

## **30 YEARS OF BIRD WATCHING**

No not me. I have only been a serious birdwatcher for 6 years. I am referring to Bird Watching magazine which has just celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> year with an interesting supplement, sponsored by Focus Optics, one of our sponsors.

In recent months I have commented on some bird species in trouble so I thought I should mention some of the success stories in the last 30 years listed in BW magazine.

There were 3 pairs of Cranes in Norfolk in 1997, now increased to 15 breeding pairs. Spoonbills bred in the UK until about 1650; as well as a steady increase of summer visitors they started breeding again in 2010 at Holkham. Choughs have increased from 68 pairs in 1991 to 150 pairs today. Cetti's Warblers were nearly eradicated in the 1980s harsh winters but there are now more than 2,000 singing males. Little Egrets were rare 30 years ago but now there are 4,500 wintering birds and 700 breeding pairs. Avocets have increased from 650 breeding pairs to 1,500 in the last 20 years. There were fewer than 20 pairs of breeding firecrests by 1992 but there are now estimated to be 550 pairs. Blackcaps have increased from a few hundred thousand pairs to 1.2 million breeding pairs and 3,000 wintering birds. Peregrines, Marsh Harriers, Buzzards, Hobbies and Red Kites have all increased significantly. Bitterns are increasing and 35-40 Great White Egrets now spend the winter here with a pair breeding at Shapwick Heath in 2012.

We sometimes overlook these positive stories by only thinking about the species that have declined.

### **COACH TRIP TO RSPB BEMPTON CLIFFS**

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June**

Our next coach trip is to RSPB Bempton Cliffs in June.

We have had a good response so far with 34 booked on the trip so we have been able to order a larger 49 seater coach. Therefore there is still plenty of room if you would like to go.

This is the peak time to see all the nesting sea birds, including of course the puffins. Bempton has the largest mainland breeding colony of gannets. You can get close to the action from six, safe cliff-edge viewing platforms. Inside the seabird centre, which has been rebuilt in 2015, there's an exciting exhibition area, large TV screens screening live images from the cliffs. There is a café and decked area overlooking the reserve with tables and chairs.

Therefore please reserve your place with Heather tonight. We would appreciate early payment as we will have to pay for the coach soon.

Cost for this trip will be £17 per head and the coach will leave the B&M car park at 7.30 am.

Free admission to Bempton for RSPB members, otherwise £3.50 for adults.

## LOCAL BIRDWATCHING WALK: TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH

### Shustoke reservoir

We have been pleased with the popularity of our local walks with an average attendance of 12 people over the last year. Last month at Sandwell valley we saw a good range of birds including snipe, goosander, kingfisher and ring necked parakeets.

We are going to Shustoke reservoir near Coleshill for our next local birdwatching walk.

This is a Severn Trent Water reservoir of approximately 40 hectares. The adjacent small areas of woodland add to the diversity of birdlife.

**Resident birds include:** Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Buzzard, Red-legged Partridge, Stock Dove, Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay, Bullfinch.

**October - March:** Cormorant, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Pochard, Goldeneye, Goosander, Fieldfare, Redwing, Siskin, Redpoll.

Occasional rarities turn up – a black throated diver was there in January and the early part of February.

We will be meeting at the Reserve car park at 10am for an approximate 2 hour visit. Please come along if you can and share your birdwatching skills with us.

Meet at the Severn Trent Shustoke reservoir visitor car park, which can be accessed from the B4114 road in the centre of Shustoke village. Postcode is B46 2BE.

If anyone requires a lift from Lichfield please see me this evening or contact me either by phone on 0121 353 6886 or email ([dennis.muxworthy@btinternet.com](mailto:dennis.muxworthy@btinternet.com)).

## NEXT MEETING: 12<sup>th</sup> APRIL

### Jim's Big Year

We welcome back the "Shropshire Birder", Jim Almond, who will tell his story of 2014 which saw him travel the length and breadth of the UK to seek out rarities and breeding birds. There's too many species to list here but be assured the best of the images obtained will be featured - from common residents to amazing rarities. It was a true roller coaster of a year and many of the highs and lows are featured. His target was 300 species - find out if he made it and enjoy the 1,000's of miles travelled from the comfort of your chair!

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

In the eighteen months I have been preparing the newsletter, no one has submitted anything for the newsletter! While I quite enjoy writing articles and bits of news and information it seems a shame that your birding and wildlife activities are not being enjoyed by the rest of us. Please put pen to paper or prepare an email and let us know what you have been doing, where you have been or what you have seen.

I'm happy to receive items by email, post or a note at a meeting.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sutton group are running a coach trip to Potteric Carr on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March. For further information and to book please contact Tony Green on 01827 750633 or [tonygreen777@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tonygreen777@hotmail.co.uk)