



newsletter

Lincoln Local Group

Winter/Spring 2012



A MESSAGE TO THE LINCOLN LOCAL GROUP FROM RSPB PRESIDENT, KATE HUMBLE

Hello,

This is the first time I've spoken to you directly via the RSPB's local group newsletter and I want to start by saying a huge thank you for all the work you do. Make no mistake; the society is able to do so much more of its essential conservation work because of all your time and effort and it's no exaggeration to say that you are its lifeblood. I suspect many of you do it for the love of the cause and I hope that you are proud of yourselves. I'm sure there are mornings when some of you are freezing cold, wet, and the birds aren't playing ball, but you support a fantastic charity and make a massive difference.

When I was elected as President two years ago, the knowledge that I was only the second female president since our charity was founded in 1889 was daunting to say the least! I was honoured, excited and surprised to be asked, but once the initial shock had subsided I was incredibly excited.

I have an interest in wildlife that stems from a childhood growing up in the countryside, and my travels as a teenager. I'm not an academic or a specialist, but I do love learning new things and asking questions—I'm never afraid to ask. If I can communicate some of the amazing things I learn about wildlife on an almost daily basis and spark the same interest in others that would be great. I feel very lucky to be able to nurture this interest in

my job—my involvement with the BBC's Springwatch and Autumnwatch series, and programmes like Animal Park have all seen me lucky enough to be making discoveries and speaking to some of the world's wildlife experts.

In my role as your President, my overall aim is to help increase support for the RSPB's work. In particular I'd like to get more people enjoying wildlife first hand, whether feeding birds in their back garden, walking in the countryside or visiting nature reserves.

And making sure young people have access to the outdoors is a particular passion of mine—how on earth can a child be inspired to help protect their environment when they only see it in books and never get to feel mud under their fingernails? I was pleased to be able to lend my support to the RSPB's recent Every Child Outdoors project—along with some of the UK's other biggest environmental education organisations, the RSPB, the Field Studies Council and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, joined forces and opened the doors to all their teaching sites and centres in response to a call from teachers calling for more outside facilities to ensure all children and young people have the opportunity to learn outdoors and have contact with nature.

You may have seen a piece on BBC Breakfast about the initiative too; it was a huge success and best of all, hundreds of children enjoyed outdoor experiences that day.

Back in March, I was at the launch of the RSPB's latest and most ambitious campaign yet, called 'Stepping Up for Nature.' The nine year campaign hopes to end the continuing threat to wildlife in the UK and across the world and to get UK Governments to meet their 2020 target of halting biodiversity loss and begin to restore it.

The idea is for everyone to take small steps for nature and make a big difference.

Volunteering, building a home for wildlife or

(Continued on page 2)

a million voices for nature

participating in a garden wildlife survey counts as a step for nature.

There are more fantastic ideas on how you can step up for nature on www.rspb.org.uk/steppingup. If we all take steps for nature, we might be able to achieve the goal of halting the loss of biodiversity.



A SIGNED PHOTO OF KATE FOR YOU

Kate Humble has signed a photograph for the Lincoln Local Group. It reads 'Best wishes, Kate Humble'. The photograph has been framed and the only

fair way of deciding who has it is to auction it to the highest bidder. You can place a bid for the photograph by sending an e-mail to info@lincolnrsnb.org.uk or by handing in a bid at the January, February or March meetings. The bid should state the amount you are offering and your contact details. The bid currently stands at £5 so you can bid any amount in excess of this. We will publish the current bid but will not publish the bidders name or contact details.

As you will know from watching the Antiques Roadshow or searching eBay, signed photographs of celebrities can sell for a considerable amount. All the money raised from this auction will go towards the RSPB's coast and marine projects, such as the new sea defences for Titchwell Marsh, so the money will be put to very good use.

NEWSLETTER COPY DATE

Thank you to all the contributors to this newsletter. Short articles are always welcome. Please send your contributions for the summer newsletter to the group leader by the end of March.

