



Linkline

Summer 2015 Issue 49

Newsletter of the Gainsborough Area Group of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

A.G.M. = A GREAT MEETING:

The AGM in April was, as always, a brisk affair with Chairman Jean Blades conducting the necessary business at a lively pace. There were no changes to the Committee, which was re-elected en bloc, although it is hoped a permanent Programme Secretary will be found to take over from Joy Bannister, who is currently carrying out this task on a temporary basis for a second year.

Following the various reports etc the meeting was splendidly entertained by that well-known double act 'The Two Richards' (Williamson & Wiltshire) who gave a very interesting illustrated update on the wildlife at Strawberry Farm, Morton.

Finally supper was served, most of which was provided by members of the Committee. The menu of homemade vegetable soup with fresh bread rolls, cheese and plum loaf and tea or coffee appeared to be enjoyed by all, and rounded off another successful year for the Area Group.

Grateful thanks to all who helped to make the AGM such a pleasant occasion, whether by providing the entertainment, preparing and serving supper or clearing away and washing up afterwards. This type of team work is what makes Gainsborough Area Group so friendly and special – long may it continue!



COME CELEBRATE WITH US!

We shall be celebrating the Area Group's 40th Anniversary on Wednesday 12 August with an evening DIY Picnic Party from 7pm-10pm at 35 Morton Road, Laughton by kind invitation of Ken and Hilary Harris. As it is impossible to ascertain numbers for catering purposes, the Committee suggests party-goers bring their own picnic food and drinks, although tea/coffee will be served, and a celebration cake cut, later in the evening. Barbecue facilities will be available for those who wish to use them. It is also difficult to organise adequate seating, so bringing a garden chair or blanket may be a good idea! Admission is free, but as this is a Members Only event you will be asked to show your current membership card at the entrance. There will be a raffle on the night and proceeds from this will be used to cover any incidental expenses.

Any queries to Joy on 01427 628457, please.

Please send your wildlife sightings
or other info to the Editor,
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Notes From An Uphill Garden – Spring 2015

2 April – First Chiff Chaff to be heard in the wood this year.

6 April – Male and female Brimstone on the wing; also Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell - the mild winter has allowed good numbers of adults of the last two species to survive from last year. Three Buzzards circling over the wood and Green Woodpecker calling. Blue Tits take regular beakfuls of natural string fibre from a bunch tied to a plant

support. A Chiff Chaff visits the pond three times, settling on the dense weed on the surface and perching on the dead stems of emergent Water Plantain. It does not bathe and appears not to drink so we assume it is looking for insects.

8 April – A rare visit to the garden by a Treecreeper, which usually keep to the wood. It gathers some of the string fibres dropped to the ground by other birds and climbs with spurts of jerky movement, its white belly pressed close to the trunk, up the largest Hawthorn in the hedge before flying back into the wood.

10 April – Wood Anemones starting to bloom. First sighting of Bee Fly. Tawny Owl hooting in the middle of the day, quite near the edge of the wood but remaining invisible to us. Although these owls mostly nest in holes in trees, many also use squirrel dreys and the old nests of crow species and raptors, laying two to four eggs in March and April. We assume there is a breeding pair fairly close. We have found that Tawny Owl activity, as far as we are aware of it from the familiar hoot of the male and the “whit- whit” of the female, seems to come in fits and starts, with perhaps a week of nightly calling followed by periods of silence, but the birds are present every year.

A batch of string fibre put out at breakfast is gone by lunch and a second lot hung up after lunch is all taken by late afternoon.

11 April – Three full batches of string fibre carried off during the day – clearly nest building is reaching a peak.

13 April – Blackcap male singing in the wood for the first time this year.

16 April – First sighting of female Blackcap, preening in the bird bath.

20 April – Cuckoo calling for the first time this year, heard distantly from the direction of The Belt. First sighting in the garden of Holly Blue and male Orange Tip. A Chiff Chaff and a pair of Goldfinches come regularly to the bird bath.

22 April – The early evening is a popular time for birds to use the bird bath and in quick succession we see Sparrow (male), Chaffinch (male), Goldfinch, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Coal Tit bathing. Birds often take a dip two or three times, flying off into the hedge to preen in between plunges.

20 May – Red Campion flowering under the hedge for the first time since scattering seeds several years ago. Its bright rosy-pink flowers are unscented. We don't have any of its close relative the White Campion, which favours more open and sunny places and has flowers which spread their petals more widely in the evening and are then slightly fragrant to attract night-flying insects.

24 May – First sighting this year of Hornet, a single insect passing low over the conservatory, the loud, deep note of its wing beat indicative of its impressive size. On a couple of occasions in the past a Hornet has entered the conservatory through a window. Catching one in a small container to release it safely outside can be a slightly alarming experience but does allow a rare chance to see these magnificent insects in close-up.

