Dear Members,
I would like to welcome everyone to this edition, especially those of you who are receiving our twice yearly newsletter for the first time.
Membership of our group is automatic to all members of the RSPB who live in our catchment area. I am pleased to say that the membership of the RSPB is at an all-time high with over 1.1 million members which shows that more and more people are showing that they care about nature and want to play their part in helping to save it.
I would like to thank all of you who responded to the survey which was in the previous newsletter. I am pleased to say that as a result of these responses we are organising a three night break in Yorkshire for June 2015. Full details can be found in this newsletter and on the website. At the time of writing there is limited space available so please contact me as soon as possible to reserve your place.
I have met many people throughout the year and when I ask them why they do not come on our field trips or attend our meetings the usual reply is “I like birds but I don’t know much about them and I think I would be embarrassed being with all the experts.” I would say you are exactly the person who should be attending as you will soon find that the majority of people are just like yourself and are still learning.
As most people know, at the recent AGM, Maureen Thompson retired after many years of service as a volunteer with the Bexley Local Group. I would like to thank her on behalf of everyone connected with the group for all the work that she has carried out on our behalf. She has been Treasurer for 14 years, as well as
(Continued on page 2)

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the RSPB
organising the group’s sales tables at indoor meetings and at the many fairs we attend and in addition organising the raffle at our indoor meetings.

As I have said before fundraising is one of the main functions in which local RSPB groups can support the work the RSPB carries out in protecting nature. There are two easy ways in which you can help. Firstly, there is a book of raffle tickets which I hope you will be able to purchase or sell on our behalf. This is one of our main fundraising events and I hope you are able to support it. Please contact Diane Lelliott if you require any more books. Secondly, you can join our growing 200 club. I would like to thank everyone who has joined or renewed their membership of this fund raising event. The increased membership has meant that we have been able to increase the monthly prize fund. Who knows one day we may have to rename it the 300 club which would be fantastic. No article of mine would be complete without a plea for volunteers. We are in need of a volunteer who would be willing to organise the speakers for our indoor meetings. This position needs filling urgently as speakers take bookings two years in advance. We also need someone to organise our field trips. Please contact Stuart Banks who can give more details. I would like to thank Roz Nicholls for volunteering to organise our Spring and Autumn Fairs.

The Friends of St. Mary’s Church Bexley are holding a cheese and wine evening at the church hall in Manor Road on 20 September at 7.00 p.m. when Ralph Todd will be talking on the Birds of Bexley. Tickets are available at £8 from Mary Andrews on 01322 523071 or Deirdre Allard on 01322 525629. I am also appealing for donations for our Autumn Fair. Please contact Stuart Banks who will make arrangements for collection closer to the date of the fair. Finally I hope that you have had an enjoyable summer and look forward to meeting more of you throughout the year at our indoor meetings, fairs or field trips.
Happy Birding, Stuart Banks

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the RSPB
LEADERS ANNUAL REPORT 2014

Indoor meetings: We have had another year of varied and interesting meetings. This is due, with thanks, to the work of Alan Mayes. Although attendances have been down I am sure that this was due to the prolonged period of bad weather we have experienced. The highlight was the talk given by Simon Ginnaw about his local patch of Mote Park in Maidstone. Thanks also go to Jean and Fred for organising the refreshments at our meetings and to everyone who has supported the monthly raffle. Thanks also go to Ken Saxby for collecting the entrance money.

Field Trips: These have been run successfully again with many trips being sold out. My thanks go to everyone who was involved with the organisation, leading and participation in these trips. Special thanks go to Tony Banks who has continued to organise despite resigning and thanks to Diane Lelliott who has taken the coach seat bookings.

Conservation: Our group continues to support the organisation at Northward Hill with its regular work parties. Our thanks go to Bob Parker and his volunteers for undertaking this work. More volunteers are always welcome. I am pleased to say that a new volunteer has attended as a result of reading the newsletter.

Fund Raising: We have raised money for the RSPB principally from our two fairs, Grand Draw and 200 Club as well as sales at meetings and at the fairs we attend. Thanks go to Diane Lelliott for organising our Grand Draw and Linda Blackett for organising the Sales in addition to her organisation of the sale of pin badges. Suggestions for new locations are always welcome. Our thanks also go to Jackie Tappenden for the sale of bird seed and to Sandra Sheppard for organising the 200 club. This has reached record membership and therefore we have increased the monthly prizes. Finally our thanks go to everyone who has volunteered to help at the fairs we attend.

Website: We have started our new web page which comes under the umbrella of the RSPB and is being used as we regularly appear in the top thirty out of over 300 websites in terms of visitors.

Communications: We have reached all the RSPB membership in our area with our twice yearly newsletter. Thanks go to all 130 volunteers who distribute it for us and to everyone who helps out at the labelling meeting. Our thanks also go to Alan Mayes, Helen Burgess and Dorothy Wells for the maintenance of the address list, to Steve Ansell for producing the newsletter and to John Turner for editing it.

Recycling: The Group recycles ink cartridges, binoculars and stamps. Thanks go to Alan Mayes who organises the recycling of stamps.

Other Achievements: We have had Martin Burke, our campaigns officer, organising our Big Garden Bird Watch event at Hall Place. We also have a number of members who volunteer to take part in the peregrine watch at the Tate Modern. We have also given assistance to the London Office of the RSPB in their recruitment of members at the four fairs we attended at Woodlands Farm. We have also provided bird feeding stations at the Greenwich and Bexley Hospice in Abbey Wood and my thanks go to everyone involved in these achievements.

