



42nd year
Autumn 2018



Peregrine falcon on a clock tower, Bournemouth. Photo: John Rogers

Leader's Lines

For all local birding details - log on to: www.ayrshire-birding.org.uk

Hello fellow birders,

"Here we go again" as the song says! The new session of indoor meetings and outings will soon be upon us. I hope you will come along to, at least, some of our events. You are assured of a friendly welcome and excellent company and, hopefully, some interesting birds.

Last session, we had a nice selection of speakers, who were kind enough to come and talk to our group. Only one had to cancel because of the atrocious weather, but we had a film show instead for those who dared to come out. I hope you will appreciate the speakers we have for this year.

The outings were enjoyed by all who attended and this year's programme should be just as enjoyable. **The new year bird walk** in Rozelle was attended by 38 people - a record - whilst **the dawn chorus walks**, held in Rozelle and Belleisle at the beginning of May, were not so busy. I must thank **Jim Thomson** for leading these and dissipating his knowledge to others.

Tony Scott arranged a weekend trip to **RSPB Leighton Moss and WWT Martin Mere** in November where we enjoyed excellent weather and equally good birds. He also arranged **a ten day holiday to Dorset** at the end of May. Unfortunately **Tony and Gerda** were unable to go with us due to ill health and it was left to **yours truly** to complete the arrangements with the reserves and ensure we didn't leave anyone behind. **Ian Clark** took over the financial arrangements from Tony and ensured all transactions ran smoothly. **Jim Thomson** of course, was our bird leader as always and did his utmost to find many interesting species. **Tony** also produces '**The Gannet**' and designs our events posters.

Gerda Scott has a heavy burden to carry health wise at present and I am sure you all wish her well. She refuses to let it get her down and gets out and about as much as possible between treatments.

Ian Clark, our treasurer, keeps our accounts in excellent order and **Anne Thomson**, our secretary, produces the minutes of the committee meetings promptly. **Ronnie Coombes** organises the use of the hall, laying out the chairs and clearing up afterwards. He also continues to host the committee meetings at his home to save people coming out to “the sticks” in winter. We welcomed two new committee members last season, **Jean Anthony** and **Morven Cumming** have been ably assisting at events since they joined us and over the past year.

PS Waverley failed to sail from Ayr, either to Ailsa Craig or anywhere else at all last summer. We can only hope that this year’s advertised cruises will actually happen. Several of the sailings were cancelled at very short notice and left many disappointed people standing at the pier. **Jean, Eleanora and I** went up to Largs to go on the first sailing of the 2018 season **to Ailsa Craig via Brodick**. Lovely weather and scenery, but we went around the Craig anticlockwise at full speed and well offshore - very disappointing! We didn’t bother to go on the second trip, also from Largs. Maybe we will get to sail from Ayr on all the advertised Monday cruises in August.

Finally, I must thank you, **the members**, for attending the meetings, and for buying raffle tickets and refreshments which helps us to raise funds for RSPB Scotland, and I hope you will continue to do so. If I can do anything to make the experience better in any way, please do let me know.

There have been a few interesting birds around this year with a long-staying glaucous gull at Troon Harbour and an obliging kingfisher on Rozelle pond in the winter. The osprey pair at Loch Doon successfully fledged two youngsters recently and there are a number of Mediterranean gulls around the Barassie / Troon area at the moment. I had a pair of buzzards nesting in my woodland and they fledged a single chick.

I am told that some people are not happy about the **parking arrangements** for the hall at Newton-Wallacetown church, and I would advise that there is a large, well-lit public car park behind Main street, entered from Crown Street. There is a passageway through to Main Street at the Aldi store leading to the pelican crossing opposite the hall. Disabled parking is available at the hall.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the first meeting on **17 September 2018** when **Peter Holden** will give an illustrated talk on **“Birds - Their Hidden World”**.

If you need transport to this or any other meeting, please let me know.

Anne

Anne M. Dick, Group Leader

Sightings from our Lancashire trip in November 2017. Photos: Tony Scott



The birds and landscapes of Dorset

An RSPB Central Ayrshire and SOC Ayrshire group holiday from Monday 28 May to Wednesday 06 June 2018

Report by Anne Dick and Tony Scott
Photos: John Rogers



Bullfinch, Leighton Moss

Day 1 Monday 28 May 2018

Ayr to RSPB Leighton Moss Reserve and on to the Best Western Moat House Hotel at Alsager (near Stoke-on-Trent) for dinner and overnight.

Waving goodbye to Tony at Dodds' at 07.30 seemed very odd as we set off on our holiday to Dorset with 17 on board and not forgetting Derek, our driver. Driving along the A70 via Muirkirk and Douglas, we joined the M74 south for a short stop at Annandale Water services. It was undergoing extensive renovations which made it more difficult to get outside to view the birds on the lake. On down the A74/M6 motorways to RSPB Leighton Moss where we met Molly, our 18th participant. Molly had travelled from Edinburgh to nearby Silverdale by rail and walked the short way to the reserve. This first day was very successful, despite being rather hot in the early afternoon. The rarity was a **black tern**. Specials were **osprey, scaup and gargany**. Several *marsh harriers* and all the usual species were noted. Our planned time at Leighton Moss was from 12 noon to 16.00hrs. From Jim's bird list, we can see that both *little and great crested grebe* had been seen, and the now ubiquitous *little egret*. Apart from the birds listed above, there was *grey lag, Canada goose, shelduck, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck and teal*. *Common buzzard, kestrel, coot, common gull, lesser black-backed and of course, the large colony of black-headed gulls* were about. *Swift, sand martin and house martin* were noted and in the reeds, *Cetti's warbler, sedge and reed warbler*. Good to see that *bearded reedlings* put in an appearance along with *willow warbler* too.

