



**Black and red broadbill**



**RSPB East Surrey  
Local Group**

Newsletter 66  
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## **LEADER'S BLOG**

2019 marks the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the RSPB. Many of you might be aware that the embryonic Society for the Protection of Birds (SPB) was founded in 1889 by a group of women led by a Mrs Emily Williamson in Didsbury, Manchester to stamp out the fashion for feathers in hats. Yet it was a young lady named Etta Smith, who lived in Blackheath, who would become one of the driving forces of the Society up until 1939. Etta had joined the Fur, Fin and Feather Folk, also formed in 1889, which met in the house of Mrs Eliza Phillips in Morland Road, Croydon. A frequent guest of honour at these early genteel tea parties was the nature writer W H Hudson.

In 1891 the two groups were encouraged to meet at the headquarters of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in London to provide a focus against "the cruel fashion for avian adornment". They amalgamated, Mrs Williamson bequeathing her society's name

to the new organisation. Etta suggested a young barrister of her acquaintance, Frank Lemon, to draw up a constitution. The Society was on its way.

Frank and Etta were married in May 1892 and between them carried out the administration work of the Society, giving entirely gratuitous service as honorary secretaries, from its inception until Frank's death in 1935 and when Etta was moved upstairs as Vice President in 1939. Etta was instrumental in the early years in organising local secretaries to lobby against the plumage trade. She was one of the first women members of the British Ornithologists' Union (MBOU) in 1910 and a Fellow of the Zoological Society. She was particularly interested in the fate of the red kite.

The Lemons lived all of their married life in Redhill. Frank became Mayor of Reigate in 1911 and was instrumental in acquiring 60 acres of Colley Hill which would be stewarded by the National Trust. Etta received the Most Excellent

Order of the British Empire (MBE) in March 1920 for her local war work such as running Redhill War Hospital when the army requisitioned Redhill Workhouse Infirmary in May 1917 and in 1921 became one of Reigate's first two women Justices of the Peace. Etta died in 1953, aged 92, and was buried next to Frank at St Mary's, Reigate.

If you are interested in this local connection you can read more in the book "Mrs Pankhurst's Purple Feather. Fashion, Fury and Feminism – Women's Fight for Change" by Tessa Boase.

I hope you have enjoyed the long hot days of summer this year and enjoyed some interesting birding. Why not join us at one of our meetings or outings and share that pleasure with like-minded enthusiasts? We are always looking for new faces.

*John Lawrence (Group Leader)*

## **BORNEO DEVASTATION**

Despite covering only six percent of the earth's surface, remarkably, rainforests are home to at least fifty percent of all known species of plants and



**Red leaf monkey**

animals. Rainforests' ability to support such diversity of life is unequalled but their capacity to sequester and store atmospheric carbon, particularly in the context of global warming, makes them a resource that must be protected. It has therefore been greatly concerning that on a scale nigh on unimaginable, this natural wonder is being burned to make way for agriculture.

The world's media has been justifiably critical of the logging and burning rampant in the Amazon since the election of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, yet less attention has been paid to the same issues being played out concurrently across continents. Levying the blame for this series of catastrophic environmental disasters exclusively at the feet of a few egoistic world leaders makes for a compelling narrative, but it indulges the ignorant untruth that we are not all personally to blame. In 2018 I was fortunate enough

to spend a few weeks in the rainforests of the Malaysian part of Borneo. The experience was like something straight out of an Attenborough documentary - the forest is alive with the buzz of insects, the calls of strange birds and the howling of monkeys; Proboscis monkeys with their comical noses and their harem of females call from the treetops at dusk, pygmy elephants break through the dense forest cover to steal a drink from the cool waters of the Kinabatangan river, hornbills fly between the canopy tops overhead and the man of the forest, the critically endangered Bornean orang-utan (photo below) visits the same fig tree its mother did, as did her mother before; it is Eden on earth.



Sadly, every hour, the virgin rainforest of Borneo, unchanged for 140 million years is encroached, eroded at a rate of 1.3 million hectares a year to make way for plantations of palm whose oil finds its way into all of our daily goods from food to hair products.

The scale of the destruction is



**Proboscis monkey**

all too evident from the air: from the flight from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan, I saw the vast plantations of palm stretching as far as the horizon - the same scenario played out across South America in the boundless soya monocultures that have replaced the Amazon to provide feed for the world's growing demand for beef and dairy. All major UK supermarkets have been caught supplying beef from illegally deforested parts of the Amazon and the trend is not set to change across Europe, both



**Buffy fish owl**

with the signing this June of an EU-South American deal to cut tariffs on, inter alia, beef from Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, and with EU member states such as Ireland (who account for 70 percent of UK beef and dairy imports) regularly failing to meet their targets on greenhouse gas reductions from agriculture.

Despite all this doom and gloom, there are solutions. We must embrace the ideology of Buckminster Fuller when he said: "you never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." To do this, we must all personally change. As consumers we must behave responsibly, for example, drastically reducing (if not eliminating) our beef and dairy consumption and ensuring the palm oil containing products we use are sustainably sourced and certified.

We must use our wealth to create value, be it through our



**Pygmy elephant**



**Oriental black hornbill**



**White-breasted woodswallow**

*All photos by kind permission of Sam Thomas*

support for charities who protect our common heritage or through the ecotourism that brings the economic benefits of a resource without extracting and destroying it. And finally, we must offset our carbon or give up a carbon intensive lifestyle - there are plenty of ways to help - for instance, we can calculate our carbon and offset it, just Google it!

