This ticket entitles 2 non-members to Bedford RSPB Local Group indoor meetings free of charge on either

**Thursday 18th January**
Jennifer Smart presents ‘Breeding Wader Research’ – a talk on the conservation of lowland breeding waders.

**Sunday 21st January**
A visit to Abberton Reservoir & Fingringhoe Wick for wintering wildfowl. **NB: 8 am start**

**Thursday 15th February**
Dick Newell from ‘Action for Swifts’. A talk about worldwide action to halt the decline of Swifts.

**Sunday 18th February**
A visit to East Norfolk /Stubbs Mill for wintering geese, cranes, raptors & wildfowl.

**Thursday 15th March**
Patrick Barkham presents ‘The Butterfly Isles’. Patrick is a natural history writer for the Guardian and award-winning author of ‘The Butterfly Isles’.

**Sunday 18th March**
A visit to Brecks – Cavenham Heath, Lakenheath for early spring migrants.

**Thursday 19th April**
Mark Ward, editor of ‘Nature’s Home’ on ‘16,000 Species and Counting’. A talk about the many species all around us.

**Sunday 22nd April**
A visit to Coombes Valley & Peak District for Spring migrants and breeding birds. **NB: 7am start**
To all you keen bottle top collectors.

Many thanks for your enthusiasm in collecting bottle tops for recycling in aid of raising funds for *The Springboard Project*, a community based charity that provides inclusive play and leisure opportunities for families with young children and fun short breaks for children and teenagers with disabilities. For further details go to [http://www.springboardproject.com](http://www.springboardproject.com)

However, please can I re-emphasise that the type of bottle tops required are only **CLEAN TOPS FROM SUPERMARKET TYPE MILK BOTTLES**, all others, although no doubt recyclable, I regret are not required in this case and can, if mixed with the correct ones, cause the whole batch to be rejected - the numbers currently being collected making sorting unacceptably time consuming, see photos below. But PLEASE don’t let this deter you from collecting the specified tops - Many thanks, John Tomlin.

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**YES PLEASE.**

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**NO THANK YOU.**

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*The Springboard Project*

The Springboard Project is a community based charity that provides inclusive play and leisure opportunities for families with young children and fun short breaks for children and teenagers with disabilities.

Springboard Houses are open as drop-in centres for any family to bring their children and enjoy our play facilities during the week. The centres are accessible with ceiling hoists and changing facilities and lifts.

Mission Statement: The Springboard Project welcomes children and young people with or without disabilities and their families for inclusive play and social opportunities.
### Summary of Bedford RSPB Local Group

#### 2017 Evening Walks & Dawn Chorus

**Thursday 15th June. (c20 ‘birders’).**

Broom Gravel Pits 7:00pm to 9:00pm.

- **38 Species** – Highlights - Little Egret, Shelduck, Oystercatcher, Ringed & Little Ringed Plover, Common Tern, Great Spotted Woodpecker.

**Thursday 13th July. (17 ‘birders’).**

Willington Gravel Pits 7:00pm to 9:00pm.

- **c12 Species** – Highlights - Green Woodpecker, Kingfisher, Wigeon - unseasonal eclipse male.

**Sunday 14th May (14 ‘birders’).**

Dawn Chorus Priory Country Park 5:00am to 7:30am.

- **48 Species** – Highlights - Cuckoo, Goldcrest, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Garden Warbler.

**Thursday 11th May. (23 ‘birders’).**

Paxton Gravel Pits 7:00pm to 9:00pm.

- **33 Species** – Highlights - Kingfisher, Common Sandpiper, Common Whitethroat, Garden Warbler.

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**Wren Facts and Fiction – Marion Hession**

The Wren is one of our smallest native birds about which much has been written over the centuries - only Goldcrest and Firecrest are smaller. Wrens have been recorded here since Anglo Saxon times and there is fossil evidence of Wrens from the time of the last Ice Age. The name ‘Wren’ has origins in the Anglo Saxon word wroenno (the meaning of which is lascivious!)