On the way south from Camforth, we made good time despite passing several crashes and roadworks. Our hotel for the night, the Best Western Moat House was very efficient with envelopes including room keys for everyone. Derek took charge of these and handed them out as we left the coach. Rooms were large and comfy. Dinner was ready at 20.00 and served promptly. Specialities tonight included breaded whitebait with lemon caper aioli; Sticky honey and soy buffalo chicken wings with balsamic onion marmalade, or a wild mushroom fricassee with white wine emulsion, toasted ciabatta and rocket, as well as a soup of the day. Mains included chargrilled Piri Piri chicken breast with Portobello mushrooms; Beer battered haddock with the usual accompaniments, grilled salmon fillet on a crushed new potato cake and salsa verde, a vegetarian dish and a selection of four desserts. Sounds pretty good! Jim had his bird list ready and we marked up those seen today. We will get a slightly longer lie-in tomorrow morning as breakfast doesn't start till 7.30 - but still plenty of time to leave at listed time. Miles today - 268.

Day 2 Tuesday 29 May 2018

Best Western Moat House Hotel, Alsager - to RSPB Highnam Wood Reserve - then on to the Best Western Hotel Royale in Bournemouth for seven nights.

Breakfast at 07.30 and depart at 08.45 and a five mile drive to the M6 where we headed south for Upper Strensham Services to buy lunch for today, as there is no catering at Highnam Woods reserve. I now remember why I don't like motorway driving and am very grateful that it is not me who is!!! Roadworks, crazy drivers on mobiles swapping lanes, etc., but Derek just keeps going unfazed.

The warden met us at **Highnam Woods** and took us round the managed part of the wood. **Three nightingales** heard singing and many other birds heard, but few seen other than a *great spotted woodpecker* and *two ravens*. The weather was much cooler than yesterday so it was much more pleasant for walking. Jim noted the following interesting species (plus those given above): *Common buzzard, kestrel, collared dove, pied wagtail, wren, dunnock, robin, song thrush, blackcap, chiffchaff, willow warbler, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, and goldfinch*. Our planned stay here was from 12.15 to 13.45 hrs.

We continued south through Gloucestershire and the M5, stopping at Michael Wood services for a coffee stop. We had some rain after we left the service area this afternoon but we were in the bus at the time so it didn't matter. Derek made good time and got to Bournemouth early. I thought I saw a *peregrine* on the clock tower just before we arrived at the Hotel Royale - must have a good look in the morning as we pass!. Derek had to reverse the bus off a busy main through a barrier to park at the hotel. My room is rather small with a single bed but it will do. Not as posh as last night! Coffee was available in the lounge when we arrived - so a warm welcome at this hotel. Unfortunately the lift was out of order and some of us were on the third floor! Dinner tonight was at 20.00 hrs and we had a good selection of dishes with a tomato and tarragon soup; smoked salmon terrine; blue cheese, pear and walnut salad and candied bacon, pomegranate and Feta salad. Mains included a chicken, ham and leek pie; Tender beef strips in a wild mushroom, red onion and rum cream; grilled fillet of trout with a spring onion, dill and orange butter or a betroot and spring onion risotto. Four desserts were also on the menu. Today we travelled 235 miles.



Our group at RSPB Highnam Woods



Best Western Hotel Royale, Bournemouth

Day 3 Wednesday 30 May 2018

RSPB Arne Reserve and Stoborough Heath NNR



Breakfast today was from 07.30 and we left the hotel at 09.00 hrs along the A35/A351 through Wareham and the B3075 and an unclassified road to **RSPB Arne Reserve**. This traditional stronghold for *Dartford warbler* is one of the UK's top nature reserves, with a unique transition from mudflats and saltmarsh at Poole Harbour to extensive views of lowland heath. This most attractive site is definitely a place for the all-round naturalist, so a visit at any time of the year will impress. We were met at 09.50 by a warden and given a general overview of Arne (the home of Springwatch for several years). We did the Green Woodland trail in the morning and Coombe heath trail after lunch. There were lots of *green woodpeckers and jays* today, among many other birds which included the *Dartford warbler* - seen at both sites. There was a lot of walking involved at Arne, followed by more at **Stoborough Heath** this evening. We weren't supposed to be able to park at Stoborough, but they hadn't counted on Derek's excellent driving skills, reversing easily into the small car park! The bird count finishes at 77 by this evening and included: *little egret, grey heron, common buzzard (seen daily), kestrel, peregrine, common snipe, black-tailed godwit, cuckoo, swift, great spotted woodpecker, house martin, meadow pipit, tree creeper, magpie, greenfinch, linnet, lesser redpoll, barn swallow*. The traffic was not too bad this morning as we left the hotel, but very heavy on our return for dinner. **Stoborough Heath** was visited this afternoon from around 15.00 hrs. Stoborough, together with Creech and Grange Heaths, form a continuous link of heathland that holds good numbers of *Dartford warblers and nightjars*. As we got back to our hotel, there was a *peregrine* on a clock tower close by and both *buzzard and jay* were seen in town on all our journeys. Odd or what? The road running past the hotel is lined with big trees. Another relaxing evening with dinner tonight at 19.45 hrs. The menu included smoked trout with blackberries and toasted almonds; chicken and bacon salad with Caesar dressing; cream of vegetable soup or canteloupe melon with pineapple and kiwi. Mains included chargrilled pork chop with apple and ginger puree and a red wine and blueberry sauce; Breaded turkey escalope with lemon thyme and honey sauce; Herb crusted tilapia with tomato and lime coulis; or roasted vegetable curry with wild rice and poppadums. Desserts was headed up by a dish with an unfortunate name.....Chef's Mess! A sweet with blackberries, nectarine, Chantilly cream and tarragon meringue. Miles today - a mere 38!



