



LICHFIELD RSPB SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER



Well, our summer break's over and the nights are drawing in so it's back to the monthly meeting routine when we get a chance to find out what everyone's been up to - where they've been and what they've seen. It has been a really dry summer and although it's rained all day today (August 26) we've had so little rain that gardens have been desperately short of water and many trees are showing signs of real stress; leaves are curling up and dying on the branch. Most reservoirs are at a very low level, and further south many rivers have dried up completely. It seems crazy that in such a small island the northern half can experience very wet summers, rivers in flood and full reservoirs while the south is parched and on water restrictions yet we do nothing about it.

I've got a cunning plan! Let's cancel HS2, which will benefit few and ruin the lives of many and invest the multibillions it will cost in a network of pipelines feeding water from the north to the south. This will create many jobs, inconvenience few and benefit all. Many ancient civilisations managed it with manpower alone and our canal network, all 2500 miles of it, were dug with pick and shovel. There's not much point in saving 20 minutes on a journey to London if there's no water in the taps when you get there and the pubs are shut.

Most of you will be familiar with The Fuse, the alternative side of the Lichfield Festival. This is a tented event held in Beacon park and this year we were offered a pitch in one of the marquees for an RSPB stall. This we duly accepted so on Sunday 10th July a group of committee members turned up with all our RSPB stuff and spent a pleasant day chatting to visitors, handing out leaflets and programmes and selling pin badges. As always with these event the intention is to raise the profile of the RSPB and to highlight the presence of our local group. As we often find, many RSPB members who come for a chat are surprised to find that a local group exists in Lichfield. This is a subject we have raised with HQ several times but the message about informing all members about local groups doesn't seem to have sunk in.

On the birding front things are now getting interesting as Autumn migration begins and all the northern breeders which passed through in spring are now making their way south again. Just think how relatively boring it would be, birdwatching in a region which didn't experience the twice yearly migration which can bring any number of rarities to our shores. We may curse our unreliable weather at times but it does make life interesting.

CHANGE OF PROGRAMME

Because of changed flight times on a holiday booking, Steve Lovell who was to visit us in November will now present **Australian Wildlife** at our **October** meeting.

Fortunately Roger Charters who was booked for October to present **Wildlife Sound Recording** was free to swap so he will be with us at the **November** meeting.

This information will be on our website but please pass on the information to anyone not at this meeting.

NEWS AND INFORMATION

At a recent committee meeting it was decided to donate **£500** to the **RSPB Reedbed Appeal**. For the last few years we have made similar donations from an accumulation of surplus funds. This still leaves us with sufficient funds to cover our running costs and to meet commitments. We need to keep in mind that part of our function is to raise money to enable RSPB to continue the numerous projects it is engaged in both home and abroad. It is worth noting that **91%** of money raised is used for conservation. If we existed solely as a local group without making any donations, we would in fact be a financial drain because of the admin costs involved.

*Our involvement in the Pin Badge scheme continues to be productive. In the last financial year, from **May 2010 to May 2011, we paid in £738** thus raising our total donations for last year to £1238. Midlands Local Groups in total raised **£96,756**. This is a very simple and easy way to raise money but we could do with more sites to put boxes - **can you help?** The best sites are those with plenty of passing trade where the box is easily visible to customers but safely in sight of staff.*

Our best outlets are Bromley Hayes Garden Centre, Chase Station Cafe, Ben Reavey's dental practice in town and two Pet R Us stores. Christmas is a'cummin, pin badges make a nice little additional present to friends and family of any age and who knows, you may start a collecting craze. I know one lady who now has 150 badges and eagerly awaits any new ones!

We are planning a local bird walk for any group members, friends and family. This is an opportunity to improve your own birdwatching skills, possibly seen new species, to introduce newcomers to our group and perhaps have your first look at this local reserve. The walk will take place at the newly-opened RSPB reserve at **Middleton Lakes near Tamworth**. Meet at the **RSPB carpark at 10.00am on Sunday 23 October**. The walk will take about two hours and there are toilet and cafe facilities at Middleton Hall near the RSPB carpark

Our list of speakers for next year was completed months ago, the next task is to contact all our sponsors then organise the layout and printing of the programme for 2012. Hopefully this will all go smoothly and the new programme will be available at the December meeting.

*You may need prior notice of a coach outing to **Old Moor RSPB Reserve**. We attempted a visit there two years ago but were forced to cancel due to a heavy snowfall on the morning of the trip. This site has all facilities including an excellent shop, renowned cafe, level, easy walking and six hides. Situated near Barnsley it's only a couple of hours away by coach, ideal for a short winter's day. **Date for this event - Sunday 22 January; book with Heather now.***

The RSPB second-hand binocular scheme: you may or may not have heard of this scheme which provides optics for conservation bodies in other countries.

“Around the world there are thousands of conservation projects with little or no funding for basic optical equipment. In 1985 the RSPB came up with a way to help by asking for donations of old binoculars.

We appeal to members of the public to send in their old unwanted optics that are in good working order. Staff and volunteers check over received items and put them in store till needed.”

This is a great way to help volunteers in countries where the purchase of decent equipment is out of the question. If you have binoculars, small 'scopes or tripods that never see the light of day, do you bit for world conservation, bring them in to a meeting and we'll arrange delivery to HQ.