[Thank you to our two diarists for these observations so vividly recorded - Ed.]



WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN AND HEARD

- In mid-March we received a report of a Brambling in a Laughton garden which is adjacent to open fields. This was the first time the householder had been visited by this winter visitor.
- A few days later, in a nearby garden, a member was fascinated to see a Treecreeper which she first took to be a mouse as it crept around the base of a tree stump, close to her kitchen window. The bird then tacked up the stump, making jerky progress until it reached the summit where it took flight.
- Our reporter who lives in Laughton Forest rang on 24 March to say there was suddenly lots of frogspawn in his garden pond – hurrah! Two days later he reported that migrant Chiffchaff were back and calling in the forest fringe.
- There were numerous reports of the arrival of Swallows – the first one notified to the Editor was on 8 April, but the majority of sightings were a week or so later when nest building began in earnest. *[And what a mess they are making in Paint Pot's stable and tackroom, though I feel a great sense of pride when I imagine them on their interminable journey north with their birdie minds focussed on the outbuildings here at No 9!! – Ed.]*
- A Scotter member who lives near the River Eau was distressed to find a headless Mallard drake on her front lawn one morning in early spring. The bird was in excellent condition otherwise, and one can only assume this was a case of murder most foul, with Mr Fox the chief suspect.
- As to the 'first' Cuckoo – well, reports covered a range of dates but 20 April in The Belt area of uphill Gainsborough to 22 April in Laughton Woods were the first ones Linkline received.

[Please keep your sightings coming in. The Editor is longing to hear from you, no matter how insignificant you feel your sighting is. Contact her by telephone, e-mail or snail mail (details on the back page) – Ed.]



Field Trip to Rush Furlong Reserve

6 May 2015

Eight including leader Michael Barke attended this Trust reserve on a cold and windy evening. Situated just north of Haxey in the Isle of Axholme, this piece of meadow grassland is a rare survivor of the once extensive system of strip farming in the area and has been managed only by hay-cutting for as long as is known. The Trust saved it by buying the land in 1978 and has since expanded the reserve by acquiring adjacent land. We timed our visit to see the site's speciality, Green-winged Orchid (*Anacamptis morio*) and were rewarded by the sight of many hundreds of flower spikes in perfect condition. At first sight the plant is rather similar to the Early Purple Orchid but is slightly smaller and distinguishable by the dark-greenish parallel veins on the coloured sepals, which form a hood over the flower instead of spreading. We were fortunate to see the full range of colour forms of the flowers, ranging from deep purple through pale pink to pure white. More than sixty species of flowering plants have been recorded on the reserve but at this early date many had yet to flower; we found the leaves of a number of species including Rough Hawk's-beard, Yellow Rattle, Pignut, Yellow Meadow Vetchling, Knapweed and Agrimony. The flowers of Cowslips were largely faded but Buttercups in the newer part of the reserve were in flower and the species turned out to be Bulbous Buttercup, distinguished from the similar Meadow Buttercup by its down-turned sepals. Another uncommon and special species of old meadows, Adder's Tongue Fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), also occurs here and we spent some time looking for it before Alison Brownlow finally succeeded in finding a patch. Not an easy plant to spot amongst grasses and other

herbage as it is entirely green and only 2-6 inches high. It is a curious little fern with an oval, plain, leaf-shaped frond and some of the plants bearing a thin, spore-bearing frond which looks rather like a green mouse's tail, or perhaps a plantain flower spike. The reserve is bounded on three sides by large hedges which provide good habitat for small birds and over the wind we did manage to hear Yellowhammer and Whitethroat singing and at one point a distant Cuckoo.

[Very many thanks to Michael Barke for leading the expedition and also for presenting this report - Ed.]



Dates For Your Diary

WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER: As our feathered summer visitors prepare to make their long flights back to far away destinations it is appropriate that tonight's speaker, Steve Lovell, will be giving an illustrated talk on "The Miracle of Migration".

[Please note that this talk was originally scheduled for October 2014 but was unavoidably cancelled.]

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER: Rachel Shaw, LWT Communications Officer, occasionally leaves her perch at Trust HQ and flies off to see the world. Tonight she drops in to tell us all about "Conservation from Lincolnshire to the Philippines".

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER: 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"

All indoor meetings are held at Morton Village Hall (postcode DN21 3AL) and begin at 7.30pm. Members and non-members equally welcome. Entrance by donation (minimum £1.50 which includes tea/coffee and biscuits. Raffle, sales table and bird food sales (please pre-order - see panel of bird food prices on P4). Volunteers to serve refreshments and clear up afterwards are much appreciated!

AUTUMN MEETING SALES STALLS: LWT sales goods including Christmas cards and calendars plus general Bring & Buy (produce, books, bric-a-brac etc) on a sale-or-take-it back-home with you basis.



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.