This is one of the first birds for which many people learn the Latin name – Troglodytes troglodytes – and, although there are over 80 species of Wren worldwide, all but the European Wren (Troglodytes troglodytes) live in the Americas. Troglodytes means ‘cave dweller’ which may refer to its enclosed nest with only a narrow entrance. The female bird is also frequently referred to as Jenny Wren. In Devon it is also known by the name Crackil or Crackadee due to the sound of its alarm call.

The Wren has one of the most recognisable of bird songs, characterised by the volume achieved and the trill contained within the song. This was once described to me as being like a machine gun – quite apposite and clearly memorable!

Wrens are thought to be the most common breeding bird in the UK with over 8.5 million breeding pairs. Males can make 6 to 12 nests and, once they have mated with a female, many move on to build more nests to attract further mates. In favour of male Wrens I must commend the small number of them who participate in feeding and caring for the young.

Wrens also feature in Folk Lore and I am sure that its polygamous nature has condemned this otherwise charming bird to a mixture of censure and sometimes hatred over the years.

It was said to have alerted guards to the attempted escape of St Stephen from prison, as a result of which the tradition of ‘Hunting the Wren’ takes place in Ireland. Youths used to go out into the countryside to capture or kill a Wren which they would parade around the village chanting:

*The Wren, the Wren, the king of all birds, St Stephen’s Day was caught in the furze. Although he was little his power is great, so up with the kettle and down with the plate.*

It should be said that only fake wrens are now used! Variations of this tradition can be found in many areas and there are numerous versions of the song some of which can be found in folk songs including some recent recordings.
Local Publicity Events

**Bedford RSPB Local Group Awareness Day Milton Ernest Garden Centre - 10th September 2017**

An overcast, cold and blustery day kept the ‘punter’ numbers low making it difficult to attract new members. However despite the rather unseasonal September weather we did our best and managed to talk to a few nice people who invariably went away clutching copies of next year’s program so let’s hope they were interested enough to maybe join us in the future.

Thanks to Milton Ernest Garden Centre for inviting us and providing the Gazebo, and to those of our group who came along to help - L to R - Bob Montgomery, Caroline Brown, John Hayward, Maureen Carpenter & Pete Soper (inset). Well done John H for organising our stall.

Photo – John Tomlin

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**Bedford RSPB Local Group Stand – RSPB Sandy 12th November 2017**

My thanks to Rex, Maureen, Bob and Martin for their help, support and company on the stand at Sandy. Footfall was rather poor, as Sandy Town was closed due to remembrance services, but it was an enjoyable day. We got two new members and made some useful contacts, plus £13.25 in the sale of badges, and other donations.

Our reward was close-ups of two male Sparrowhawks, a Brambling, Redwing, and Nuthatch plus the usual ones, all caught by Ringers.

John Hayward
Summary of species recorded on Bedford RSPB Local Group Field trips in 2017

Sunday 23rd April. (16 ‘birders’).
North Norfolk - Titchwell & Cley - for spring migrants & breeding birds.
83 Species - Highlights - Brent Goose, Red-crested Pochard, Long-tailed Duck, Whimbrel, Mediterranean Gull, Yellow Wagtail, Bearded Tit.

Sunday 24th September. (17 ‘birders’).
Gibraltar Point - Lincolnshire - for migrants & sea birds.

Sunday 27th August. (16 ‘birders’).
North Norfolk - Snettisham & Titchwell for high tide specialities.
82 Species - Highlights - Spoonbill, Water Rail, Golden & Grey Plover, Common Sandpiper, Yellow Wagtail, Bearded Tit.

Saturday 17th June. (11 ‘birders’).
North Norfolk & Ouse Washes - Manea, Titchwell & Dersingham 'a late in the day visit for Nightjars'.
92 Species - Highlights - Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Little Tern, Turtle Dove, Tree Pipit, Tree Sparrow, Nightjar.

Sunday 21st May. (13 ‘birders’).
Forest of Dean - Symonds Yat & Nagshead - 46 species - Highlights - Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Pied Flycatcher.

Sunday 16th July. (15 ‘birders’).
Rye Harbour, Pett Levels & Oare Marshes - for high tide waders & summer visitors.


Sunday 19th October. (18 ‘birders’).
RSPB Dungeness & Oare Marshes - for late migrants & winter arrivals. 78 Species - Highlights: Tree Sparrow, Little Stint, Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson’s Phalarope.