Little egret



and visitor centre at RSPB Arne

Day 4 Thursday 31 May 2018

Poole Harbour and a cruise to Brownsea Island and an evening excursion to Stoborough Heath NNR for nightjar



On Stoborough Heath

Did they get the weather forecast totally wrong or what? The rain came on whilst we were on the **ferry out to Brownsea** (at 10.00hrs from Poole Harbour), and it continued till lunch-time. A National Trust person gave us leaflets on arrival but got very confused about members and non-members covered by other life members cards. The rain was not very heavy and it didn't matter as we were in hides or under trees. A volunteer from Dorset Wildlife Trust met us at the entrance to their section of the island and accompanied us right round the reserve. Lots of *sandwich and common terns* nesting on little islands in the lagoon. *Black-headed gulls* all had chicks. One pair each of *Mediterranean gulls* and *avocets*. One *red squirrel* on the feeder. It was very humid in the afternoon and a thick sea mist came down, so the cruise round the islands was not possible. Crawled back to Poole with foghorn blaring and extra lookout in cabin. Poor chap doing the commentary had to give up as he, and we, could see NOTHING till we were back in harbour for 16.00 hrs. An early dinner tonight at 18.00 hrs before driving out to **Stoborough Heath** for around 20.15. Back at the hotel before 22.00. Four starters again on the menu tonight and with a chicken curry, pork tenderloin with calvados, oven baked Cape hake or a new potato and spinach lasagne for main course choices. Lemon posset headed the four dessert choices.

It was a lovely sunny evening as we set off back to **Stoborough Heath** to look for *nightjars*. Midges were out en masse and very hungry! We all suffered despite layers of assorted repellants. Walked a long way for little reward. A couple of churring birds were heard but only Jim thought he saw one flying. However, it seems that Jean & Geoff, who walked much further along the track, were bombarded by three *nightjars*! It got very foggy again over the heath spreading in towards us on the path which stood a bit higher. It looked like an old railway line. We decided it best to head back to the bus, which Derek had managed to squeeze into a little space outside the locked gates to the car park, instead of having to take it back to Arne to park. Bob had his bat detector out on the way back listening to the pipistrelle bats as they flew back and forth along the track. Still no lift although they were working on it at dinner time - maybe tomorrow? Jim recorded the following birds (plus those shown above) today: *Little grebe, little egret, grey heron, greylag goose, shelduck, gadwall, mallard, shoveler, common buzzard, pheasant, moorhen, oystercatcher, ringed plover, dunlin, black and bar-tailed godwits, curlew, nightjar, swift, both green and great spotted woodpeckers, pied wagtail, wren, stonechat, song thrush, blackcap, willow warbler, coal, blue and great tits, treecreeper, jay, goldfinch and a variety of other common species.*

Common tern



and ferry to Brownsea Island



Stoborough Heath



Day 5 Friday 01 June 2018

RSPB Radipole Lake and Lodmore Reserves, Weymouth



Breakfast from 07.00 and depart our hotel at 08.45 for the A351/A354 via Wool and Broadway to **Weymouth** (33 miles) - arriving at **RSPB Radipole Lake** for around 10.15. These reserves are in the centre of Weymouth. *Terns* galore. Mainly *common* today. *Marsh harriers* on both reserves. *Hobby* at Radipole catching dragonflies, of which there were many assorted. *Cetti's and reed warblers* all over both reserves. **Radipole Lake** is surrounded by busy roads, a retail park, housing and a large, busy car park. Despite all this it is one of the best birding sites in the county and probably the top urban birding site in the UK. A few waders at **Lodmore**, *redshank*, *lapwing*, *dunlin*, *curlew* and *oystercatcher*. A couple of very friendly rats were enjoying sharing the feed which was on sale to feed the *mallards* outside Radipole centre. Stella (Derek's famous SatNav) got very confused today as we were on new roads made for the Olympic sailing events near Weymouth. Derek had to switch her off till we were in the town. Coaches were not allowed in public car parks at either reserve and he had to go to a dedicated coach park, come back to move us and to collect us at the end. **Jim's main bird list included the following from Radipole and Lodmore reserves:** *Great crested grebe, little egret, mute swan, shelduck, gadwall, mallard, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, marsh harrier, sparrowhawk, hobby, dunlin, redshank, black-headed and other gulls, common tern, collared dove, blackbird, song thrush, whitethroat, blackcap, chiffchaff, bearded reedling, long-tailed tit, greenfinch, reed bunting, barn swallow and goldfinch*. At 14.45 we moved on to Lodmore reserve, the 'wilder' of the two Weymouth reserves managed by RSPB. Lodmore has developed into an excellent site for breeding ducks and holds a small colony of common terns on purpose-built islands that can be viewed from close quarters.