Contributions can be hand-written, typed, submitted on memory stick or CD or sent by e-mail to: info@lincolnrsnb.org.uk

COMING UP...

THE BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH is fast approaching! This ever popular event continues to grow year on year. The event in 2011 turned out to be another record-breaking year with 609,000 people taking part. The results are extremely valuable as they give a snapshot of bird populations in the UK, which allows the RSPB to determine which species are increasing and which species are in decline. The more people that take part the more accurate the results are. This year the event takes place on 28 and 29 January. Please spend an hour sometime over this weekend and record the highest number of each species seen in your garden at any one time. You will receive a recording form with the spring edition of *Birds* magazine. Once you have your results please enter them on-line. If you don't have access to the Internet then send your results in using the form provided with the spring edition of *Birds*.

DATE WITH NATURE EVENTS start in Lincoln on Saturday 31 March with the Hartsholme heron watch. It takes place over three weekends, including the Easter weekend. The event is open to the public between 11 am and 4 pm but volunteers are needed between 10.30 am and 1.30 pm and/or between 1.30 pm and 4.30 pm (the extra half hour is needed to set up and take down the watch point). Later in the year we will need even more volunteers to help with the Cathedral peregrines watch point. If you would like to help with either event please speak to Alan Flintham as soon as possible as we can only accommodate a maximum of four volunteers at any one time at the events.

SUCCESS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Two young Lincoln Local Group volunteers who, between them, have spent many hours volunteering for the RSPB at the Hartsholme herons and the Cathedral peregrines events in Lincoln over the last two years have successfully managed to start their careers in conservation.

Fiona McKenna is now working for the RSPB on an internship at Coombes Valley and Fairburn Ings and Simon Thompson has just started an apprenticeship at Rutland Water nature reserve. We wish them both well in their chosen careers.

WHO CARES ABOUT NATURE?

Peter Skelson
Lincoln Local Group

If you have a copy of the RSPB 2010-11 annual review you may have read the profoundly moving article by the RSPB Director for Wales, Katie-Jo Luxton. In part of her report she mentions the very personal way in which she has experienced the value of nature. In March 2010 her two year old daughter was diagnosed with a very rare form of cancer. The key drug that saved her daughter's life was synthesised from Madagascan periwinkle, a plant with an attractive pink flower. In her report Katie-Jo says that most of the drugs that kill cancer cells also kill healthy cells and are especially harmful to children, but this relatively new drug only targets cancer cells. Now, thanks to this plant, many children are surviving cancer and get a chance of a full life.

The interconnectedness of human health and the natural world cannot be illustrated in a more powerful way than this. Many of the drugs and medicines in current use have been derived from nature. Even the humble aspirin was originally discovered in the bark of willow trees. There could be cures for many of our ills just waiting to be found in the natural world. Yet only a fraction of the world's species have been researched for possible treatments of human illnesses. Alarmingly however, a considerable number of species are on the verge of extinction, which is mainly being caused by the activities of human populations. Yet many people, and governments, seem to care little about the protection of bio-diversity and nature. Even the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, argues that environmental protection,



Madagascan periwinkle

which has protected our most precious wildlife for decades, is standing in the way of development. In his autumn statement he referred to the Habitats Regulations, which ensure major developments don't destroy our most precious wildlife sites, as a 'ridiculous cost on British business' and claimed that they amounted to 'gold plating' on European legislation. You can find out more about this, the RSPB's view and what you can do about it at: www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/campaigns/campaignwithus/current/stepup.aspx



The RSPB not only works relentlessly to protect nature in the UK but it also works with its partners in BirdLife International to protect nature in other parts of the world. More recently the RSPB has been campaigning to protect the fragile tropical rainforests in Sierra Leone and Indonesia. Already 70% of Sierra Leone's tropical forest has been destroyed through unsustainable logging. Gola is one of the last remnants of this rainforest and, thankfully, the Government has just declared the Gola Rainforest, where the RSPB has been working for 20 years, a National Park.

