

AUGUST 2014

Sunday 31 August

Own transport trip to **Rutland Water**.

Rutland Water offers excellent bird-watching, with plenty of hides if the weather is wet! The breeding ospreys should still be present and we will also look out for waders on passage. Dragonflies are abundant here in August.

Meet at Egleton car park (O/S 141, SK 880 072) at 9.30am. Permits £5.50

Leader: Martin Johnson

MEMBERS' SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

SEPTEMBER

Friday 5th

Goshawks - The RSPB's Conor Jameson is an award winning nature writer and brings to the group his own unique story of the elusive Goshawk.

Sunday 21st

Coach trip to **RSPB Dungeness and Dungeness NNR** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).

The RSPB's oldest reserve occupies the largest shingle formation of its kind in Europe and is home to rare plants, insects and amphibians, along with a great selection of birds. As usual, we will spend a couple of hours in Dungeness village before we return, looking for passage migrants, gulls and terns as well as the black redstarts which often frequent the power station. Letchworth: 7.30am. Hitchin: 7.45am. Stevenage: 7.55am.

Leader: Malcolm Ingram

OCTOBER

Friday 3rd

Mongolia, Steppe & Desert - Phil and Ann Farrer return to delight us with their images of the birds that live in these vast barren lands of Asia.

Sunday 19th

Coach trip to **Holkham and Wells**.

This popular trip, which offers participants the opportunity to walk from Holkham to Wells on the North Norfolk coast, offers first-class bird-watching as winter visitors arrive and passage migrants linger in perfect habitat. We expect to see 90+ species on this trip and maybe even 100 if an easterly wind is blowing! The coach will return from Wells.

Hitchin: 7.30am. Letchworth: 7.45am. Royston: 8.05am.

Leader: Val Thompson

NOVEMBER

Friday 7th

The Biggest Twitch - Alan Davies & Ruth Miller
A warts-and-all tale of bird watching in 27 countries around the world, Ruth and Alan entertain us with their 2008 'Big Year'.

Sunday 16th

Coach trip to **RSPB Frampton Marsh** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).

This excellent young Lincolnshire reserve, close to The Wash, has quickly become a firm favourite of ours. We will look out for wintering raptors (good chance of merlin, peregrine and hen harrier) as well as many other bird species.

Stevenage: 7.50am. Hitchin: 8.00am. Letchworth: 8.15am.

Leader: Malcolm Ingram

DECEMBER

Friday 5th

Feathers and Flight - Photographer Chris Ward returns with some stunning images that look at bird feathers – their purpose, variation, and their modification for flight.

Sunday 14th

Own transport trip to **The Lee Valley**.

Starting at Fishers Green we will work our way up the Lee Valley, finishing at the Amwell nature reserve where bittern, smew and rare gulls in the afternoon roost are all possible.

Meet at Fishers Green car park (O/S 166, TL 375 025) at 9.30am.

Leader: Martin Johnson

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR MEMBERS.**

JANUARY 2015

Friday 9th

Chalk Grasslands - Professional ecologist Roni Edmonds-Brown discusses the surprising and specialised biodiversity within Chalk Grasslands - including insects, mammals and birds.

Sunday 18th

Coach trip to **RSPB Fen Drayton and WWT Welney**.

Flooding in recent winters has resulted in our January itinerary being "flexible", but all being well we will spend the morning at Fen Drayton looking for wildfowl, waders and passerines before heading on to Welney to enjoy the "swan spectacular".

Hitchin: 8.00am. Letchworth: 8.15am. Royston: 8.35am.

Leader: Martin Johnson

FEBRUARY

Friday 6th

Around the UK in 80 Reserves – Paul Forecast
RSPB regional director Paul Forecast takes us on a trip around the UK's RSPB reserves and shows us his favourite photos.

Sunday 15th

Coach trip to **RSPB Rainham Marshes**.

We return to this attractive wetland oasis by the side of the River Thames in East London, close to the Dartford crossing. A wide selection of wildfowl and waders will be present on the reserve whilst meadow, rock and water pipits, snipe and jack snipe all over-winter along the side of the river.

Letchworth: 8.00am. Hitchin: 8.15am. Stevenage: 8.25am.

Leader: Malcolm Ingram

MARCH

Friday 6th

An Ecologist in Namibia & South Africa – Michael Keith-Lucas takes us on a splendid botanical safari through the rainforests and deserts of the coastal regions of Namibia & S.Africa – includes associated species of mammals, birds and reptiles.

Sunday 15th

Coach trip to **Abberton Reservoir EWT and Tollesbury**.