Derek is having the day off tomorrow and a local bus will be taking us to and from Poole. Hope it is not foggy for the sail to Swanage. Still no lift although they were working on it again today. I am still collecting the menus for Tony to peruse when we get back. The mention of menus brings us to tonight's dinner, which was at 19.30 hrs. Poached salmon; cream of mushroom and tarragon soup; green asparagus, Prosciutto and Feta bruschetta; and a cherry tomato and basil crostini were the starters. Mains included a steak and Guinness casserole with herb dumplings; Moroccan chicken tagine; trout, watercress and black pepper fishcakes; and a wild mushroom and spring onion risotto. A summer berry Pavlova was one of the four desserts on offer. A reasonable variety of food which all sounds good, apart, I am told, from the rather overcooked vegetables each evening. Miles today 76.



Pochard



Hobby



Radipole Lake visitor centre

Day 6 Saturday 02 June 2018

A combined cruise from Poole Quay along the Jurassic coast to Swanage, and a return trip on the Swanage Steam railway to Corfe castle - then back to Poole Quay by boat.



The Jurassic Coast

Hot today! Derek went out to dinner with a friend last night and was meeting him again today for a long walk. Not a big bird list today if you ignore passing close to **Brownsea lagoon** and seeing everything there. We did add *fulmar, shag and gannet* to the list on the chalk cliffs. Not sure where the awks are hiding? The guy in the Poole bird centre said we should get lots of *guillemots and puffins and two pairs of peregrine* - but we got none! Maybe they were further round the coast (as the boat sailed on after we left it at Swanage)? Logistics worked fine. **We left Poole at 10.30 and arrived in Swanage for 11.30.** Monica, Susan and Molly took a taxi from the pier to the station as time was limited but all walked back. **Our steam train left at 12.00 and we returned from Corfe Castle at 15.22 and our boat from Swanage left at 16.55 arriving back one hour later.** At Corfe, most visited the castle with its *jackdaws and ravens*, and some also had a walk along the river trail to the NT centre. Hugh and I saw a lovely pair of *bullfinches* and Jim found a *great spotted woodpecker nest*. Jim also included *cormorant, red kite, buzzard, peregrine, avocet, black-tailed godwit, both sandwich and common terns* and all the usual *gulls, chiffchaff, willow warbler, raven, and goldfinch* on his list. Had a look round the village but did not venture up the hills on either side. There was a wedding in the church which gave added entertainment! A modern diesel train came into the station and just sat at the platform so we had to climb back over the bridge and get on at the "up" platform. Our steam engine wasn't able to turn as there was no turntable - so was obliged to run tender first all the way back to Swanage. Our boat was later than scheduled but only 5 minutes late getting back to bus at Poole. *Two peregrines* on the clock tower today to make up for the missing ones earlier. Dinner a bit chaotic tonight - coffee brought round before our sweet was served - but it was a nice meal, even if the vegetables didn't come till we were finished our main course. The offer for tonight was: lemon and rosemary marinated pork strips with tarragon yoghurt, plus a choice of three more: Fillet of pollock baked with lemon and dill crumb and cider and saffron sauce, plus a choice of three more; and finally the dessert list of four was headed up by a dark chocolate mousse with Amaretti biscuits. As every night - Jim called a bird list count. Miles by coach - 20.



Arrival in Swanage



Swanage steam railway



Corfe Castle

Day 7 Sunday 03 June 2018

**Portland Harbour,
Chesil Beach,
Ferrybridge and
Portland Bill**



Departing our hotel at 09.00 we headed west through Dorchester and Weymouth to **Portland Harbour and Ferrybridge - arriving around 10.15 hrs.** After a visit to the very pleasant centre at Ferrybridge and a look round their displays we headed outside to look at the *pie d wagtails* nesting above the door and along the inlet where there was a *little egret* and a few other waders. **Then a walk on Chesil Beach.....**and oh boy! It was very difficult walking along the stones to the *little tern colony*. They had a single 10 cm plank walkway around the colony, so your balance had to be good! A notice board informed us that there were 16 nests so far, but there appeared to be many more birds than that about; several *ringed plover nests* too. Moving on to **Portland** which was very hot and very busy. We stopped at the Olympic viewpoint to have a great view over Portland Harbour. Unfortunately our coach was not allowed to go up the road to to the woodlands and the road was far too busy to stop at any of the quarries, so we just had to go straight **on to Portland Bill**. Some *guillemots* and *razorbills* were breeding on the cliffs near the lighthouse and a few small birds hopped around the many beach huts lining the sea. No-one found the *rosy starling* which was seen yesterday in the MOD compound. Most people visited the observatory but not much about there either other than *blackbirds* and a *siskin* on the feeder. Very nice scones in the café at The Bill, but the huge diner was using a loudspeaker to advise folks to come and collect their meals. By 15.00 hrs everyone had enough of the heat and the crowds, so we decided to head back for an early dinner. **Jim had added a few other things to the list** including *shag, kestrel, turnstone, skylark, rock pipit, and wheatear*. Dinner tonight included four starters, and the mains were pan-fried duck breast with parsnip and white chocolate puree, with blueberry and red wine jus; a pork, apple and leek casserole; fish pie with a cheesy mash topping; and green asparagus, garden pea and lemon penne bake. The four desserts were headed up by the interesting sounding salted caramel risotto with vanilla ice cream! Difficult to believe that tomorrow is our last day in Dorset - it has all passed very quickly and we will be back home far too soon! Miles driven today: 103.