In Indonesia the only way the RSPB could protect the Harapan rainforest from being destroyed by commercial logging was to buy the logging rights. The Harapan rainforest is one of the last remnants of rainforest in Indonesia providing a home for a huge range of plant and animal species. But a vast area of the Indonesian rain forest has already been destroyed through logging and clearance for palm oil plantations. If the forests disappear, then all of the plant and animal species that depend on them also disappear.

As Katie-Jo says in her report, her experience has made her want to campaign even harder to protect nature and bio-diversity. We can all help to protect the world's natural resources simply by supporting the RSPB and encouraging others to do so. Nature is in serious trouble. We must all 'Step up for Nature' and help to protect the world's bio-diversity. After all, who knows, one day it may even save your life!

A MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

A VISIT TO GREECE BY STEWART FOSTER,
MIKE TWEDDLE AND VIC AND MARGARET
LUNN

This trip, as many do, started with a few drinks and a comment from Vic that we had never been to Athens. Stewart is our Greek 'expert' so the first stage was for him to work out the archaeological sites and nature reserves we would visit and possible hotels in the right areas to see as much as possible without moving everyday. The other essential item needed in Greece is a road map, or preferably two, as they almost always show completely different roads and quite often neither of the maps shows exactly what is really there. We are always impressed with Mike's navigational skills.

With all the planning complete the holiday started with dinner and a few drinks at our house before a late night / early morning taxi whisked us to Manchester airport for our flight to Preveza, where we collected our hire car, a nine seater Nissan Primastar with plenty of room for luggage, and headed south towards Mesolongi and hotel Theoxenia.

We stopped on route for a bit of birding and saw golden eagle, white stork, black-eared wheatear, great white and little egrets. Due to lack of sleep overnight Vic and I retired early leaving Stewart and Mike to 'people watch' a very large wedding party going on at our hotel. Apparently the size of trays the waiters were carrying had to be seen to be believed. The party explained the lack of choice in the hotel restaurant that night—we had a choice of spaghetti Bolognese!

The next morning we drove over the causeway at Mesolongi and found a flock of greater flamingos a total surprise. We then headed east to Delphi which is a very interesting and famous site.



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Luckily we arrived before most of the coaches and were able to see rock nuthatch, hoopoe, ravens, rock thrush and blue rock thrush as well as a green lizard and plenty of different butterflies including clouded yellow, and several different white types later identified as eastern dappled, Balkan marbled and mountain small white. Over night in Arahova where we found the Arachova Inn, not the one we had planned for but it was very nice. We had dinner at a local taverna, with a much better choice than the previous evening.

The next day we headed for Nea Makri near Athens where we planned to stay for three nights and travel into Athens by bus one day to view the Ancient Sites. On route we visited the historic sites of Orhomenos and Amfiareio, we had planned to visit the Mycenaean site of Glas but we could not find it. We stopped for lunch in Ayii Apostoli. Vic and I ordered Greek salads, Mike ordered a plate of chips and Stewart ordered sausage and chips. When the salads and chips arrived we all thought we were going to struggle as the meals were very large and then Stewart's 18 inch sausage arrived; it caused much hilarity as he quickly decided he would not be able to eat it all and various options for hiding it were discussed.

(Continued on page 5)

We found the Olympic Apartments in Nea Makri, again a different one to the plan. We tried to find a taverna that Stewart has used in 1992 but it was not open; however, we were able to go there on the second night. On our second day in this area we visited the Temple of Nemesis at Ramnous, and then returned south to the site of Vravra, which was closed for works. Fortunately it was possible to see most of the site from the road.

We then travelled to Cape Sounio and the Temple of Poseidon, closed by a strike! But again it was possible to view very well from outside. We had excellent views of a chukar, we were hoping it might be a rock partridge, a life tick for us all, but after checking Vic's photo we had to settle on a chukar.

