*. This early blooming member of the Borage family is a valuable nectar source for these insects and attracts many during its flowering period of several weeks. The distant sound of a Woodpecker drumming.

25 February – Robins investigating an open-fronted nest box in the Honeysuckle and Blue Tits busy looking at the box on the back of the garage that faces on to the woodland. This particular box is very popular and has been used the most often of those in the garden, most likely because of its secluded position.

26 February – Wren taking nest material into the ivy at the end of the south fence, making many trips to fetch dead leaves, and sometimes rejecting one for a reason known only to him. The male will build several nests and invite the female with his trilling and surprisingly loud song to inspect each one and make her choice.

23 March – A male Brimstone butterfly, two Peacocks and two Commas in the garden in the morning. The Commas came together and flew upwards in a furious spiral, behaviour thought to be a competition to win the right to a coveted perching post in the sunshine, the best place to look out for a mate.

24 March – First Chiff-chaff in the Wood.

28 March – Sparrowhawk soaring in the thermals over the Wood. First snatch of song from the male Blackcap.

30 March – K tied up on the bean frame some short, teased-out strands of natural fibre string. Within 15 minutes a Blue Tit was gathering great beak-fulls after repeated tugs at the bundle. A Robin foraged on the ground underneath for fibres dropped by the Blue Tit. Neither bird had been visible when the string was put out and it was interesting to see how quickly they had picked up on something we would have thought inconspicuous.

12 April – First sighting of a male Orange Tip. This butterfly lays eggs on the Lady's Smock, or Cuckoo Flower, and as we have greater numbers of these delicate mauve flowers blooming in the bog garden than ever before, no doubt encouraged by the wet weather, we hope the Orange Tips will be able to breed here.

24 April – First Cuckoo call, a good distance away. First sighting of Humming Bird Hawk-moth, an early record for this European immigrant which is usually most numerous in high summer.

26 April – Male Blackcap singing all morning, its bubbling song often mingling with the varied and expert phrases of a Song Thrush.

5 May – Starlings circling high above, we assume to catch small insects for their young. So often seen foraging on lawns, it was a surprise to see them imitating Swallows, but like other birds we have seen in the garden – Greenfinches, House Sparrows, Goldfinches – they alter their normal behaviour to catch small insects which are of a suitable size and very digestible and nutritious for their nestlings.

21 May – Chiff-chaff bathed in the bird-bath. Many Green Longhorn Moths in flight by the hedge.

25 May – A joined pair of Large Red Damselflies over the pond, the female ovipositing.

27 May – After running a moth trap overnight (thanks for the loan and help from Linda and Alan) we identified: Orange Footman, Silver Y, Green Carpet, Heart and Dart, Setaceous Hebrew Character, Waved Umber, Spectacle, Common Rustic, Pale Tussock, Knotgrass and Slender Pug. We also caught 15 Cockchafers!

30 May – A Magpie brought what appeared to be a piece of bread to the bird bath and dunked it in the water to soften it before eating it. We saw this behaviour repeated, and as the bread was sometimes carried off uneaten, we thought perhaps it was being moistened before being taken back to feed hungry youngsters.

3 June – At 10:30 pm, on hearing through the slightly open bathroom window a snuffling and strange whining, grunting noise just outside, a search was made outside and on the ground found – a pair of Hedgehogs!

Many thanks for this beautifully descriptive view into a fascinating garden! We would love to hear from anyone who keeps a similar wildlife diary, but perhaps in a different type of location. - Ed.

Dates For Your Diary - INDOOR MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER:

Botswana - an adventure safari
Malcolm Walpole



WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER:

Hedgehogs
Janet Peto

WEDNESDAY 21 NOVEMBER:

A Digital Year
Geoff Trinder

All indoor meetings are held at Morton Village Hall and begin at 7.30pm. Members and non-members equally welcome. Entrance by donation - minimum £1.00 - which includes tea/coffee and biscuits. Raffle, Trust sales table and bird food sales (please pre-order - see below). Volunteers to help serve refreshments/wash up much appreciated!

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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 feed 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,
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or
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