We will spend the morning at the excellent Abberton reservoir Essex Wildlife Trust reserve, before moving on to the wild and beautiful Blackwater estuary at Tollesbury, where raptors such as short-eared owl and peregrine can often be seen hunting.

Letchworth: 7.45am. Hitchin: 8.00am. Stevenage: 8.10am.

Leader: Martin Johnson

APRIL

Friday 10th

A Photographic Journey with Birds – Award-winning wildlife photographer Thomas Hanahoe FRPS will talk about his passion for bird photography.

Sunday 19th

Coach trip to **Pensthorpe and Sculthorpe Moor NR**.

Two new reserves for us in a single day! In the morning we will visit the compact and attractive Hawk and Owl Trust reserve at Sculthorpe Moor before moving on to Pensthorpe (recently used by the BBC "Springwatch" team) with its lakes, wader scrape and collection of captive birds (including waders and bearded tits).

Hitchin: 7.30am. Letchworth: 7.45am. Royston: 8.05am.

Leader: Phil Hasell or Martin Johnson

MAY

Friday 1st

A Journey to Capture Birds in all their Glory – Phil Hasell returns to talk us through his journey, with lots of interesting facts and some great photos. Preceded by a short AGM.

Sunday 17th

Coach trip to **RSPB Minsmere** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).

This “mecca” for bird-watchers is at its most productive in May, when around 100 bird species are nesting and more will be passing through. Add in orchids, dragonflies, red deer and many more and you have the recipe for a fantastic day out!

Stevenage: 7.05am. Hitchin: 7.15am. Letchworth: 7.30am. Royston: 7.50am.

Leader: John Dingemans

JUNE

Sunday 21st

Coach trip to **Stodmarsh NNR** and **RSPB Blean Woods** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).

Stodmarsh in June is a naturalist’s paradise. The extensive reed-beds hold breeding marsh harriers, bearded tits and cetti’s warblers, whilst hobbies fly overhead and insects abound. If conditions are suitable we will spend an hour or so at Blean Woods before we return, in order to observe a colony of extremely rare heath fritillary butterflies.

Letchworth: 7.15am. Hitchin: 7.30am. Stevenage: 7.40am.

Leader: Martin Johnson

Summer Meetings

Evening 'own transport' trips to local venues will be arranged for the summer months. Details will be announced before the end of April, or can be obtained from Martin Johnson. It may be possible to arrange for members to share cars, if required. Contact Martin if you need or can offer a lift.

AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of **£12.00** per member (**£6.00** for juniors under 18) is payable to cover expenses and will admit members to all meetings for the period of the programme.

VISITORS will be admitted on payment of **£2.50** admission fee.

INDOOR MEETINGS will be held on Fridays in accordance with the programme, at 'The Settlement', Nevells Road, Letchworth, SG6 4UB, commencing at 7.30pm.

Visit our Web site at

www.rspb.org.uk/groups/hitchinandlechworth

OUTDOOR MEETINGS by coach are subject to a fee of **£14.00** per adult (juniors under 18 **£7.00**). This fee is liable to alteration should hire charges increase. Bookings cannot be considered firm until payment is received.

ALL BOOKINGS AND PAYMENTS TO:

Mr. Malcolm Ingram,
5, Redhill Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2NQ
Tel: 01462-451320

Or at prior Indoor Meetings.

COACH PICK-UP POINTS

Hitchin – St. Mary's Square
Letchworth – Arena Car Park & Hospital
Baldock – By prior arrangement
*Royston – Newmarket Road
*Stevenage – Sainsbury's car park, Coreys Mill
(* only where specified in the programme) and agreed points en route.

Group Leader

Martin Johnson
1, Cartwright Road, Royston, Herts. SG8 9ET
Tel: 01763 249459

Treasurer

Malcolm Ingram
5, Redhill Road, Hitchin, Herts. SG5 2NQ
Tel: 01462 451320

Secretary

Vacant

Indoor Meetings Secretary

Laura McLellan Tel: 01462 683242
Kevin Taylor Tel: 07919 936267

Outdoor Meetings Secretary

Martin Johnson (trips)
Malcolm Ingram (bookings)

Publicity and Raffles

Janet Southwood Tel: 01462 491617

Committee Members

Jean Crystal Tel: 01462 433912
Colin Hawkins Tel: 01462 676457
Helen Lumley Tel: 01438 315683
Val Thompson Tel: 01462 813606



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nature
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THE ROYAL SOCIETY

FOR THE

PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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HITCHIN AND LETCHWORTH

LOCAL GROUP

PROGRAMME

AUGUST 2014 – JUNE 2015