

Newsletter 32

The thirty second meeting of the ILBs' was held on 15 October 2019 at Belfairs Woodland Centre and 10 ladies and Kris Mee attended.

Indoor Meeting 2/10/2019: - Thanks to Rita Merrick.

A very clear talk from Chris Collins about Guyana, a vast area of S. America. Mainly covered in savannah, rainforest and riddled with waterways, plus a 740ft. powerful waterfall. A huge number of birds from the smallest kingfisher and hummingbird to the largest raptors in the world. How he remembers all the names is amazing! We, also, saw a variety of animals, large monkeys, yellow and red foot tortoises. Some of the species had peculiar names, others more obvious.

Local Sightings: - Thanks to Anne Sanford.

Wakering Stairs – Common scoter, Velvet scoter flying. Bonchurch Park – Goldcrest, Kingfisher. Gunners /Bowers – Ring Ouzel. Fobbing Marsh/Coryton Yellowhammer, Whinchat. Canvey Point – Manx shearwater, Great skua

Maureen – Two Tree Snipe, Curlew and Lapwing

Kris – There are still swallows about and the first Redwing was seen 1/10/2019 The humpback whale seen in the Thames at Rainham has unfortunately died and is thought to have been injured before it come up the river.

Walks Report

Two Tree Island Wednesday 18 September One ILB attended and 30 species were seen.

RSPB Rainham Sunday 29 September – One ILB attended and 40 species were seen including a huge flock of House Sparrows on the feeders and Marsh Frogs in the ditches.

Walton on the Naze Sunday 6 October was cancelled due to the weather.

Rita reported that Essex Birdwatching Society is 70 years old this year and chose to celebrate by visiting many reserves in Essex over the weekend. The species count was up to 90 by Sunday but may be more.

Rita has also been involved for many years with the City of London Thames Fishery Research Experiment held in Gravesend. 2019 was the 47th year of the event. The Essex adult angling team were overall winners and the girls beat the boys in schools angling competition. All the fish caught are measured, points given, and then put back in the Thames. The exciting thing this year is that elvers were caught for the first time, although eels have been seen, so the river must be cleaner. She also told us that the sole breeding ground is recovering following the dredging at Thameside.

The Local Group were kindly given a stamp collection accrued over a lifetime as a generous donation and Graham and Kris took the numerous boxes and albums to the Legacy Officer, Shelley, at RSPB HQ Sandy in Bedfordshire. The stamps will all be checked and assessed by an expert before being sold. The Group will be told how much is raised towards conservation projects. While we were at Sandy, we took the opportunity to ask about legacies and Shelley gave us a pile of brochures which I took to the ILB coffee morning and I will also take to the next indoor meeting if anyone is interested.

Forthcoming Events: -

Brent Goose Watch Friday 18, Saturday 19, Sunday 20 October !0:00 to 4:00 at Old Leigh

The next ILB outing to be arranged will be to Fingringhoe on Sunday 17 May 2020.

Maureen Beesley will be arranging this trip and will provide details later.

The next indoor meeting will be Wednesday 6 November 2019 at the Belfairs Woodland Centre. Wildlife of New Zealand by Graham Ekins.

The next Field Trip will be Monday 21 October Wat Tyler / Vange Marsh meet 10:00am in Wat Tyler CP Pitsea behind the Visitor Centre.

And Monday 18 November at Ingrebourne RM12 6TS Meet at 10:00am

The next Essex Wildlife Trust meeting will be Thursday 24 October 7:45pm. The Essex Coast by Mark Iley of EWT.

The Christmas meal will be Tuesday 10 December 2019 12:00pm at The Royal Oak. £20 a head to include tea or coffee. Menu enclosed. Please let me know if you are coming and what your menu choices are. Make cheques payable to RSPB SEE Local Group for £20 and send to me before 1st November please at 34 Park View Drive, Leigh on Sea, SS9 4TU.

Any lady requiring transport to attend **any** event please contact Kris Mee.

The **next ILB meeting** is scheduled for **19 November 2019** at Belfairs Woodland Centre. Meet at 10.00am for a walk or 10:30 for a coffee and chat.