Pied wagtail chicks



Linnets



Day 8 Monday 04 June 2018

Isle of Purbeck: Studland and Godlington Heaths, Rempstone Forest, Studland Bay and Little Sea.



Picturesque Wareham

Headed out to **Studland** today at 08.45 as arranged. Couldn't stop at the heath as coach parking not available there or in the first two car parks, so we headed to visitors' centre at **Knoll beach** and spoke with the National Trust ranger who told us we should get *Dartford warblers* on the trails there - but we didn't! Very little on the "**little sea**" except a pair of *great crested grebes* and a few gulls on the "tern" raft. We only heard *great spotted woodpeckers* in the woodland. Rather a short list today. Quite a hot day again and walking on soft white sand dunes was VERY tiring. Some people had a walk in **Wareham** - but mainly to supermarkets or the Red Lion. Jim spotted a *kingfisher* on the river and also added *little egret, kestrel, hobby, common tern, cuckoo, green woodpecker, meadow pipit, reed warbler, chiffchaff, willow warbler, tree creeper, jay, jackdaw, bullfinch, reed bunting and barn swallow*. Headed back early for dinner and to allow time for packing. Well that's our last dinner here in Dorset. Served efficiently and in the correct order. Did a little presentation to Derek as this would be the last time the whole group would be together. (Molly isn't coming back with us tomorrow.) It was much appreciated by Derek who said he really enjoyed going to different places from his usual trips. Back on the road north tomorrow. Miles driven today: 65. A relaxing evening before part one of our long journey home tomorrow. Dinner tonight included cauliflower, apple and brie soup; Cajun chicken strips with a pineapple, honey and mint salsa; smoked salmon and trout terrine with rocket and cherry tomatoes; and a blue cheese, balsamic onion and sundried tomato salad with toasted pine nuts. Mains : Lamb shoulder shank in a rich rosemary and redcurrant gravy; roasted chicken supreme in a mushroom sauce; grilled fillet of bream with watercress sauce and a vegetarian cottage pie. Four desserts were on offer including a salted chocolate and Baileys cream tart. Miles driven today: 65.



All 19 of our group - including Derek.

At the Best Western Hotel Royale, Bournemouth



Day 9 Tuesday 05 June 2018

From the Hotel Royale, Bournemouth to RSPB Middleton Lakes Reserve and an overnight stop at Best Western Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford.



Middleton Lakes Reserve

Having left our hotel and Bournemouth around 08.45, we headed north to J17 of the M4 and a stop at Leigh Delamere Services about 11.00 hrs. Molly was leaving for home this morning by train via London. I thought she was staying in Bournemouth for a bit longer, but she had changed her plans. From the service area we then drove along the toll motorway to the A4091 and to **RSPB Middleton Lakes reserve** for 14.00 hrs. It was an interesting place with several pools and scrapes with viewing points and a fancy new brick hide with a keypad lock. Phoned number on notice for recorded message of code and then found it in the leaflet: It will improve further once the new paths being laid are completed. At the moment some are just piles of aggregate on a liner. Nice selection of *rats* and *grey squirrels* on the feeders! We could have spent a much longer time there. We had to rush back and I found it difficult to keep up with Jim's long stride. I think it will change with the seasons too with more kinds of ducks in winter. *Gadwall* have been very common on most reserves, along with *mallard*. Think we only added *Egyptian goose* to list today. Middleton Lakes Reserve is an area of 160ha of worked out gravel pits in the Dosthill complex adjacent to Middleton Hall and between the River Tame and the Birmingham and Fazely canal. Jim noted the following on his list today: *great crested grebe*, *little egret*, *shelduck*, *shoveler*, *tufted duck*, *red kite*, *kestrel*, *peregrine*, *moorhen*, *coot*, *ringed plover*, *lapwing*, *redshank*, *common tern*, *stock dove*, *cuckoo*, *Cetti's warbler*, *sedge and reed warblers*, *whitethroat*, *blackcap*, *chiffchaff*, *willow warbler*, *goldcrest*, *long-tailed tit*, *nuthatch*, *treecreeper*, *jay*, *bullfinch* and *reed bunting*. **Leaving the reserve around 17.00 hrs, we headed north once more to Stafford** and our hotel for the night, arriving about 18.00 hrs. About a *dozen buzzards* were seen from the bus in a few miles on our drive to the hotel. **Tillington Hall Hotel** was a comfortable place and dinner (at 19.45) was quite nice but no coffee unless we wanted to buy it. Just waited till I got back to my room and having my own hot chocolate instead. On offer from our three course menu tonight: Chef's broccoli and stilton soup; Traditional prawn cocktail with Marie Rose sauce; Duck and orange pate with melba toast. Mains: Baked cod loin with a lemon and chive cream; Roast leg of pork with stuffing and a rich pan gravy; To finish - apple and cinnamon crumble with custard; raspberry cheesecake; fresh fruit salad. Seems like a fairly traditional menu.... Back to Bonnie Scotland tomorrow after last reserve at Dee Estuary. Miles driven today: 235.