Volunteering: A number of names have occurred many times in this report. To provide continued support, to expand our activities and to meet the demands on the group we need a larger base of volunteers. If you could offer your help it would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks: Thanks to all members of the committee who have helped throughout the year and to everyone who has helped out at the Fairs and to anyone I have forgotten to mention. Your assistance was greatly appreciated. Finally thanks to my wife Frances for all her support throughout the year.

As some of you may know Maureen Thompson is formally leaving the committee from tonight after many years of service. Maureen has been a committee member for many years carrying out a variety of roles but she will be most remembered for being our treasurer and sales co-ordinator. As Maureen is unable to attend I will send her a bouquet of flowers to show the groups appreciation.

Stuart Banks
BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH 2014
24% DROP IN PARTICIPANTS IN GREATER LONDON

The top bird in Bexley was the house sparrow the average per garden increasing by 7.36% while the starling regained second place with a 26.88% increase replacing the wood pigeon which showed a 20.15% decrease. Other improvers were the magpie (+7.75%) the feral pigeon and the collared dove all gaining one place although the latter both decreased in percentage. This was due to an even bigger drop by the ring necked parakeets (-22.26%) and the blue tit (-12.42%). A very worrying trend is a 40% drop in blue tit averages per garden in the last ten years while the great tit has dropped out of the top ten.

The number of participants in Bexley dropped alarmingly from 1785 last year to 957 (890 adults and 67 children) this year. We therefore crashed from third among the Greater London Boroughs in 2013 to seventh this year after two previous years of gains. WE NEED TO PULL OUR SOCKS UP NEXT YEAR! Bromley still leads having lost only 164 participants but we have been overtaken by Croydon (+2 places), Richmond (+4) Havering (+5) and Barnet (+5). Participants in Greater London dropped from 32341 in 2013 to 25903 in 2014 but this could be explained by the wet Sunday.

John Turner

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BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH AT HALL PLACE

It was a fantastic day again at the 2014 Big Garden Bird watch at Hall Place Bexley on 25 January thanks to Bexley Heritage Trust. We had some very excited young children helping us to count vast species of birds numbering 37 in total, beating our total from last year by five. This included both redwings and fieldfares to add to song thrushes and mistle thrushes as well as a grey wagtail a coal tit and long tailed tits. One little girl even wanted to stay to help even though she had a birthday party to go to. Over 100 Big Garden Bird Watch forms were distributed to the public for completion at home. With the birds now very used to the feeders, you can sit in the hide and gain great pleasure in viewing the birds up close. You may even get a glimpse of a kingfisher as it flies up and down the River Cray.

Martin Burke

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NEW HIDE AT CROSSNESS

Friday 16th May saw the formal opening of the new two-storey, octagonal bird hide at Crossness Nature Reserve.

As Site Manager for Crossness Nature Reserve, I have long wanted a split level bird hide that would offer elevated views of the reserve, and in particular, the West Paddock. This paddock, a shallow flooded meadow, is probably the most interesting in terms of waders and wildfowl, with dunlin, lapwing, little ringed plover, shelduck and other species frequently recorded there. Previously, views were limited to a viewing screen at the southern end of the paddock, but now, with binoculars and scopes, we are able to see right to the back of this wetland area without causing disturbance, and thereby flushing the wildlife.

Hide construction finished in January 2014, followed by the addition of internal features such as photo boards, interpretation panels and identification charts. Some adjacent landscaping also took place, so that in May, we were able to formally open this fabulous new structure, described by Ralph Todd as ‘possibly the best bird hide in the south-east.’

Over 50 local partners and stakeholders joined us to celebrate the opening, and we were fortunate to secure celebrity Urban Birder, David Lindo, to cut the ribbon and declare the hide formally open.

Crossness is very much an urban reserve, surrounded as it is on all sides by industry and infrastructure, but it has an absolute wealth of wildlife value and is of great importance to the local community, so it seemed only fitting that the Urban Birder should be the person to declare the hide open. David is particularly keen to engage others and to encourage young people to get involved in bird watching, and he was suitably impressed by our measures to do so at Crossness.

Event attendees included members of the London Borough of Bexley, Environment Agency, RSPB, Bexley Natural Environment Forum, London Natural History Society, Bexley RSPB, Sidcup Natural History Society, Thamesmead and Marsh Dykes Catchment Improvement Group, Thames21 and a host of neighbouring landowners and partner organisations. We managed to secure the hottest day of the year so far on which to hold the event, and visitors were treated to sightings of a marsh harrier flying over, some ringed plover chicks, wheatear, whinchat, and more, so I think the day was a great success.

Speeches were provided by me, Thames Water’s Head of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, Ralph Todd – member of the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve scheme – and David Lindo the Urban Birder. It was a great way to celebrate a year of change with not only the bird hide being a new addition, but also new wetland areas, new boardwalks and dipping platforms, and of course the extended sewage treatment works which is now visible from the bird hide.

Our hard work is paying off with ringed plovers, little ringed plovers, barn owls, Cetti’s warblers, cuckoos and many more species being recorded at Crossness. We’ve also had some exciting invertebrates, with a number of rare, Red Data Book species recorded, and the very rare Shrill Carder Bee making a home for itself on the marshes.

