

IAN BOTHAM ATTACKS RSPB

As you may be aware, the RSPB has recently come under attack from a group calling itself 'You Forgot The Birds' that is clearly backed by shooting and related interests in a thinly veiled attempt to limit RSPB's work in the wider countryside and the charity's campaigning against wildlife crime. On 2nd November the Mail on Sunday ran a story headed by Sir Ian Botham full of misleading claims.

Mike Clarke, the RSPB's Chief Executive responds.

The RSPB is proud of its conservation work and robust financial standards. It has been grossly mis-represented and refutes all that the group claims.

We believe it is no coincidence that the group's campaign, in the media and on the web, comes at a time when the RSPB is calling for greater controls on the environmental impacts of some game shooting activities, amid growing public concern over the illegal killing of birds of prey.

This includes hen harriers, which have been illegally persecuted to near extinction in England as a breeding species. Only last Thursday, the RSPB published its *Birdcrime 2013* report which records the wholesale illegal shooting, destruction and poisoning of eagles, harriers and red kites.

This year, the Society had its 125th anniversary, and throughout our history we have been proud of our openness and relationship with members and the public. This new campaign group appears to be unaccountable, and has anonymous financial backers for its campaign which has enlisted the services of a multi-national PR consultancy.

We have a long track record in protecting birds and wildlife. Conservation involves not just protecting nature reserves, but developing science and field testing, working with farmers and landowners to share best practice, challenging those who break the law, and fighting to protect the laws that protect our birds, wildlife and special natural places.

This attempt to limit the RSPB's activities to its nature reserves comes at the same time as the latest reports of bird populations released by the UK Government. These show a continuing decline in birds of the countryside, with the indicator for farmland bird populations at the lowest level ever. This demonstrates that urgent action is needed beyond the confines of nature reserves.

The RSPB adopts the highest standards in the charity sector for financial and other working practices. We publish annual accounts, which are independently audited by experts in the charity sector, and conform to all aspects required by charity regulators, including how much is spent on conservation and charitable activities.

GIBRALTAR POINT: 12th OCTOBER

The first couple of hours of the trip to the north corner of the Wash was made in fairly thick fog and we began to wonder if our birding exploits would be severely limited. However as we drove across Lincolnshire a feeble glow of sunshine struggled through the mist and by the time we arrived at the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve we were greeted by blue skies and full sun.

Until last winter Gibraltar Point had a very pleasant visitor centre and café but storms and sea surges caused irreparable damage. There are plans for a new "Grand Designs" style centre to be completed by 2016 but work can't start until various grants have been awarded. Meanwhile a temporary (and inadequate) toilet block is on site and catering is provided by a mobile van.

Despite the glorious weather birding was slow, we didn't have the influx of migrants we had last year and even the resident birds were reluctant to show or had cleared off for a late summer break. We may have been short of species but a vast swirling cloud of Knot, numbering possibly 100,000 birds left us open-mouthed with wonder and delight and many in the group had excellent and prolonged views of a hunting Barn Owl.

We finished the day with just short of 60 species, a sun tan and a feeling of general well-being after a lovely day at the sea-side.

Bob

SPONSORSHIP

At this time of the year I have been contacting our sponsors detailing the group's activities over the last year, thanking them for their support and hoping they will continue sponsorship for the next 12 months. Each sponsor gives us £1 a week.

In my letters to sponsors I have expressed the gratitude of the group for their support and promised to circulate any advertising material they provide. I would like to encourage group members to use our sponsors if possible and, if appropriate, mention the group and add your thanks.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

I have recently received the annual certificate from the RSPB thanking the Lichfield Group for the donations of £1,285 we have made in the 2013/14 financial year. We have been able to make these donations as a result of your support. Your help not only ensures the continuation of our group but enables the RSPB to carry out its nature conservation.

An easy way to further support the RSPB is through pin badge collection. We currently have two collectors. If you feel able to help please speak to me.

NEXT MEETING: 9th DECEMBER

Christmas Social with a short presentation, Photo Display, Food and Drink

If you can't make December, the first meeting of 2015 is on 13th January with "**The Birds of the Highlands and Islands**" covering birds and wildlife of the Cairngorms/Strathspey and also the Islands of Mull, Outer Hebrides, and Shetland, presented by Craig Round of Speyside Wildlife.