Total species recorded 168

Sunday 19th February. (12 ‘birders’).
North Norfolk - Titchwell, Holkham & Roydon Common - for wintering geese & wildfowl.
94 Species - Highlights - Fulmar, Gannet, Pintail, Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoter, Velvet Scoter, Marsh & Hen Harrier, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Shore Lark.

Sunday 19th March. (16 ‘birders’).
The Brecks - Cavenham Heath & Lakenheath - in search of spring migrants.
c65+ Species - Highlights - Garganey, (possible Goshawk), Stone Curlew, Wood Lark, Stonechat, Marsh Tit, Brambling, Crossbill, Hawfinch.

Sunday 23rd April. (14 ‘birders’).
North Norfolk - Titchwell & Cley - for spring migrants & breeding birds.
83 Species - Highlights - Brent Goose, Red-crested Pochard, Long-tailed Duck, Whimbrel, Mediterranean Gull, Yellow Wagtail, Bearded Tit.

Sunday 19th October. (18 ‘birders’).
RSPB Dungeness & Oare Marshes - for late migrants & winter arrivals. 78 Species - Highlights: Tree Sparrow, Little Stint, Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson’s Phalarope.

Sunday 19th November. (14 ‘birders’).
Welney & Ouse Washes - for wintering birds. 71 Species - Highlights - Peregrine Falcon, Goldeneye, Whooper & Bewick Swans.

Sunday 19th March. (16 ‘birders’).
The Brecks - Cavenham Heath & Lakenheath - in search of spring migrants.
c65+ Species - Highlights - Garganey, (possible Goshawk), Stone Curlew, Wood Lark, Stonechat, Marsh Tit, Brambling, Crossbill, Hawfinch.

Sunday 19th October. (18 ‘birders’).
RSPB Dungeness & Oare Marshes - for late migrants & winter arrivals. 78 Species - Highlights: Tree Sparrow, Little Stint, Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson’s Phalarope.

Sunday 22nd January. (16 ‘birders’).
Rye Meads & Amwell GP - for wintering wildfowl.
c.55 Species - Highlights - Goldeneye, Peregrine, Water Rail, Cetti’s Warbler, Snipe, Kingfisher.

J.T/C.B.
FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS.

Speakers for January, February, March & April 2018.

January 18th - Dr Jennifer Smart.
‘Trials and tribulations of grassland waders.’

Dr Jennifer Smart is a Principal Conservation Scientist at the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science. Much of her career has been focused on the ecology of breeding waders, such as redshank, lapwing and black-tailed godwit, and developing conservation solutions to reverse their severe population declines. Increasingly this involves understanding and managing the impacts of predation and finding ways to influence landscape-scale management of wet grasslands.

A couple of web sites you will find very interesting:
https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/centre-for-conservation-science


Dick Newell is passionate about Swifts. He coordinates the Action For Swifts website and helped to organise the International Swift Conference in April this year, as well as being involved in all manner of Swift conservation projects. Tonight Dick will give us an informative talk into the world wide action being taken to stop the decline in the Swift population by providing many types of artificial nesting locations, some of which will be on display this evening.

March 15th - Patrick Barkham.     ‘The Butterfly Isles’

Patrick Barkham is both a prolific journalist and one of a generation of British authors who have injected popular vitality and literary respectability into the genre loosely known as nature writing. Over the course of two books on the creatures of British wildlife, he has turned thousands of readers on to the mysteries of the countryside. Having had a love of nature instilled in him by family in boyhood, Patrick sees his duty to pass this all too rare gift on through his writings. Tonight he is going to talk to us on the subject of his first book, The Butterfly Isles, which was shortlisted for the 2011 Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje prize.

April 19th - Mark Ward.     ‘16,000 Species and Counting’.

Most of us are well aware of wildlife across the UK but what about the wildlife that is right on our doorstep? Tonight Mark, Editor-in-Chief of the RSPB’s membership magazine ‘Nature’s Home’ is going to enlighten us on the wildlife all around us on a daily basis and share with us his tips and tricks on how to find wildlife close to our homes.

His book ‘Wildlife on your doorstep’ inspires everyone to look at their local wildlife and to view your own local area, and will be available to purchase on the night.