The new bird hide is in the ‘Protected Area’ of the reserve, which is accessible to members of the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve scheme. If you are interested in becoming a member, which gives you access to a range of wildlife-related events, volunteer days and a quarterly newsletter, please contact Karen Sutton at karen.sutton@thameswater.co.uk for an application pack.

Karen Sutton - Warden
SPRING FAIR - 3 MAY 2014

As the door opened on our Annual Spring Fair the Freemantle Hall was packed with many craft, plants and other stalls. There was the usual rush of people trying to find the bargains.

Our grateful thanks go to Anna Staples who as well as assisting John and Jeanna Turner with the sale of plants, provided many of the plants which were on sale. Donations of plants were also received from other members of the Bexley Group and from Bexley Garden Centre for which we are extremely grateful. Plant sales made £133.

Refreshments at the fair were in the hands of Alan, Jean and Alison Mayes who had a constant supply of customers. Book sales were being looked after by Frances Banks and Leslie Warner while Diane Lelliott and Tony Banks looked after the white elephant stall. A large donation meant that we had a stall selling classical CDs and this was managed by Steven Sheppard. RSPB sales were in the capable hands of Graham and Linda Blackett and a new volunteer Rosemarie Mcclavey was selling the bird seed making £118. The ever popular tombola was run by Sandra Sheppard and Stuart Banks which made £100.

The proceeds of £780 from this event was the highest for a number of years and I am extremely grateful to everyone who assisted at the fair and to those who donated items: the hand-made leather notebooks, plants, bric-a-brac and especially the CDs, which made £172.

I am also pleased to say that Roz Nicholls has volunteered to take over the organisation of our spring and autumn fairs.

Stuart Banks

BTO AND GiGL – WANT BEXLEY’S BIRD RECORDS

You will have seen, in our newsletter, the half yearly reports of birds seen in Bexley made up of contributions from members and various web-sites. I have accumulated a huge amount of data in various forms, mostly paper. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has stated that this historical data would be invaluable to their Bird Track database which monitors population trends across the country (amongst other things). I have also had a meeting with GiGL (GreenSpace Information for Greater London) – the biological records centre for London and they also would welcome the data.

Again the data is used for a multitude of purposes but probably most relevant to us would be for planning developments – knowledge of flora/fauna for specific sites could mean loss and development or protection of these sites. GiGL hold as much data for all taxa that they are provided with.

Both organisations have offered to help with some of the data input and I have worked with them to identify all of the Bexley sites and agreed names and map references for each. I now need help please to input data from the records I hold into the data bases. If anyone is able to give just a few hours of time in their own homes to help it would greatly speed the project and ensure the data was available for use. There is no time limit on this - just as quickly as we can achieve it. Equally there is no on-going commitment – you can take as much or as little as you can manage. I can deliver data and discuss the methodology which is pretty straight forward and collect the originals when complete. Any help would be very much appreciated.

Thank you, Ralph Todd
NEW BEXLEY WILDLIFE WEBSITE
AND FACEBOOK PAGES

http://www.bexleywildlife.org/
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bexley-Wildlife/177977672396633

This new website is designed to be a ‘one-stop shop’ where anyone searching for information about the range of wildlife conservation activities and related groups in the Borough, can easily find it. The ‘Groups’ tab leads to a thumbnail sketch of each relevant organisation, and provides a link to their website where one exists. For groups that do not have their own sites, we offer editorial control over their page(s) so that they can post information direct. A ‘calendar’ page aims to list all the wildlife events in the Borough. There is usually two or three a week to choose from. We are working on producing more site profiles, more Bexley species checklists and much more besides. Suggestions for additional content – or better still, offers of writing it, and photos – will be gratefully received. Contact Jonathan Rooks jonathanrooks@virginmedia.com or Chris Rose chrisrose@gn.apc.org

The Facebook page is for short, topical news items. Calendar event notices are automatically posted here from the website a few days before the meeting is due to take place. These sites enable us to advertise various shorter notice and ad hoc meetings.

Bexley RSPB, as the conservation organisation with the largest membership in the Borough is, of course, featured, and we hope to put up more information about the group’s activities in due course. We would welcome ‘real time’ sightings of particular interest.

It is hoped to forge closer links between RSPB members and the Friends Groups that help manage open spaces in the Borough and we hope that you will take advantage of the habitat management listings on the website to participate in some of the events that will deliver improved homes for birds and other wildlife in our area.

These sites have been set up by the ‘Greener Bexley’ charity and Bexley Natural Environment Forum. We hope that another result will be that we find it easier to get better outcomes from decision-makers when wildlife and habitats are at stake.

ERITH QUARRY UNDER THREAT
BEXLEY’S LAST GREAT WILDERNESS

Never heard of the place? That’s no surprise as few people except, perhaps, locals, have been on it, and maybe no one since the old chain-link fence with holes in it was replaced with palisade fencing about four years ago. If you’ve got access to Google Earth, look at the large area north of Carlton Rd, east of Bexley Road and south of Fraser Road. It can be seen from Hollyhill Open Space. It’s in the top rank of Borough level Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, being Grade 1 and is, or was, a fantastic area of scrub, with very good bird life. The site has just changed hands, but the previous owners bulldozed it a couple of years back – implausibly claiming that this was for ‘Japanese Knotweed control’ purposes. It has been designated by Bexley for ‘development’, although the Council is stipulating that a fair part of the site, including some woodland, should remain as open space. The new owners have set up a website announcing that they are doing various surveys with a view to submitting planning applications. As a first step Bexley Natural Environment Forum and the London Wildlife Trust will be asking them, as a matter of ‘good faith’, to let some ‘independent’ wildlife observers onto the site, not least because LWT were not granted access for the purposes of the 2013 SINC review, and we want to see how it has recovered from the previous appalling treatment. If you want to be kept in touch with the latest on this issue please follow the BexleyWildlife.org website, or contact Chris Rose at chrisrose@gn.apc.org.

