

AN AUTUMN HOLIDAY WITH SPEYSIDE WILDLIFE

As most of you know, one of our sponsors, Speyside Wildlife, recently invited 2 group members to try out a week's birdwatching holiday in Scotland for **free**. Andy Clarke and Steven Keey took up the offer and Andy has written this article about his week in Scotland:

What a treat this turned out to be. Just up the valley from RSPB Insh Marshes and to the right a bit, we were based at Ballintean on the edge of Cairngorm country. Beautiful panoramas, wildlife a plenty, warm, luxurious accommodation, a tasty, locally inspired and sourced menu, overseen by friendly obliging staff.

Each day we were transported to different destinations, a hide maybe where pine martins and badgers might delight us, or an east coast foray for cetaceans or plummeting gannets. Comfortable in our minibus our guide, the legend that is Craig Round, leapt into action whenever something caught his eye, or ear, and we saw...nearly everything. On a count up of a possible 140 birds we identified 109 species, many on more than one occasion. Also, 19 different mammal and 7 types of insect rarities and 3 even rarer celebrity wildlife presenters (some nearly extinct).

A lifetime's worth of memories captured I returned south a happy man. Was it worth £1,125? (Single supplement @ £200) Easily.

SLIMBRIDGE COACH TRIP



We had a very successful coach trip to Slimbridge. 36 of us enjoyed the wide variety of wild and captive birds. We saw the first Bewick's swan to arrive this autumn (Indri) just outside the visitor centre. We then spent the morning going around the hides near the centre and saw lots of wigeon, teal, pintails, pochards, shelducks and tufted ducks together with greylag geese and mute swans. The Holden hide gave us views of canada geese, barnacle geese, white fronted geese and two distant peregrine falcons. Probably the best bird that most of us saw was a very obliging water rail near the bird feeders by one of the hides (thanks to Roger Hindley for supplying the photo). In the afternoon we went down to Kingfisher Hide where we saw golden plover amongst the lapwings. Colin then arrived and said he had just seen a bittern flying nearby. We waited for sometime and then decided to go over to the Zeiss Hide where after a few minutes some of us saw the bittern fly out of the reedbed. A great end to the day! We just had time to go and see the cranes on the way back to the centre, having seen 64 different species of bird during the day.

ADMISSION PRICE – We have been reviewing the cost of hiring speakers and the hall. The admission price has been £3 for at least 10 years and we have absorbed increasing costs and travel expenses of speakers during that time. To continue providing good quality speakers in the future, we need to increase the admission fee to £4, which will take effect from January 2019.

RSPB England is part of the RSPB, the UK's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.

NEXT MEETING: 11th DECEMBER

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

Colin has bought a new projector which he tells me will definitely work and he will show us photographs from his visit to the Galapagos Islands earlier this year. Apparently a lot of the birds and wildlife are very approachable so it is easy to get close-up shots.

Please bring your favourite wildlife photographs from the last 12 months to display at the December meeting. Please make sure the subject matter is wildlife or landscape based and mounted on card so they can be presented on our display boards. Please note this year that we would like photographs to be no larger than 8" x 12" (A4 size).

Please bring a plate of food. We will provide squash but of course you can bring your own drinks.

If you can't make December, the first meeting of 2019 is on 8th January when we have rescheduled Emma Marsh, the RSPB Midlands regional director, to talk about developments and new projects taking place at the RSPB.

LOCAL BIRDWATCHING WALK: TUESDAY 27th NOVEMBER

Ladywalk (managed by the West Midland Bird Club)

Our next visit is to Ladywalk. This is one of the best reserves in the West Midlands.

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. 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).

Access is via Faraday Avenue at Hams Hall Distribution Centre, approached using the roundabout on the A446 approx 1 mile south of Junction 9 of the M42. Faraday Avenue leads to the car park via a padlocked security gate (turn right at final roundabout by Sainsbury's warehouse). The WMBC require a permit fee of £3 from non-club members (collected on the day). A code is required to open the gate to the car park so I will get there at 9.30 to open the gate. Postcode is B46 1AL.

ANOTHER WAXWING YEAR?

Good numbers of waxwings have been reported in Scotland, the north east of England and even down to Norfolk in the last few days, so it seems it may be a good waxwing year again. We last saw a major irruption in 2016/17 and so hopefully we may see them arrive in the Lichfield area in the next few weeks. There seems to be plenty of berries about this autumn to encourage them to visit.

SUTTON COLDFIELD RSPB GROUP COACH TRIPS – Sutton group are running a coach trip to WWT Martin Mere on Sunday 18th November. For further information and to book please contact Tony Green on 01827 750633 or tonygreen777@hotmail.co.uk.

If you no longer wish to hear from RSPB Lichfield Local Group, please contact Dennis Muxworthy on 0121 353 6886 or dennis.muxworthy@btinternet.com to unsubscribe from communications, confirming your name and address and stating that you wish to unsubscribe from RSPB Lichfield Local Group's communications.