



**RSPB East Surrey
Local Group**

Newsletter 68
Autumn 2020

LEADER'S BLOG

How have you been coping with lockdown? I hope you have escaped infection with the coronavirus and have enjoyed in some measure the changing seasons of spring, summer and now approaching autumn during lockdown.

Many people have commented that the appreciation of nature and the outdoors have significant benefits for our mental and physical well-being. What better hobby is there than bird watching in these challenging times? There are "five ways to well-being" apparently – to be active; to take notice; to learn; to give; and to connect.

Have you spent more time watching and noting what is going on around you and have you noticed anything new? Perhaps when we can get back together, we can share these insights and maybe promote changes and improvements to our local area.

I'm sorry we have had to curtail our monthly meetings and outings. Our speakers have been very understanding and have agreed to rearrange their visit and lectures to next year when hopefully we may be able to resume in a covid-secure environment. Unfortunately, social-distancing etc. limits our capacity in the White Hart Barn

to a maximum of 20 attendees at present and this is frankly uneconomic going forward as we need to cover our costs at least. We are looking into various on-line alternatives for the near future but wonder how we can best organise these virtual meetings if we cannot resume face-to-face meetings soon and reach enough of our members to make it a worthwhile experience. Are there any knowledgeable volunteers out there who could help or suggest how we can move forward sensibly and inclusively?

Group outings and car-sharing again do not seem feasible at this time although there is an opening up of reserves and facilities for families. Many look forward to our annual pilgrimage to Minsmere and it would be a pity if we could not visit again next year.

We have prepared a provisional programme for 2021. However, we cannot say for certain when we can resume safely. Please bear with us and check our website and local news sources for the latest information.

In the meantime, the RSPB remains active both here and abroad as we ponder the "new normal". Please continue to support our work as we speak up for nature as the country

seeks to rebuild a more resilient economy, international fair trade post-Brexit and healthier and more socially aware communities. We care as much about investing in a thriving natural world because if we do not respect nature, we cannot realistically hope to rebuild our daily lives to resist the challenges of new pandemics, climate change, habitat degradation and species loss.

Did you see and were you not moved by Sir David Attenborough's programme on "Extinction: The Facts"? Can we really afford to lose 1:7 of our UK species? The RSPB has launched a new campaign headlined "Revive our World" to put nature at the heart of decision-making and build back a healthier, happier world that's good for wildlife and people. I hope we can count on your continued support and look forward to meeting you again face-to-face in the not too distant future. Meanwhile - Stay Safe!

John Lawrence (Group Leader)

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

And usually there are diaries, calendars, cards and other things for you to buy at our meetings to help the local group's contribution to raising funds for the RSPB. This year is different. However, if you wish to support

the Local Group, I will be putting in an order in early November for all requests that I have by the end of October. Please e-mail me on annfort2014@yahoo.co.uk either with a specific order or to discuss what you would like. I will e-mail you when orders are ready for collection and payment.
Ann Fort, Sales Organiser.

EXTINCTION

Our leader above mentions the recent programme on BBC hosted by Sir David Attenborough. If you have not seen this already, it is a must for viewing and available on BBC iplayer.

Sadly world leaders have totally ignored the consensus by the scientific community and their predictions on climate change and biodiversity loss. 20 years ago they suggested that this was extreme exaggeration, but many years later, the evidence clearly shows that rather than being an exaggeration, it has become a substantial underestimate – categorically substantiated by hard scientific proof.

Social media has brought unparalleled attention to the plights of environmental causes at a breadth, reach and level of granularity that just 10 years ago would have not been thought possible. We understand better than ever, the scale of the threats the natural world is facing as news from far flung corners of the world is shared and responded to in moments – from the illegal bird markets of south east Asia to the ivory poachers of southern Africa.

Real-time data could prove to be our greatest tool in the fight back against extinction but we have to be careful that it is used correctly and does not become the sword of Damocles hanging over our necks. Social media has turned into a platform for amplifying the opinions of flat-earthers, climate change deniers, COVID-deniers and the latest embodiment of this ,virtual trolling narrative, extinction-deniers.

As Attenborough articulates, warnings of COVID-like contagions and their increased likelihood as a result of habitat

destruction and trophic unbalancing (loss of apex predators and proliferation of disease spreading prey species such as rodents) have been well documented for a similar length of time. If we continue to marginalise these predictions, we do so at our own peril.

So my personal hopes are unfortunately ‘glass half empty’ for the world to wake up to this foreboding cataclysm. As usual money is god and the constant and ultra powerful lobbying by big business and vested interests has and always will be against meaningful resolution. We all have an individual responsibility in this matter – I wonder how many of us have written to our pension providers to ask if their strategy includes divestment from fossil fuels and other inimical investments?

For those of you who saw the programme, I would be surprised if you did not react as I did in being saddened and feeling totally depressed. The piece that really got to me was seeing the only two surviving northern White Rhinos with their caring keeper – doomed like the

passenger pigeon and the Dodo before them.

We are so fortunate in having an influential, dedicated and erudite orator in Sir David and the fact that he can still see the possibility of light at the end of the tunnel, but only if we act now. We really are in our last chance saloon.

Brian Thomas





BIRD PHOTOS

Jack Barnes is a very talented local wildlife enthusiast and exceptional photographer; I predict great things for him in this field in the future. His stunning photo of a cuckoo on the front cover of the latest (2017 Surrey Bird Report) has to be the very best I have ever seen. He has kindly consented to the use of 3 of his stunning bird images (whinchat, hobby and common redstart) in this Newsletter and I wish to acknowledge my grateful thanks for this. The size and format of this publication can't by any means do full justice to them; notwithstanding I'm sure you will agree they are still something to behold. You have to be unbelievably patient to get the images we have on show here. Hours upon hours waiting in hides, or careful study of bird habits are needed to capture such exceptional shots as his hobby about to catch a coupled pair of dragonflies over a lake in Richmond Park. So good was this image that it was featured

on Springwatch last year!