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COACH TRIP REPORTS

Holkham - 16 February 2014

Our visit coincided with a short spell of good weather that we enjoyed as we headed north, but the chill during our comfort stop at the picnic site near Lakenheath reminded us that it was still winter. Arriving at Holkham, and getting out of the coach in Lady Ann's Drive, the quicker members of our party soon spotted a distant hunting barn owl, that even I saw before it dipped out of sight. As we moved towards the dunes a good sized flock of brent geese occupied the field to our right, doubtless aware of the skeins of geese flying high above them in the pale blue sky. Other skeins were composed of pink-footed geese and we enjoyed views of hundreds of these dusky-headed birds flying, landing and feeding on the west side of the Drive together with large numbers of wigeon. By the time we got onto the beach it was obvious that we would have quite a walk across acres of wet flat sand, to get to the sea but we were soon in a position to scan both the sea and shoreline. About half an hour spent here produced a trio of feeding bar-tailed godwits which then flew past us with no trace of black and white in their wings. A number of sanderling were busy as always at the edge of the waves offering good photo opportunities and a pair of red-breasted merganser flew low over the waves quite close in. Oystercatchers, great crested grebes and a variety of gulls were quite obvious but further out we located some birds which had to be ducks. As they rode the waves we could only see them as they reached each crest. The usual problem! Most managed to see them through a scope and with books checked we identified them as common scoters and eiders. After a lunch break sitting in the dunes our group headed back through the pines and reaching the other side we were able to study a pair of grey partridge feeding only a few yards away. Heading west towards the hides a female goldeneye was a surprising find in a pond by the path and a little further on a goldcrest challenged us to get a good view as it flitted among the branches. From the first hide one could have spent an hour counting the ducks and geese in view but there was little else to see other than distant marsh harriers and a "possible" red kite.

The sun was still shining and there were thousands of birds to look at but with time slipping by and our departure time approaching we had to end a very enjoyable day in Norfolk. Leader – Tony Banks

Pagham Harbour - 18 May 2014

Birds seen on the way to Pagham included red kite, common buzzard, red legged partridge and house martin. Wall to wall sunshine was the order of the day and chiffchaffs sang in the car park. In the hedgerows on the way to the Ferry Pool were the first of many scratchy calls of a whitethroat which also performed its calling in flight routine and gave good views atop a bush. A small group of long tailed tits were also seen. The Ferry Pool was quiet with around 25 black tailed godwits in various plumages loafing on the mud, while a few lapwings performed their flight manoeuvres. Throughout the day little egrets were commonplace both in flight and feeding. In the reed beds beside the harbour path excellent views were had of several, smart, perching reed buntings with their monotonous “zip- zip” call. Both reed and sedge warblers were initially heard and also seen amongst the reed beds. It was good to get the comparison between their calls. Several powerful calling Cetti’s warblers were also heard. Up to four common buzzards were seen perched and in flight. The tide was initially out with vast mudflats exposed but it rose quickly as we progressed towards Church Norton. A small group of linnets posed well showing their blood red markings. Skylarks were serenading us together with parachuting, calling meadow pipits. A calling cuckoo was heard by everyone and luckily seen in the churchyard by one member.

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A short discussion ensued on whether some of the group had seen a whimbrel or a curlew. Photographic evidence was produced in defence of a whimbrel. On the return journey both curlew and whimbrel posed next to each other on a muddy ridge. The shorter bill, the head stripes and smaller body size of the whimbrel were evident. A summer plumage brown chested knot was amongst some oystercatchers and a summer plumage dunlin was seen together with scurrying ringed plovers. Grey plovers were in various stages of plumage including a couple with black chests.

All three tern species performed here as well. The little terns were attractive with their small, yellow bills, fast moving wings and fast accelerating dives into the water for food. A common tern with its red bill posed on one of the breakwaters alongside many tortoiseshell - plumaged turnstones. Several much larger screeching Sandwich terns, with their punk black hairdos flew around and perched alongside little terns on one of the islands which showed the huge size difference.

A singing blackcap was heard as the return walk took us through the quiet churchyard. A song thrush was feeding on the ground and a very green male greenfinch was wheezing. A couple of swallows flew over the fields on our way back and a kestrel hovered.

A total of 74 species were seen on this sunny day in a superb unspoilt landscape.

Minsmere RSPB Reserve - Sunday 22 June 2014

This was the 35th anniversary of the very first Bexley coach trip (which was also to Minsmere) and my return to coach leading after some 17 years. We enjoyed a lovely sunny, warm day on the Suffolk coast and our arrival coincided with the doors of the café opening - refreshments for some whilst others wasted no time in exploring the variety of habitats this iconic reserve offers. Whilst bird song was not so much in evidence, a very vocal Cetti’s warbler was possibly the first bird heard with chaffinch, blackcap, reed warbler and chiffchaff providing backing vocals. The scrape held good numbers of avocet, black-tailed godwits (most in stunning orange plumage), a few lapwing, redshank and ringed plovers. Ruff, dunlin and knot were also noted but bird of the day for me was the stunning full summer plumage spotted redshank enjoyed by most from the East Hide. A little gull kept a low profile amongst the many common terns but was eventually seen by most of the group.

