

Newsletter July/August 2021

The ILB meeting arranged for 14 July 2021 had to be cancelled at the last minute because Belfairs Woodland Centre was closed due to Covid. Kris managed to contact everyone except, to her shame, a new lady from Shoeburyness, who telephoned to ask, "Where is everybody?"

Indoor Meeting

There have been no Indoor Meetings this year and there are no plans at present to restart in September.

Zoom Meetings

In conjunction with Chelmsford Local Group there have been five Zoom meetings so far this year. A report is produced after each session. This can be used to see who has attended the meeting but as it is possible to watch anonymously it is proving difficult to be sure how many of the audience are LG members.

April - 8/4/2021 Thanks to Sue McClellan

We heard an interesting presentation from retired long standing RSPB staff member André Farrar who has been a passionate wildlife campaigner over the years, especially birds of prey and hen harriers. He spent much of his career working to safeguard a variety of habitats and the species that depend on them, so he had lots to share about his experiences. The UK is at the crossroads of a great avian migration highway, and our great estuaries and wetlands provide safe havens to refuel or wait out the coldest months for millions of wildfowl and waders as they travel between their winter and summer grounds. André enlightened us about many of our waterbirds; where they go, what they do there and the issues they face. Several participants asked thought provoking questions at the end of the talk.

There were 72 attendees, roughly 18 from Chelmsford and 20 from South East Essex, 34 Unknown.

May – 12/5/2021. Thanks to Sue McClellan

Alan Johnson, RSPB Area Manager - Kent & Essex, presented this talk which focused on how climate change is impacting on the Greater Thames Estuary. He kept his online audience engaged with issues around what fresh water wetlands will look like when the fresh water runs out, the likely impacts of climate change on the future of the Thames and its coastal ecosystems, climate adaptation, how we work with designated landscapes, and the whole concept of what an ecological landscape should be. He also outlined what the RSPB is doing now and what must be done in the future to preserve our valuable species and their respective habitats.

There were 66 attendees possibly 16 from Chelmsford and 23 from SEE, 27 Unknown.

June – 16/6/2021 Roger Hance FRPS AFIAP DPAGB BPE5 speaking on Nature Photography in the UK - Tips and Tricks. Talk paid for by Chelmsford Local Group.

His talk, normally given to Camera Clubs, had been adapted for non-photographer wildlife enthusiasts with some wonderful pictures and some very useful tips for those who like to take wildlife photos. There were fewer attendees at 45 with 8 from Chelmsford and 19 from SEE, 18 Unknown.

July – 21/7/2021 Ian Barthorpe, Minsmere Visitor Experience Officer. RSPB Minsmere. This free talk about the history and wildlife at RSPB Minsmere was extremely interesting.

There were 58 attendees with 12 from Chelmsford and 24 from SEE, 22 Unknown.

August – 18/8/2021 Keith Betton. The Birds of the World's Most Remote Islands. Talk paid for SEE Local Group. We were taken on two trips to the southern oceans. First starting from Ushuaia, Argentina South America, to South Georgia, Gough Island, Tristan Da Cunha, St Helena, Ascension Island. The RSPB is doing a lot of work with the local governments to eradicate rats, mice and cats endangering the very rare species on these British islands. The second trip in the Sub Antarctic (which cost £10,000!!) started from Invercargill, South Island NZ, to Snares Islands, Auckland Islands, Macquarie Island, Campbell Island, Antipodes Islands, Chatham Island. We were shown lots of wonderful photographs of some of the rarest and most endangered birds in the world by a very knowledgeable and interesting speaker.

There were 31 attendees with 8 from Chelmsford and 12 from SEE, 11 Unknown.

Local Sightings: - Highlights and Year Firsts

5/3/21 Wallasea Sand Martin. 27/3/21 Wallasea Wheatear.

28/3/21 Gt Wakering Yellow Wagtail. 30/3/21 Fobbing Marsh Swallow.

1/4/21 Gunners Park Sandwich Tern. 6/4/21 Wallasea Garganey.

7/4/21 Hadleigh Downs Willow Warbler.

8/4/21 Vange Marsh Sedge Warbler, Foulness Ring-tailed Hen Harrier.

10/4/21 Gunners Park Common Tern, Red Breasted Merganser, Doggetts Farm, Rochford Common Whitethroat, House Martin.

11/4/21 Wakering Stairs Nightingale. 12/4/21 Wallasea Hobby.

14/4/21 Fobbing Marsh Cuckoo, White Stork. 16/4/21 Fobbing Marsh Ring Ouzel.

17/4/21 Southchurch Park East Reed Warbler. 19/4/21 Canvey Wick Lesser Whitethroat.

27/4/21 Canvey Wick Grasshopper Warbler, Tolleshunt Major Turtle Dove. 29/4/21 Canvey Point Swift.
1/5/21 Stambridge Mills Woodchat Shrike. 2/5/21 Bower Marsh Garden Warbler.
5/5/21 West Canvey Marsh Whinchat. 8/5/21 Canvey Point Gannet, Razorbill.
10/5/21 Wakering Stairs Turtle Dove. 14/5/21 Canvey Point Eider, Fobbing Marsh Spotted Flycatcher.
22/5/21 Heybridge Basin Nightjar. 14/6/21 Foulness Hummingbird Hawk Moth. 20/6/21 Hyde Hall Little Owl.
24/6/21 Hanningfield Reservoir Spoonbill. 1/7/21 Bowers Marsh Black-necked Grebe feeding fledgling.
1/7/21 4:15am Daws Heath Two Hobby hunting Pipistrelle Bats.
8/8/21 Vange Marsh Spoonbill, Green Sandpiper. 16/8/21 Bowers Marsh Purple Heron, Whinchat



Woodchat Shrike Photo by David Lee

Field Trip Reports

EWT Blue House Farm 18 April – 11 attended, and 49 species were seen including Great White Egret and four Cattle Egret.
EWT Gunners Park 2 May – 13 attended, and 33 species were seen.
Wakering Common 17 May – 3 attended, and 28 species were seen.
RSPB Minsmere 26 May – 9 attended, and 71 species were seen including four Hobby from the Bittern Hide but no-one saw the Golden Oriole.