Over dinner that night I received a phone call from Steve to tell us that Athens had serious riots around the ancient sites and also a 48 hour general strike, so we decided it was best to avoid Athens. Instead we headed into the countryside, to the mountains in the Parnitha National Park, finding an excellent site for butterflies where we managed to identify at least 13 species of butterflies within a 50 sq m area. We also found elk footprints. Returning to our apartment that night we heard little and scops owls. We did have one slightly unfortunate incident in the apartment when the showerhead fell and flooded the apartment; luckily we had plenty of towels and everything dries very quickly in Greece.

We then headed north toward Kalambaka for a two night stay at the hotel Meteora; for once it was where we had planned to stay. The hotel is built at the base of some very impressive cliffs. Dinner both nights was taken at a local taverna.

The next morning we went for a drive round some of the most fantastic scenery I have ever seen. The area is called Meteora which means 'hovering



in the air' which describes exactly how the monasteries look as they are perched on the top of huge lumps of rock hundreds of metres high and until fairly recently it was only possible to gain access by sitting in a net bag and being hauled up by the monks. Our hotel had a photo of a monk in a net bag being hauled up which was taken in the 1920s. These days there are roads and bridges to the inhabited ones. We found an excellent restaurant for lunch, it was called Eagle's Nest and it was literally in the middle of nowhere with lovely views over the valley.

While having dinner on the second night we watched the groom's half of a wedding party leave the hotel opposite in a convoy of cars decorated with flowers and ribbons, they toured the town sounding the horns. We also spent a fascinating half hour watching a few ants moving a fish bone we had dropped; it was amazing to watch the teamwork. As usual Vic and I chose a Greek salad as part of our meal, made up of tomatoes, cucumber, onions, sweet chillies and of course feta cheese. The salad came and Vic took a bite of his chillies and suddenly grabbed his beer and tried to cool his mouth. Vic can usually eat very hot chilli but he had never had anything this hot. I thought it could not be that bad so I tried a small piece and so did Stewart. It took nearly half an hour for our mouths to return to normal. We called the owner over and he was really angry with his wife who had bought the wrong chillies!

The next stop looked fairly simple on our maps; we were heading north visiting a couple of lakes and then going through a small town called Kastoria to a hotel we had located. We stopped by the side of Lake Kastoria thinking we were only about 20 minutes from our hotel. Two hours later

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Temple of Poseidon

we finally found a road out of town and 10 minutes after that we found hotel Nostos in Maniaki and booked in for two nights. The hotel was only 100 m from a very good taverna and 800 m from a motorway—not on our map—which the next day would take us north to the borders with Macedonia and Albania for some good birding including Alpine and pallid swifts, white pelican and squacco heron. The taverna we used gave us free raki when we arrived, a free glass of wine with chocolate cake after our main course and a plate of assorted local meats with our ouzo.

We then returned south, on the motorway, to Menidhi for our last five nights. This was another case of the hotel not being where it appeared on Google but we found the very nice hotel Delfini. We made a couple of stops en route including Dodona, a very ancient site, where among the ruins we found a new butterfly, spotted fritillary.

The next day we visited Rodhia Wetland Centre at Strongyli and took a boat ride around the site, really the only way to see the birds. There is a large breeding colony of Dalmatian pelicans on the lake and we also saw common & wood sandpipers, little tern, Kentish and little ringed plovers and great reed warbler as well as a couple of snakes in the water.

We spent the next day driving round the edge of Amvrakikos Gulf and over to the island of Lefkada, as always stopping where possible to look at the views and wildlife. After looking at our map Vic identified a couple of scenic drives near our hotel; neither of them appeared on Mike's map, but we decided to have a look the following day and were able to drive part of both of them and the scenery was certainly worth the trip.

On our last day we visited the very large and scattered ancient site at Nikopolis which has some



Southern white admiral

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impressive mosaics. The main walls we were able to view from the road. We then returned to Menidhi and a local seafront taverna for lunch and a bit of 'people watching' as a group of about 50 people of all ages met for lunch. Again we were given a plate of freebies including chips, tomatoes and whitebait. After a long lunch we reluctantly returned to our hotel to pack for our journey home. The hotel Delfini is quite close to a main road and over dinner and a few drinks each evening we enjoyed watching the huge number of lorries from all over Europe carrying everything imaginable.