There was at least one sighting of bearded tits - our group being satisfied with an active group of four juveniles from the north wall. The “Springwatch swallows” (many species have been elevated to celebrity status following the recent TV series) were still active at the nest in the sluice and the “Springwatch bittern” was still showing well from the aptly named Bittern Hide, making many flights to and from its nest a couple of hundred metres away. Bitterns were also seen from the Island Mere Hide which also provided great views of marsh harriers and hobby. At least seven little egrets were seen and a stone curlew was seen by one or two as they took a walk to Dunwich Heath where Dartford warblers were seen well by those who made the detour.

Some of us ended the walk with a stunning view of a singing garden warbler but perhaps the abiding memory of the visit for many would be the opening and ending experience of watching lots of sand martins busily feeding young in the natural bank next to the visitor centre and behind the dragonfly pool which was the car park when we visited 35 years ago!

The Bexley Bird report has not been included this time but may be found on the Bexley group website or the Wild Bexley website.

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REPORT FROM NORTH KENT MARSHES – SUMMER 2014
BLACK- WINGED STILTS NEST AT CLIFFE

Cliffe Pools is now home to the largest breeding colony of avocets in the country (126 pairs). Lapwing and redshank had an average year (13 and 26 pairs each) but there have been new record highs for breeding linnet (8), reed bunting (14), song thrush (7), Cetti’s warbler (5), lesser whitethroat (10) and whitethroat (85). The fact that black-winged stilts chose Cliffe to nest is very good news. A round-the-clock watch ensured the eggs were not stolen and four chicks hatched on Friday June 13th. Unfortunately, placing the nest in the middle of 850 pairs of black-headed gulls was asking for trouble and three days later the chicks were gone. If the stilts try again next year and sit amongst the avocets, the collective protection should offer them more hope for success.

One pair of marsh harriers bred at Cliffe Pools, but it was all going on up the peninsula at RSPB Northward Hill - six pairs bred (equalling RSPB Minsmere, which is ten times the size!). Other new highs were mallard (37), tufted duck (16), lapwing and redshank (26 pairs each), green woodpecker (10), great-spotted woodpecker (11). The new scrapes supported 17 avocet pairs for the second year running. Six cuckoos were unprecedented and, after a very slow start, two purring turtle doves are showing interest, so fingers crossed. A ‘cover crop’ has been sown on the site of the old barns with their preferred food plants. A pair of little owls and long-eared owls bred successfully ( also at Cliffe) and a pair of barn owls is on site and I saw evidence they are using the nest box placed for them in the Cooling Radio Station when I ventured in there recently.

Night Ring at both sites were average, 18 and 22 pairs, slightly up on last year’s poorer turn-out (due to that bad spring), but still hugely significant given the threat to the 86 pairs up the road at Lodge Hill; the Hoo Peninsula remains the species’ strongest population in the UK. I am enormously impressed by the huge investment of time by the RSPB regional and head office to protect Lodge Hill from development, which, if it proceeds, will expose every other SSSI in the country to a similar fate.

The Constant Effort Survey bird ringing conducted by BTO volunteers Roger Kiddie and Dr Andrew Harris is in its second year at Northward Hill and includes a monthly visitor event. The team report that most birds have bred early this year with above average numbers of dunnocks, robins, tits; blackcaps are up 20% on last year.

I also wish to draw attention to Shorne Marshes which has responded to the huge amount of groundwork there, and just look at these breeding pair figures for lapwing: 2011 = 24, 2012 = 15, 2013 = 26, and this year 46 pairs! How did redshank fair? 2011 = 17, 2012 = 11, 2013 = 25, and this year, 50 pairs! Skylarks also hit a new high with 34 pairs. At Higham Marsh, 14 lapwing pairs nested on the newly flooded quarter of the farm. The remaining 75% will be improved for waders this year under the Greater Thames Nature Improvement Area scheme (funded by Defra) in partnership with the RSPB local team. Out in the Medway, Nor Marsh has experienced a similar population explosion for oystercatchers, 2011 = 5, 2012 = 21, 2013 = 22, and this year, 90 pairs!

The new RSPB reserve at Great Bells Farm on the Isle of Sheppey has just been awarded the National NGO Impact Award by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management; from nothing 25 pairs of lapwing now breed there and the discovery of black oil beetle is one example of many ‘all nature’ winners on our reserves. The reserve is the culmination of many years’ design and planning by Julian Nash (North Kent Site Manager). At Seasalter Marshes there have been 15 pairs each of lapwing and redshank, grasshopper warbler, cuckoo and lesser whitethroat and the Norfolk hawker dragonfly has been found on the site.

It has been an excellent year for butterflies, and Blean is seeing large numbers of heath fritillaries with 130 counted on one patch of cow wheat alone. The butterflies need sunlight, so the warden and volunteers have been selectively opening-up branches of oak to let the light onto their food plant. The small patches of heath welcomed three to four pairs of nightjar and the nightingales were singing well through the spring.

Despite these successes the North Kent Marshes remain under threat. Daniel Moylan (Boris Johnson’s campaign leader for an estuary airport) recently described the marshes as ‘empty land’ to be unlocked for homes and jobs. At least Sir Howard Davies of the Airport Commission has visited RSPB Northward Hill (last year), and his Strategy Manager, Fiona James visited this March. A lot of RSPB resource in the region is focused on protecting this Ramsar site, working at a local, regional, and national political level.