This newsletter will be available on the local group website at: <http://www.southendrspb.co.uk> . Click on ILBs on the Menu Bar.

If you no longer wish to hear from the RSPB South East Essex Local Group, please contact **Kris Mee 01702 525152 krismee28@googlemail.com** confirming your name and address and stating that you wish to unsubscribe from the RSPB South East Essex Local Group's communications.

Rita reported a dispute with a member of the public about Brent Geese, so I asked Graham to clarify for us. He got an enormous fat tome, BTO The Migration Atlas, off our bookshelf and proceeded to regale me with facts. Using this tome I will try to precis the information and apologies to any experts who find my effort too broad, or non-experts who find it too boring. Globally there are three main sub species of Brent divided into seven distinct populations or flyways: -

1. Dark-bellied Brent (*Branta bernicla*) form the largest population.

i) Breeds predominantly on the Taimyr Peninsula in the central Russian Arctic and winters in NW Europe.

2. Pale or Light-bellied Brent (*Branta hrota*) are divided into four populations/flyways:-

ii) Breeds largely in the Svalbard archipelago and NE Greenland and winters around the North Sea

iii) Breeds in eastern Canadian high Arctic and winters almost exclusively in Ireland

iv) This group also known as Atlantic Brant breeds in SE Canadian Arctic and winters on the Atlantic coast of USA

v) This group also known as Grey-bellied Brant breeds in W Canadian high Arctic and winters on the Pacific coast of USA

3. Pacific or Black Brant (*Branta nigricans*) are divided into two populations/flyways:-

vi) Breeds in the Russian Arctic east of the Taimyr Peninsula and winters on the coast of China, Japan and Korea

vii) This group, more numerous than (vi), breeds in Alaska and SW Canadian Arctic and winters on the Pacific coasts of USA and Mexico, mixing to some extent with Grey-bellied Brant



Photograph by Graham Mee
Dark-bellied Brent Geese, showing in foreground, two families of four adults and two juveniles with white stripes visible on the wing

The Brent geese found at Leigh on Sea are Dark-bellied Brent (*Branta bernicla*) from the Taimyr Peninsula. The non-breeding birds arrive first in early September followed by families with this year's young. Young Dark-bellied Brent can be identified by their three white stripes and are nicknamed "Sergeants". They start the migration back to the breeding grounds in Spring.

Black Brant (3) are occasionally seen locally among the huge flocks and were reported in 2018.

Pale or Light-bellied Brent (*Branta hrota*) (2) are less frequently seen locally and were last reported in 2016.

Dark-bellied Brent (*Branta bernicla*) (i) and Pale or Light-bellied Brent (*Branta hrota*) 2(iii) from Ireland may possibly be seen together in small numbers in the West Country.

The RSPB website [states that](#)



Brent goose (Dark bellied)



Brent goose (Pale bellied)

Scientific name: *Branta bernicla* Bird family: Ducks, geese and swans

UK conservation status: Amber Protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Brent goose is a small, dark goose, of similar size to a mallard. It has a black head and neck and grey-brown back, with either a pale or dark belly, depending on the race. Adults have a small white neck patch. It flies in loose flocks along the coast, rather than in tight skeins like grey geese. It is an Amber List species because of the important numbers found at just a few sites.

What they eat: Vegetation, especially eelgrass. Population: UK wintering between October to March: 102,000

Natural habitats: Farmland Grassland Marine and intertidal Wetland

Where and when to see them: - Brent geese can be seen around estuaries and saltmarshes. Main concentrations of dark-bellied birds in the Wash, the North Norfolk coastal marshes, Essex estuaries, the Thames Estuary and Chichester and Langstone Harbours. Most light-bellied birds are found at Strangford Lough and Lough Foyle, N Ireland and at Lindisfarne, Northumberland.

<http://jasonendfield.weebly.com/home/revealed-natural-england-approved-the-slaughter-of-6000-brent-geese>

"Natural England have issued hundreds of licences to UK farmers to approve the shooting of Brent geese in various coastal locations across the country, including Kent, Lincolnshire and Essex.

"The primary explanation, given by England's nature watchdog for this potential mass slaughter, is that the bird causes 'serious damage to crops, vegetable or fruit'"