Tillington Hall Hotel



Great crested grebe

Day 9 Tuesday 05 June 2018

From Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford, to RSPB Dee Estuary & Burton Mere Wetlands or Ness Gardens, then north to Dumfries for dinner - and home to Ayr



We left our hotel as planned at 09.00 hrs and arrived at the **RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve** around 11.00. Once again, this was a fledgling area still being developed from an industrial site. Lots of small pools and scrapes for waders but most of those seen were *black-tailed godwits* – around 200. There were several *avocets* with chicks and a very few *lapwing*, *redshank* and *golden plovers*. Again *gadwall* ducks in the majority, virtually no *teal* and not a single *wigeon* seen on the whole holiday – weird or what? Large *grey heron* and *little egret* colonies, with a possible *cattle egret* nesting amongst them - but not seen well enough to add to the list. Several people stayed on the coach and went with it to **Ness Botanic Gardens** where it had to park for the Dee Estuary reserve as coaches were not permitted. We could have got it a bit nearer but the turn was very tight in Burton and we did not know if the bus could turn in Puddleton lane so we just walked. It was not very far at least. As it turned out, we could have turned right at the entrance to the reserve. Again something for future reference. We did not add anything new to the list even though there were supposed to be at least four on the information board – but didn't find any of them so the total for the whole trip was 110 birds and nine mammals. Didn't count the insects! Dragonflies, damsel flies and demoiselles everywhere but I don't know enough about them to be sure of what they all were. Moths and butterflies galore too. We went to the Co-op and bought food before we left Stafford this morning but it proved unnecessary as the reserve had sandwiches, biscuits and hot & cold drinks on sale and, obviously, the gardens had a restaurant. **Leaving around 14.00 hrs we had a final short break with the ducks at Tebay services** on the way up the M6. **We had dinner at the Solway Gate restaurant in Dumfries as arranged** – I had booked for 18.30 but we were there before 18.00. They did not mind as the tables were ready anyway. Back in Ayr by 21.00 and headed home a bit tired and ready for bed. I think, hope, everything went without any major hitches and everyone said they had enjoyed the holiday. I really enjoyed the break and seeing all the new places even though there were many very long walks in rather hot weather.

Thanks to Tony for arranging the itinerary. Looking forward to the next one! Miles driven today: 310



Can our swifts fill summer's skies again? It's up to us to help

Patrick Barkham

This article appeared in The Guardian on Tuesday 19 June 2018



It is the most miraculous bird, the ultimate winged messenger, exploring our globe, spending its life on the breeze. Sickle-shaped wings silhouetted against the sky, the swift is the fastest of all birds in level flight and remains entirely airborne for 10 months, sometimes more - feeding, sleeping and mating on the wing. These long-lived creatures can clock up four million miles, commuting between English summers and African winters.

Something has changed, though. June is erupting as gloriously as it ever did: roadsides are waving with oxeye daisies and blackbirds flute during the endless evenings. But summer is a shadow of its former self. The swifts aren't here.

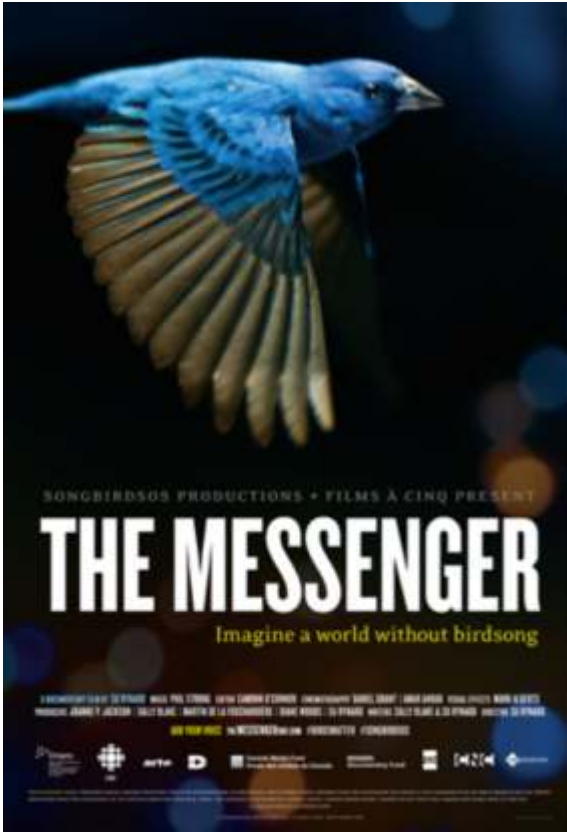
Well, they are. Only not as we knew them. I heard a scream just now, felt that start of wonder, and glanced up. One swift. No - three, darting through the blue. Three birds. It's like returning to the place where you grew up and finding your old home bulldozed. Reality does not compute with the picture you remember. I knew the swift for its screaming parties, marvellous groups of 20 or 40 or 60 or uncountable numbers of birds racing together through the sky, flicking their wings, calling in apparent glee.