For a full report please see the Bexley group web site.

Rolf Williams - RSPB Communications Officer.

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**15% discount at Cotswold**

The national chain of stores selling outdoor clothing, footwear and camping equipment are still offering a 15% discount to members of our Group at all their outlets.

Our nearest Cotswold store is at Nugent Shopping Park, Cray Avenue, Orpington – about 300 yards from St Mary Cray Station.

The full 15% discount is only available to Bexley Local Group RSPB members quoting Account number **AF-BRSPB-D5**. If you say you are an RSPB member you will only receive 10% discount.

You may also order by phone (Tel. 01689 885560) or online at www.cotswoldoutdoor.com. We have specimen catalogues for you to browse at indoor meetings.

The level of discount offered depends on the amount of sales against our account number during the year, so do consider taking advantage but DO NOT PASS IT ON TO NON BEXLEY MEMBERS.

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**KC Plumbing**

- Bathroom Installs
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**Plumbing/Gas Fitting - Keith Cocking**

**Telephone:** 01322 293405  
**Mobile:** 07717 437104

Any advertisements contained within this newsletter are not specifically endorsed by The RSPB or The Bexley Local Group

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INDOOR AND OUTDOOR EVENTS

**Coach trips** leave promptly from outside Bexleyheath Library in Townley Road. Please bring suitable clothes and footwear for the expected weather conditions bearing in mind that some destinations will have limited shelter. In most cases it will be necessary to bring food and drink for the day. If in any doubt call the trip leader for information. Once at the venue you are free to do your "own thing" but the leader will be pleased to guide you for all or part of the day and help with bird identification. Beginners to bird watching are especially welcome and sharing of telescopes as well as knowledge is always in evidence. Equipment may be available on loan for the day. (Please call to check). Non-RSPB members are welcome on all trips but a small entrance charge may apply at RSPB reserves. We reserve the right to change the destination of coach trips at short notice because of circumstances beyond our control.

**Car Trips** are open to all, and beginners are especially welcome. Equipment may be available on loan. If the weather is inclement and the trip looks doubtful please ring the named leader to check if it is on.

**Children and Grandchildren?** Although our Group does not have a children’s section we do welcome accompanied young people at all of our events, and half fares are available for under 16’s on our coach trips. Some of the venues for our field trips can be challenging, particularly in the winter, but we can advise on the suitability of each. If you are in any doubt contact the trip leader named in the programme.

**Indoor Meetings** - All meetings are held at Hurstmere School, Hurst Road, Sidcup beginning at 7:45p.m. There is plenty of car-parking space within the school grounds and the 229 bus stops nearby. Doors usually open at 7:15p.m. As well as enjoying the illustrated talk you may purchase raffle tickets, seeds and nuts and book coach trips. At present we maintain a small RSPB sales stall with cards etc. and RSPB goods may be ordered, saving the postage and packing charge.

The atmosphere is friendly and informal with an opportunity to exchange information and seek advice both before the talk and during the interval with tea and biscuits.

**Admission charges** – RSPB Member - £3.50 Non-Member - £4.50 Under 16’s - 50p.

**Mobility Impaired Access** - As a Group we welcome people of all abilities to our events. At some venues however facilities may be basic or non-existent and access may be difficult or impossible for those who are mobility impaired. If you require further information please call the trip leader.

**Working Parties** - Working parties usually take place on the North Kent RSPB reserves, (mainly Northward Hill) and provide an opportunity to do some worthwhile practical conservation work whilst gaining an insight into the workings of a reserve and some healthy exercise! “Rough” clothes and stout footwear are advised due to the nature of the work. Tools, and instruction in their use, will be provided.

The tasks usually run from 9:00 until 12:00 so you may want to bring a drink and snack. We meet at Bromhey Farm. From the A289 take the first road on the left for High Halstow and then left at the church. After about half a mile turn right into Bromhey Farm entrance, which is signposted to Northward Hill.

For further information and to confirm the meeting place call Bob Parker on 01322 665849

Please Note - IF YOU RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST EVENT IN THE PROGRAMME PLEASE ACCEPT OUR APOLOGIES. WE RELY ON VOLUNTEERS FOR DISTRIBUTION AND CANNOT THEREFORE GUARANTEE DELIVERY WITHIN SET TIME-SCALES. (The Committee)

Friday 12 September 2014 \ Wings over the Reeds \ David Garner

David has worked as a voluntary warden on a National Nature Reserve near to his home in Cambridgeshire. His talk will give us a general introduction to some of the birds, both common and not so common, at Woodwalton Fen NNR and a brief look at the Great Fen Project.
Saturday 20 September 2014  Oare Marshes KWT Reserve, Nr. Faversham, Kent  09:00 - 13:00
No apologies for returning to Oare during what we hope will be another interesting migration period. Quite often close views of small waders like stints are possible even from the roadside here so this is a site that all local birders should be familiar with. Meet at the reserve car park by the Watch House at the end of Harty Ferry Road.
Leader – Ralph Todd

Tuesday 23 September 2014  Crayford Marshes  09:15 - 12:30
Meet at the junction of Hazel Road/Moat Lane (Street parking).
Leaders – Ralph and Brenda Todd

Friday 10 October 2014  Wild Turkey - Birds, Butterflies, Mammals and Flora  Martin Davies
Martin is the RSPB Head of International Funding Development. Although a zoologist by training, he is an all round naturalist and photographer. The talk is not about the American bird or the Bourbon Whiskey, but a survey of the astonishing diverse wildlife on this bridge between Europe, Asia and Africa.