*Sam Thomas*

### **BOUGH BEECH**

It is with much regret that I have to report the end of an era for this important 50 year old nature reserve, with the astonishing news that the Kent

Wildlife Trust is to surrender its lease from SES Water and discontinue management. Whether any other organization will take it on seems highly unlikely. I believe the best that can be hoped for is for SES Water to manage it to the best of their ability, and hopefully preserve as much biodiversity as is possible. Thousands of hours of volunteers time has gone into the establishment of this magical little gem, and it would be disastrous if this was not harnessed in the future for nature and the considerable public benefit.

*Brian Thomas*

EVENING MEETINGS 2020			FIELD TRIPS 2020		
JAN	Wed 8	Brian Nobbs: “ <b>Food for the birds – Eat-in or Take-away?</b> ” How birds from hummingbirds to vultures exploit the food resources around them.	Sun 12	Shellness & Sheppey (Brian Thomas 07596 171941).	
FEB	Wed 12	David Darrell-Lambert: “ <b>The easy way to identify Gulls</b> ” How to overcome the pitfalls of assessing the age and type of these birds in the field.	Sun 16	<b>The Burgh</b> (Wendy Bainbridge 07751 784479).	
MAR	Wed 11	Glenda Law: “ <b>Australia’s tropical north</b> ”. We visit Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kakadu National Park and Daintree rainforest in search of crocodiles and birds.	Sun 15	<b>Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry</b> (Dave Bryant 07837 250090).	
APR	Wed 8	AGM – followed by our special guest speaker <b>Peter Holden MBE</b> whose topic will be “ <b>Inspired by Birds</b> ” – an historic look at how people have viewed birds and objects, images and other works of art they have created.	Sun 12	<b>Rye Harbour/Pett Level</b> ( John Lawrence 07952 830240).	
			Wed 22	<b>Half day Old Lodge Ashdown</b> (meet car park TV 470305 at 9a.m) (Brian Thomas 07596 171941).	
			Sun 26	<b>Half day Seawatch Seaford Head.</b> Meet 6.30am east end of beach by start of cliffs (Brian Hobley )	
MAY	Wed 13	Chris Collins: “ <b>Arctic Russia: Realm of the Ice Bear.</b> ” Not just a world record for polar bears but also Spectacled Eider, White-billed Diver etc.	Sun 10	<b>Minsmere</b> ; coach pick up Godstone 7.30a.m. sharp.	
JUN	Wed 10	Simon Ginnaw: “ <b>Kent’s wild year</b> ” A personal journey through the seasons capturing stunning landscapes, rich history and beautiful wildlife.	Sun 17	<b>New Forest.</b> Meet 7a.m. Godstone, (Wendy Bainbridge 07751 784479).	
			Sun 14	<b>Tice’s Meadow</b> then extended stay <b>Thursley Common</b> (nightjars) Brian Thomas. (07596 171941).	
JUL	Wed 8	John Buckingham: “ <b>Bird Ringing</b> ”. An insight into the fascinating work of the Sandwich Bay Bird observatory.	Fri 19	<b>Nightjars:</b> meet <b>Old Lodge</b> car park Ashdown 8pm. (Brian Thomas).	
AUG	SUMMER BREAK			Sun 12	<b>Mystery trip</b> (Brian Hobley 07967 979674).
SEP	Wed 9	Bill Coster: “ <b>Bill does Britain</b> ” Some of the best of British wildlife and landscape.	Sun 16	<b>Pagham Harbour</b> (John Lawrence 07952 830240)	
OCT	Wed 14	Rick Simpson: “ <b>New Moon on the Wane – The Curse of the Curlews</b> ”. Why are curlew species declining across the world?	Sun 13	<b>North Foreland/Oare Marshes</b> Brian Hobley (07967 979674).	
NOV	Wed 11	Andy Skillen : “ <b>Brazil? You must be nuts.....!</b> ” A decade of adventures in South America’s wildlife haven.	Sun 18	<b>Mystery Trip.</b> (Brian Thomas 07596 171941).	
DEC	Wed 9	Christmas Meeting – festive fare and members tales/photographs.	Sun 15	<b>Dungeness</b> (Dave Bryant 07837 250090).	
			Sun 13	<b>Elmley</b> (John Lawrence 07952 830240).	

Field trips start from Godstone Green Car Park at 8.00 am, unless otherwise stated. Part day trips – see above for time and place. For details of coach trips contact Brian Hobley 01883 625404. Alterations to some of the proposed venues may be necessary at the last minute. *Warm waterproof clothing & stout footwear should be worn. Bring a packed lunch for day trips. No dogs. NOTE: If going direct to venue please notify leader at least 24 hours in advance in case of changes.*

Indoor Meetings will be held at the White Hart Barn, Godstone in 2020 starting at 8.00 pm. Admission £3.00 for adults, £1.00 for fledglings. There is no group subscription and new visitors are always welcome.

Other events during the year are notified at the indoor meetings & on the website: [www.eastsurreyspb.co.uk](http://www.eastsurreyspb.co.uk)

**Group Leader: John Lawrence (01737 553316).**

**Newsletter Editor: Brian Thomas (01883 623149)**

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If you would like to receive this publication by e-mail contact the Editor, Brian Thomas (e-mail: [brianthomas47@gmail.com](mailto:brianthomas47@gmail.com)). Publications sent by e-mail will be in glorious colour.