But this bird is in freefall. A graph produced by the British Trust for Ornithology is terrifying: the British population declined by 51% between 1995 and 2015. And the rate of decline is increasing: down 24% in the five years to 2015.

The decline of globalised animals is always global, and always complicated. So the disappearance of other equally charismatic long-distance migrants such as nightingales, cuckoos and swallows is bound up in habitat loss or changes in Africa, as well as Britain, and climatic changes en route.

Living in roofs, swifts have also suffered from the conversion of derelict buildings, and our desire for more energy-efficient, impermeable homes. But the biggest cause of changes in animal populations is always food supply. And guess what? Swifts feed on flying insects. We are belatedly waking up to the global calamity that is the loss of insect life. The German study showing a 76% decline in flying insects since 1989 is no anomaly. In Britain, for instance, three-quarters of butterfly species have declined over 40 years, while moth abundance has fallen by more than 40% in the southern half of the country.

Do not accept the vanishing of the swifts. This week is the first swift awareness week. Enthusiasts are taking action: counting swifts, putting up special nestboxes, telling their neighbours to make space for them too. We should be marching on Westminster about the threat to life. And yet, if we imagine hundreds of thousands of us brandishing banners depicting moths of birds, shouting "Save our swifts!", it is preposterous, or comical. It shouldn't be.



SPECIAL EVENT

AYR TOWN HALL
Thursday 31 January 2019
Screening at 19.30 hrs.

RSPB Central Ayrshire Local Group in conjunction with Ayr Film Society present the award-winning documentary
The Messenger

in support of RSPB Scotland and helping to save endangered species and habitat loss in South-West Scotland

Tickets £5.00 each - available at all RSPB and SOC Ayrshire meetings from October 2018

Please support us by encouraging your friends and family to come along and see this astonishing film



Ortolan bunting, as seen in 'The Messenger'. Photo: Kino Lorber

The film takes us to France, where we learn about the illegal hunting and trapping of ortolan bunting, for what some people consider is a gourmet dish. Hunting and trapping throughout the Mediterranean causes the deaths of 25 million birds annually, and of hundreds of species, not just one! We visit Canada's boreal forest where the impact of oil drilling and related development has a devastating effect on bird habitats. This is an important and long-overdue documentary - we hope it has the impact it deserves to have.

The Messenger

Director: Su Rynard
Canada/France/USA/Germany/Netherlands/
Turkey/Costa Rica 2015 1h24m

The Messenger is an amazing documentary, revealing the struggles of song birds worldwide. At its world premiere at the Hot Docs International Film Festival in Toronto, audiences voted it their third favourite. Ancient cultures viewed songbirds as messengers from the gods. Today, the film argues, birds are delivering an urgent message about Earth's health - one that we ignore at our peril. Visually, the film is stunning. We see indigo buntings, Blackburnian and black-throated blue warblers, and other species flying in slow motion. Plus: a selection of RSPB short films to complete the programme.

Committee

Anne Dick, **Group Leader**
Tel: 01292 541 981

Ian Clark, **Treasurer**
Tel: 01292 441 940

Anne Thomson, **Secretary**
Tel: 01292 260 816

Jim Thomson, **Outdoor Leader**
Tel: 01292 571 899

Gerda Scott, **Publicity**
Tel: 01292 281 085

Tony Scott, **Newsletter and
tours organiser**
Tel: 01292 281 085

Ronnie Coombes
Tel: 01292 265 891

Morven Cumming
Tel: 01292 286 465

Jean Anthony
Tel: 01563 851 325

Please note: talks subject to alteration

Indoor Meetings 2018

Monday 17 September
BIRDS - THEIR HIDDEN WORLD
A talk by one of RSPB's most well-known speakers -
PETER HOLDEN. Membership registration precedes the talk.

Monday 15 October
TAG-N-TRACK LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS
An illustrated talk by **HALEY DOUGLAS**

Monday 19 November
BIRDS & WILDLIFE OF SOUTH AFRICA
An illustrated talk by **ANDREW SHAND**

Monday 17 December
WILDLIFE OF GALLOWAY AND SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE
An illustrated talk by **ANDREW BIELINSKI**

Indoor Meetings 2019

Monday 21 January **HEN HARRIERS & THE UPLAND
LANDSCAPE**. An illustrated talk by **CATHERINE CUMMING**

Monday 18 February **BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION BOG
SQUAD**. An illustrated talk by **REBECCA CRAWFORD**

Monday 18 March **BIRDS OF BUTE**
An illustrated talk by **RON FORRESTER**

Monday 15 April
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by **AYRSHIRE
ROUND-UP** - the year's highlights told by **JIM THOMSON**