Saturday 25 October 2014  Titchfield Haven NNR, Hampshire  07:30 - 19:00
This can be a tricky time of year for birders when we are between seasons, but Titchfield should offer some interesting birds both on and off the reserve which is located by the Solent. Past visits have featured some rarities but a variety of gulls, waders, ducks, geese and raptors should definitely be on offer. There are excellent facilities here including hides and a very good café.  Group Admission £3.50 (£1.95 kids)  Leader – TBC

Tuesday 28 October 2014  Foots Cray Meadows  9:30 - 12:30
Meet in Leafield Lane off North Cray Road.
Leaders – Ralph and Brenda Todd

Friday 14 November 2014  Wildlife of East Sussex  Ian Rumley-Dawson
Ian is one of our popular speakers. He is a widely travelled and experienced lecturer who has been actively involved with the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and the Sussex Wildlife Trust. His talk tonight will cover the birds, wildlife and nature reserves of his home county.

Sunday 16 November 2014  Snettisham RSPB Reserve Norfolk  07:30 - 19:00
Snettisham is located on the eastern shore of the Wash, an area of sea and sand that plays host to huge numbers of waders and wildfowl during the winter. We should find interesting birds on both sides of the sea-wall as the fresh water pools are often visited by ducks like goldeneye and scap, and roosting waders. Please be aware there are very limited facilities and group members will need to bring all refreshments. Shelter is also very limited so warm, and properly waterproof clothing is essential.
Leader – Tony Banks

Saturday 6 December 2014  Crossness LNR  09:30 - 13:00
Meet adjacent to the Protected Area (gates will be open off Norman Road).
Leaders – Ralph and Brenda Todd

Friday 12 December 2014  Birds of the North Norfolk Coastal Path  Jonathan Forgham
Jonathan is a retired primary school teacher and an enthusiastic ornithologist. He returns tonight to show us the birds he has encountered on the North Norfolk Coastal Path.

Saturday 20 December 2014  Rainham Marshes RSPB Reserve  09:45 - 13:45
Rainham Marshes, our nearest RSPB reserve, has interesting birds to offer at any time of the year but December is a great time for geese and ducks (with or without stuffing), small birds on the feeders, and perhaps a peregrine falcon hunting its own Christmas lunch. Meet in the reserve car park accessed from New Tank Hill Road, Purfleet, Essex.
Leader – Ralph Todd

Friday 9 January 2015  Wildlife and Water in Waders  Michael Heath and Chris Rose
Michael is the River Cray Project Officer for Thames 21 and Chris is the Vice Chairman of the Bexley Natural Environment Forum. Their talk will cover local issues around the environmental work of Thames 21 and a presentation on the Thames Road Wetland Site.

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Tuesday 13 January 2015      Hall Place and Crayford Rough  09:30 - 12:00
Meet in the Hall Place Car Park adjacent to the Sports Pavilion.  Leaders – Ralph and Brenda Todd

Sunday 18 January 2015      Cley NWT Reserve, Norfolk  07:30 - 19:15
The Cley Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve is in an ideal position to attract a good variety of waders and wildfowl. The pools and marshes are a short walk from the visitor centre. The beach is just a little further, giving us the chance of eiders, scoters, mergansers and divers on the sea. Good visitor facilities including food. Charge for admission for non-members is approx. £5.  Leader – TBC

Friday 13 February 2015      Fynbos – Birds, Flowers and Mammals of the Cape  John Buckingham
John is a widely travelled wildlife photographer and tour leader. He is also well known as a freelance lecturer and tutor in birds at both Sussex and Surrey Universities. He makes a welcome return to tell us about the flora and fauna of the Fynbos in South Africa.

Sunday 22 February 2015      Abberton Reservoir and Fingringhoe Wick  07:30 - 19:00
This will be a double venue day visiting two Essex Wildlife Trust reserves. We will start on the causeways at Abberton and then move to the reserve visitor centre. Much work has been done to naturalize the banks of the reservoir. Around lunch time we will move to the reserve at Fingringhoe Wick where we should find a variety of waders on the exposed mud with the tide rising.  Leader – TBC

Tuesday 24 February 2015      Danson Park  09:30 - 12.30
Meet in Stables Car Park.  Leaders – Ralph and Brenda Todd

Friday 13 March 2015         Bird Watching in the Mediterranean  Brian Nobbs
Brian is an active member of the Sevenoaks RSPB Group. He is a keen amateur birdwatcher and photographer and will be covering some of his experiences around the Mediterranean.

Sunday 22 March 2015         Crossness, Thames Water Reserve  10:00 - 13:00
Join us on the marsh area beside the Thames. Reed beds, water filled ditches, grazing areas and the river with its muddy margins attract many birds both residents and rare visitors including unusual gulls, waders and ducks. Meet at the reserve entrance off Norman Road where vehicle access will be provided for a limited period.  Leader – TBC

Friday 10 April 2015          Travels in Ethiopia  Barry Wright
Barry is a keen ornithologist and the Bird Recorder for Kent whose illustrated talk will cover the wealth of birds and diverse habitats of Ethiopia.

Sunday 19 April 2015         Cliffe RSPB Reserve, Cliffe, Kent.  09:30 - 13:00
The large pools at Cliffe provide a safe roosting and feeding area for many ducks and waders and recent works by the RSPB have seen the construction of new paths. Meet at the reserve car park off Salt Lane.  Leader – TBC

Friday 8 May 2015             Social Evening and Members Presentations
A short AGM followed by our own members’ photographic presentations.

