

WELCOME TO 2017

Welcome to all of you at the start of the New Year.

I wrote this newsletter in December as I am currently on holiday in Tenerife, hoping to see a blue chaffinch. Colin has kindly agreed to chair tonight's meeting.

I recently received a report from the RSPB summarising some success stories from 2016 which I thought I should share with you.

Twenty five years ago a few fields in Devon were home to a rapidly dwindling number of curlew buntings. Their plight, highlighted by local bird watchers, led to a research programme that identified the problems they faced. Fast forward to 2016 and the latest survey shows that the population has gone up ten-fold. With the RSPB's help and support, Devon's farmers have stepped up to the challenge and changed the fortunes for curlew buntings – there are now over 1000 pairs. And a second population has been established in Cornwall too.

2016 has been another record-breaking year for the bittern and for the first time in 150 years they nested in Oxfordshire at the RSPB Otmoor nature reserve. In 2016 numbers increased to at least 161, recorded at 76 sites. That compares to 157 at 72 sites in 2015, and is a positive sign that bitterns are back from the brink and thriving.

Cranes have had a great year too both in their East Anglian strongholds and as a result of the Great Crane Project's progress in Somerset. The common crane has continued to make a comeback after the latest survey revealed a record breaking 48 pairs across the UK in 2016 with the total population now at an estimated 160 birds – its highest number since cranes returned to the UK in 1978 after an absence of more than 400 years.

LOCAL BIRDWATCHING WALK: TUESDAY 24th JANUARY

Kingsbury Water Park

We will be meeting at Broomey Croft car park (automatic barrier £3 per car) 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 contact me either by phone on 0121 353 6886 or email (dennis.muxworthy@btinternet.com).

Note: our walk in February is only two days after the February evening meeting on Thursday 16th and will be at Branston Water Park.

COACH TRIP TO WHISBY NATURE PARK- LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Sunday 7th May

Our next coach trip is to Whisby, the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve, near Lincoln.

The lakes at Whisby are surrounded by grassland, marsh, scrub and willow carr. Elements of the original landscape from before quarrying also remain with fragments of heathland, old hedgerows and a small oak woodland. There are six waymarked trails around the reserve and six hides.

In spring and summer, flocks of tits and finches are joined by warblers. The lakes attract feeding sand martins and swallows, and terns nest on the islands. Chiffchaffs, reed and sedge warblers can be heard. Whisby Nature Park has also become famous for nightingales.

We have chosen this date to coincide with the best time to hear singing nightingales.

There is a visitor centre with a café providing hot and cold food.

Therefore please reserve your place with Heather tonight.

Cost for this trip will be £17 per head and the coach will leave the B&M car park at 7.30am. It is just over 70 miles to Whisby and will take about 1 ½ hours to get there.

STAFFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST WALK IN LICHFIELD

I am leading a birdwatching walk for the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust in Lichfield on Saturday 21st January from 10am -12, meeting at Minster Pools by Speakers Corner.

I intend to combine this with a big garden birdwatch.

Please come along and support this event if you can.

NEXT MEETING: 14th FEBRUARY

The jewels and hidden gems of Costa Rica

Ian Butler is a freelance photographer based in the West Midlands, who combines product and commercial work with wildlife photography.

Spending three months in Costa Rica, Ian explores the different species and locations he observed and photographed. With Resplendent Quetzals in the high mountains, Magnificent Frigatebirds along the coastline, White-necked Jacobins, Montezuma Oropendulas, Strawberry Poison Dart frogs and Tarantulas, Ian's images will leave you wanting to visit this exotic place of wildlife diversity.

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