SEE LG Committee Meeting.

Thank you to June, Treasurer, and John, Membership Secretary, for all their work on behalf of the group for the last ten years. Fortunately, Jan Bradley has agreed to become the new Treasurer but as there is no replacement Membership Secretary Kris has taken on this role temporarily. John is still doing the 100 Club, but we need a volunteer for this.

We have a new RSPB Local Group Officer, Hugo Blomfield, so a meeting was arranged on Wallasea Island outside the staff offices so he could meet the LG committee and Wallasea staff Rachel and Simon. Fortunately, it was a sunny day! Hugo has been LGO for six years, is based in the RSPB Office in Brighton where he lives and is responsible for 45 groups in South England (Areas 1-4), from Guernsey & Cornwall to London & Essex. Essex is in Area 4 with Kent and Hugo has now met all his Local Groups except Guernsey!

We also met Kate Harriss, RSPB Saving Nature through Local Groups Project Officer. She lives in Shoeburyness and had been in post with the RSPB for two weeks with a two-year contract and her area of responsibility is the whole of the UK. She will be advising LG how to encourage and promote Saving Nature. Kate told us that the café on the Garrison at Shoeburyness is soon to be opened and could be a venue for the ILB in the future.

Due to a health scare following the meeting, Kris has persuaded Graham to find volunteers to take over some of the jobs he undertakes. i.e., Facebook Moderator, Newsletter Editor, Zoom Host. The committee also needs volunteers for 100 Club, Coach Trip Organiser and Membership Secretary.

Trip to Barra, Outer Hebrides Thanks to Rita Merrick

I travelled to my daughter, Angie's, in Norfolk, we then drove to Glasgow, Loch Lomond, and Oban where we spent the night. The ferry was cancelled so we proceeded to Fort William, Kyle of Lochalsh and crossed the Skye bridge, and up to Uig for another night. Up at 3:30a.m. for the ferry to Lochmaddy, North Uist, then drove to South Uist for the ferry to Barra. Arrived at last, one day late.

Barra is a beautiful island covered in gorse, primroses, bluebells, orchids and much more, with vast white, sandy bays and scenic hills. It is so peaceful, pure air and just bird song. Only one small supermarket (Co-op) and a few smaller shops. If the ferry cannot sail the shops have empty shelves.

At Barra airport a 17-seater small plane lands on the beach when the tide is out. When the windscreens are flying the public are not allowed on the beach. We watched the plane land, re-fuel, load luggage and people, even waiting for a late comer, then take off.

The weather was very kind, a few showers at the beginning of the week, then fine but windy the rest.

We saw Greylag Goose, Mute Swan, Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Eider, Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Fulmar, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Grey Heron, Buzzard, **Golden Eagle**, **White-tailed Eagle**, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Sanderling, Dunlin, Snipe, Curlew, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Turnstone, Great Skua, Common Tern, B.H. Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, G.B.B. Gull, Kittiwake, Puffin, Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Cuckoo + female Cuckoo, Short-eared Owl, **Twite**, Skylark, Swift, Swallow, Sand & House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Stonechat, Wheatear, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sedge Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler (heard), **Corncrake**, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Pied Flycatcher, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Jay, Raven, Magpie, Jackdaw, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Hooded Crow, Goldfinch, Linnet, Redpoll, Reed Bunting,

Every day we saw and heard many Cuckoos, Hooded Crows, Willow Warblers, Song Thrushes. Everywhere we went we could hear the Corncrake, but it was on the last day that we saw one and watched it for about half an hour. Our patience was rewarded. We also saw Grey Seals and lots of rabbits with one Black one. Barra mainly has a one-track road, with many passing places, about 800 residents, I think, and 8 by 5 miles.

After 7 wonderful days we took the ferry from Barra for the five-hour trip back to Oban, on the way we saw Harbour Porpoise and a large pod of Dolphin. We drove back to Norfolk via Sheffield where we visited my youngest daughter.

Extras seen on journey- Red Kite, Stock Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Kestrel, Nuthatch, Carrion Crow, and Yellow Hammer.

In one small place where we used the facilities, we had to pay 50p by 'card'. Never known that before!

A fabulous trip thanks to Angie- my daughter who arranged everything.

Forthcoming Events: -

The next Zoom meeting is still to be arranged and will be notified by email and advertised on the Website and Facebook. Only Click on the link provided on the day and time stated. It will not work before then.

The primary function of Local Groups is to raise funds to support the work of the RSPB, but our fundraising is currently very limited. Indoor meetings are normally £3 for members and £4 for non-members but we are not charging for Zoom presentations. Please consider donating a minimum of £3 per person to allow us to book Zoom speakers who charge a fee without incurring a financial loss.

Please donate by Bank Transfer to
RSPB SEE LG, Sort Code **309079** Account Number **33710768**.

Important! Please put 'ZOOMMEETING' in the reference box.

Thank you for your support it is much appreciated.

The next Field Trips are 10:00am Wednesday 15 September at Wat Tyler / RSPB Vange Marsh and 10:00am Sunday 26 September at Bradwell Bird Observatory, postcode CM0 7PN.

There are no Essex Wildlife Trust meetings arranged.

The **next ILB meeting** will be **21 September 2021** at Belfairs Woodland Centre.

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



Holly Blue in Garden photo by Graham Mee

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.