Sunday 17 May 2015           Nagshead RSPB Reserve and Symonds Yat  7:30 - 19:00 (prov.)
The Nagshead reserve is within the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire and our target species will include redstart, pied flycatcher and wood warbler that all nest (the first two in nest-boxes) in the oak woodland. An additional location to visit is Symonds Yat where one can enjoy spectacular views of the Wye Valley with the chance of nesting raven and peregrine falcon.  Leader – TBC

Saturday 13 – Tuesday 16 June 2015  Yorkshire
Please contact Stuart Banks to check availability. E-mail stuartbans@hotmail.co.uk. Tel. 020 8 854 7251

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COACH TRIP BOOKING FORM

Formal applications for the autumn/winter trips will be accepted from 1 September.
Please call Diane Lelliot on 020 8850 9705 to check availability before posting -

1) A completed form (photocopy page to avoid spoiling your newsletter) or letter with full details
2) A cheque (made payable to RSPB Bexley Local Group). No Place is Confirmed Without Payment
3) A stamped & addressed envelope for the return of tickets to:-
Diane Lelliot, 51 Holbeach Gardens, Sidcup, DA15 8QW.

Please send me tickets for the following coach trips - (Under 16’s go Half Price!)

Saturday 25 October 2014 Titchfield Haven, NNR, Hampshire (   ) Tickets @ £17
Sunday 16 November 2014 Snettisham, RSPB, Norfolk (   ) Tickets @ £17
Sunday 18 January 2015 Cley, NWT, Norfolk (   ) Tickets @ £17
Sunday 22 February 2015 Abberton Reservoir and Fingringhoe Wick (   ) Tickets @ £17
Sunday 17 May 2015 Nagshead RSPB Reserve and Symonds Yat (   ) Tickets @ £17

(Please note – Fare held at £17. A small supplement might be applied if costs rise significantly)

Names – OF ALL PASSENGERS please

Total - £

Address......................................................................................................................................

Post Code............................................Tel.............................................................

200 CLUB

We have raised nearly £3000 for the benefit of the North Kent Reserves. To date we have 127 members.
Thank you so much to those who have helped raise this money. The draw takes place every month at our indoor
meeting and the winners are published in our newsletter and on the website. If you would like to support this
worthy cause please complete the form below and return it to me, the promoter:
Sandra Sheppard, 4 Dorset Avenue, Welling, Kent DA16 2PX

Bexley Local RSPB Group 200 Club Application for New Members

Name......................................................................................................................................

Address..............................................................................................................................Post Code..............

I wish to apply for (   ) entry/entries to the RSPB Bexley Local Group 200 Club and enclose my
cheque for £ (£12 or a multiple thereof).

Cheques should be made payable to RSPB Bexley Local Group.

Signed......................................................Date .............................................................

(Complete both forms fully in BLOCK CAPITALS please) The RSPB Bexley Local Group would like to keep your details to send you
further information about group activities and the work of the RSPB. If you want to amend or update your details or you do not want us to
use them in the way stated please contact me at the above address.

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200 Club Winners

February 2014
1st J Kinsella, 2nd Raymond Sutton, 3rd Miss E Jackson-Jones

March 2014
1st Mrs Marion Hockey, 2nd Gill Page, 3rd Mrs J Indge

April 2014
1st Mr and Mrs B Jordon, 2nd Mrs M Beach, 3rd Mrs Jeannette Honour

May 2014
1st Mrs P Monk, 2nd Mr R Jackson-Jones, 3rd Mrs Marion Hockey

Group Contact Details

**Group Leader**
Membership - Stuart Banks
Tel 0208 8547251 Mobile 07791473569 stuartbans@hotmail.co.uk

**Treasurer - Alan Mayes**
and Newsletter Records
Mobile 07922255133

**Minutes Secretary - Rosemarie McLavy**
Tel 01322 401564 rosemarie.mclavy@ntlworld.com

**Group Sales Organiser – Linda Blackett**
and Pin Badge Box Coordinator
Tel 01322 435339 hurt.blackett@ntlworld.com

**Field Trip and Coach Bookings Organiser - By Committee** - **Vacancy**

**200 Club Promoter - Sandra Sheppard**
Tel 0208 3037463 sandralsheppard@googlemail.com

**Indoor Meeting Organiser - Vacancy**

**Newsletter Editor & Newsletter Distribution - John Turner**
Tel 0208 3038930 jt.jaturner@tiscali.co.uk

**Campaigns Organiser - Martin Burke**
Tel 07886785470 Photosareus@hotmail.co.uk

**Working Party Organiser - Bob Parker**
Tel 01322 665849 Mobile 07974309775

**Draw Promoter & Coach Seat Bookings - Diane Lelliot**
Tel 0208 8509705

**Non-committee volunteers**

**Fairs Organiser - Roz Nichols**
Tel 0208 3109097 rozned@ntlworld.com

**Peanuts & Seeds - Jackie Tappenden**
Tel 0208 3046306 Mobile 07963 188269

**Newsletter Production - Steve Ansell**
Tel 01322 275955

**Trip Leaders -**
**George Kalli** Tel 0208 854 8385
**Tony Banks** Tel 0208 8593518

**S/E London & North Kent RSPB Rep. - Ralph Todd**
Tel 01322 528335 rbtodd@btinternet.com

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