LOCAL BIRDS

It's that exciting time of year again, with massive bird migration through our area.

At Washponds Chelsham on 4th September a flock of 60 linnets and 3 whinchats were found. A mini 'fall' of migrants on 21st September at Warren Barn Woldingham involved a flock of 65 immigrant meadow pipits, a whinchat, 4 wheatears, 2 stonechats, a common redstart, 2 willow warblers (a species that sadly no longer breeds with us) and 3 chiffchaffs.

Later in the month in the same area stonechat numbers had built to 14 birds. The normal emigration of hirundines gained pace during the month with martins and swallows pulsing south whilst northern thrush migrants were observed joining us for the winter. How many of you I wonder noticed sudden increases of blackbirds and thrushes in the garden, many of which are likely to be

continental birds since thrush movements here aren't restricted to redwing and fieldfare.

KEARTON'S FIELD NOTES

Members will remember the talk we had by John Bevis featuring the Kearton brothers and their wildlife and photographic exploits and innovations in the early years of the 20th Century. The Bourne Society has just published Richard Kearton's Surrey Field Notes (1900-1927), featuring his intimate diary recordings of his daily excursions in the Caterham valley and adjacent areas, with numerous reproductions of colour and monochrome plates of the amazingly numerous and diverse species present at that time. Far more than just wildlife photography this book gives invaluable insight into the social history of the time. At only £11 it is thoroughly recommended! Please contact the Editor bjthomas47@gmail.com (phone 01883 623149) or Paul Riddington (01883 622964) if you would like a copy.

| EVENING MEETINGS 2021 | | | FIELD TRIPS 2021 | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--|------------------|--|--|
| JAN | Wed 13 | .Greg Prescott: “ British Wildlife seen from a Bike. ” Highlights of some of the reserves and people visited by the famed Birding Biker | Sun 17 | Shellness & Sheppey (Brian Thomas 07596 171941). | |
| FEB | Wed 10 | Simon Ginnaw; ‘ Kent’s Wild Year ’ A personal, seasonal journey capturing stunning landscapes, rich history and beautiful wildlife. | Sun 14 | The Burgh (Wendy Bainbridge 07751 784479). | |
| MAR | Wed 10 | John Buckingham : “ Bird Ringing ” An insight into the fascinating work of the Sandwich bay Bird Observatory | Sun 14 | Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry (Dave Bryant 07837 250090). | |
| APR | Wed 14 | AGM – followed by our special guest speaker Peter Holden MBE whose topic will be “ Inspired by Birds ” – an historic look at how people have viewed birds and objects, images and other works of art they have created. | Sun 18 | Rye Harbour/Pett Level (John Lawrence 07952 830240). | |
| | | | Wed 21 | Half day Old Lodge Ashdown (meet car park TV 470305 at 9a.m) (Brian Thomas 07596 171941). | |
| | | | Sun 25 | Half day Seawatch Seaford Head. Meet 6.30am east end of beach by start of cliffs (Brian Hobley) | |
| MAY | Wed 12 | Rick Simpson : “ New Moon on the Wane – The Curse of the curlews ” Why are curlew species declining across the world? | Sun 9 | Minsmere ; coach pick up Godstone 7.30a.m. sharp. | |
| | | | Sun 16 | New Forest. Meet 7a.m. Godstone, (Wendy Bainbridge 07751 784479). | |
| | | | wed 19 | Knepp Estate. Meet Godstone 8.30a.m.(B Thomas 07596 17194). | |
| JUN | Wed 9 | John Lawrence : “ Exploring New Zealand ” Travel around North and South islands looking for rare birds, fine scenery and local culture. | Sun 13 | Tice’s Meadow then extended stay Thursley Common (nightjars) Brian Thomas. (07596 171941). | |
| | | | Fri 18 | Nightjars: meet Old Lodge car park Ashdown 8pm. (Brian Thomas). | |
| JUL | Wed 14 | Chris Collins: “ Arctic Russia : Realm of the Ice Bear ” Not just a world record for polar bears but also spectacled eider, white-billed diver etc. | Sun 18 | Mystery trip (Brian Hobley 07967 979674). | |
| AUG | SUMMER BREAK | | | Sun 15 | Pagham Harbour (John Lawrence 07952 830240) |
| SEP | Wed 8 | Ashley Grove : “ Crane Spotting ” Visit Sweden for views of these iconic birds, 25000 on migration and other spring highlights. | Sun 12 | North Foreland/Oare Marshes Brian Hobley (07967 979674). | |
| OCT | Wed 13 | Jonathan Forgham: : “ Birds of the Camargue ” Where to go and what to see, a compendium of experiences over 10 years in this special area. | Sun 17 | Mystery Trip. (Brian Thomas 07596 171941). | |
| NOV | Wed 10 | Bill Coster: “ Bill does Britain ” Some of the best of British wildlife and landscape seen through the camera lens. | Sun 21 | Dungeness (Dave Bryant 07837 250090). | |
| DEC | Wed 8 | Christmas Meeting – festive fare and members tales/photographs. | Sun 12 | Elmley (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 2021 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

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RSPB is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

If you would like to receive this publication by e-mail contact the Editor, Brian Thomas (e-mail:

brianthomas47@gmail.com). *Publications sent by e-mail will be in glorious colour.*