TAYSIDE & GRAMPIAN WINTER WEEKEND

Friday 16 - Sunday 18 November 2018
visiting SWT Montrose Basin and
RSPB Loch of Strathbeg by **COACH**
from AYR **Leader: Jim Thomson**

A joint SOC Ayrshire and RSPB Central Ayrshire Local Group WEEKEND TRIP. **Leaving Dodds coach depot, East Road, AYR at 08.10hrs on 16 November**. We will be driving to SWT MONTROSE BASIN & later to LOCH OF KINNORDY. **We will stay overnight on a Dinner, Bed and Breakfast basis at a 3* hotel in Dundee**. Next day we will visit RSPB LOCH OF STRATHBEG and the YTHAN ESTUARY. On day three we will visit the EDEN ESTUARY & RSPB LOCH LEVEN. **Returning to AYR for around 21.00 hrs and stopping enroute for dinner in Livingstone**. Registration will be from September onwards or register earlier by e-mailing Tony Scott on : dascott4@outlook.com or telephone 01292 281 085. **The cost should be in the region of £220.00 per person**. This trip will operate with numbers of 15 to 20 people. **A full information leaflet will be available at the first and subsequent meetings of RSPB Central Ayrshire Local Group and SOC Ayrshire**. **Please book as early as possible in order to obtain the best prices.**



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654.

The Gannet

is the official newsletter of Central Ayrshire Local Group of RSPB Scotland. Registered charity no. SC037654

All indoor meetings take place on Monday evenings at 19.30 hrs - in Hall B of the Newton-Wallacetown Church, 60 Main Street, AYR. Parking available on Main Street or Garden St.

The meetings are open to everyone interested in birds and wildlife. Please come along and join us. If you enjoy our meetings and field trips - local membership costs only £6 single or £10 double. There are eight indoor meetings and nine field trips.

We will be repeating our annual bird walks in Rozelle & Belleisle Parks in 2019. New Year walk in Rozelle at 09.00 hrs/Saturday 05 Jan. Dawn chorus walks: Rozelle 06.30 & 08.00 hrs/Sat. 04 May. In Belleisle: 08.00 hrs Sun.05 May

All field trips are held jointly with the Ayrshire branch of the SOC (Scottish Ornithologists' Club). The meetings are open to everyone interested in birds and wildlife. Please come along and join us on any of these outings.

We generally car share and if anyone requires a lift or is willing to share their car, please telephone any of the committee listed on the previous page, also if you require further information about any activity.

Central Ayrshire Local Group Meetings, Outings & Holidays Season 2018-2019

Field Trips 2018

Saturday 22 September
RSPB MERSEHEAD RESERVE

Meet at the reserve car park for 11.00 hrs. Please bring picnic lunch. All day trip - finish around 16.00 hrs.

Saturday 20 October
STRANRAER, LOCH RYAN & WIG BAY

Meet at 10.30 hrs at Ballantrae (toilets). On to Stranraer and Loch Ryan. All day trip - please bring packed lunch. Finish around 15.30 hrs.

Friday/Saturday/Sunday 16/17/18 November by **COACH from AYR**
SWT MONTROSE BASIN; RSPB LOCH OF KINNORDY; RSPB LOCH OF STRATHBEG; THE YTHAN ESTUARY; THE EDEN ESTUARY & RSPB LOCH LEVEN.

Meet 08.00 hrs at Dodd's coach depot, East Road, Ayr. Weekend trip with DBB at a 3* hotel in Dundee. Return to AYR Sunday around 21.00hrs. Cost includes coach, Dinner, B&B - around £220.00 pp (dependent on numbers). Hoping to book the Best Western Invercarse Hotel.

Saturday 15 December
IRVINE HARBOUR & BEACH PARK

Meet at 10.30 hrs at the old Harbourmasters office, Irvine. Please bring a packed lunch - or plenty of places for lunch close by. Finish c15.00 hrs.

2019

Saturday 26 January
GREENAN SHORE AND DOONFOOT.

Meet at 10.00 hrs Greenan Castle car park. Trip lasts until 12.00 hrs.

Saturday 23 February
MAIDENS HARBOUR, CULZEAN AND THE COAST

Meet at 10.30 hrs at Maidens Harbour car park. (Toilets available). Move on along the coast to Culzean or south towards Girvan. Please bring a packed lunch - or restaurant facilities available in Culzean Country Park. Finish around 15.30 hrs.

Saturday 23 March
FULLARTON WOODS AND TROON HARBOUR

Meet 10.00 hrs at Fullarton Woods car park (toilets). Walk and birdwatch until around 12.00 and move on to Troon Harbour. Time here and at the Ballast bank. Please bring a packed lunch or plenty of cafes available in Troon. Finish around 15.30 hrs.

Friday 19 April
LOCH DOON & NESS GLEN WOODLAND

Meet at the Roundhouse (Loch Doon) for 10.30. Please bring picnic lunch or food and drinks available at the Roundhouse. Finish c.15.30 hrs.

Monday 27 May to Wednesday 05 June

A ten-day coach holiday
BIRDS & LANDSCAPES OF NORFOLK

Coach travel from Ayr. Staying at three or four-star hotels on a DBB basis. Full details available this autumn, but visiting all the top reserves in the area. This trip and all details to be confirmed.