Despite our disappointment at still not seeing the ancient sites in Athens and the mystery of things not being where we expected, the whole trip was definitely magical and we are already planning another one. We saw a total of 82 birds, 30 butterflies, 14 insects, Greek tortoise, 2 snakes, a few lizards and a brown rat.

Margaret and Vic Lunn

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ISRAEL: 15–22 March 2011

Dave Read
Lanius Bird Tours

This proved to be an extremely successful tour, which started with a trouble free direct flight from Luton to Tel-Aviv. On arrival the sun was already beginning to set, so after a quick bite to eat at the airport we transferred straight to our first lodging, a charming kibbutz settlement in the heart of the Negev Desert.

Next morning we met at 5.15 am and drove as the sun was rising to our first destination ready to look for some of the Negev's most wanted birds at first light. After a 40 minutes drive we arrived at an area of stony desert close to the Egyptian border where our first target, MacQueen's bustard, was quickly found, with a displaying male putting on a show and up to four others found close to the road providing excellent views. Other birds of note here included cream-coloured courser, pin-tailed sandgrouse, chukar, black stork, desert lark, scrub warbler and brown-necked raven. Nearby we visited a series of sewage pools to look for more sandgrouse, finding crowned, spotted and black-bellied sandgrouse all coming to drink, though a late Oriental skylark was a unexpected bonus and a very rare find this far west.

Returning to the kibbutz we had a little time for a coffee while birding in the extensive gardens adding some of commoner targets such as laughing dove, Palestine sunbird and spectacled bulbul.

Moving on we headed east towards the Dead Sea, stopping along the way at a ruined city dating back some 2,000 years, where long-billed pipit, Finsch's wheatear, spectacled warbler and lesser kestrel were quickly added. Continuing east we began our descent to the Dead Sea, where at 400 m below sea level we reached the lowest point on the planet. Here we explored one of the many wadis, where fan-tailed raven and Cyprus warbler were found and rock martin, blackstart and graceful prinia were common. We finished the day with a late evening visit to a restricted site close to the Jordanian border, where we quickly found our target Nubian nightjar, with at least four present.

Next day started with another pre-breakfast outing, this time to locate striolated bunting, an increasingly difficult species to find nowadays in Israel. We drove about 40 minutes north to a

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remote deep sided wadi, where, after much searching, a single male was found, along with a number of Tristram's starlings. After breakfast a nearby reservoir was visited where clamorous reed warbler, Dead Sea sparrow and ferruginous duck were all added.

Leaving the Dead Sea behind and heading inland towards the Ramon Crater, another of the regions most sought after birds, Syrian serin was located at a traditional wintering site, with mourning wheatear, trumpeter finch and Cretzschmar's bunting all found nearby. We then moved to another restricted military area, which we had permission to visit in search of larks. Once there it wasn't long before we had found both thick-billed and Temminck's horned larks, while further searching also produced two bar-tailed larks along with a nice male desert wheatear.

Moving further south we reached the settlement of Yotvata a little after dark, ready for another evening excursion in search of nocturnal species. Surprisingly the first thing of note was Caspian plover which was found roosting in a field. Next we located Egyptian nightjar which gave good

(Continued on page 8)

views both in flight and on the ground, while the highlight for many was a stunning Pharaoh eagle owl. A variety of mammals were also noted, including the impressive striped hyena.

The next four days we were based in Eilat in the far south of the country, where our first new species, house crow, was seen from the hotel window. Nearby the North Beach held white-eyed gull, striated heron and western reef egret. One of the most productive sites was the KM20 Res which held good numbers of greater flamingos, marsh sandpiper, black-winged stilt, spur-winged and Kentish plovers and slender-billed gull. Careful searching through these produced greater sand plover, ruddy shelduck, Pallas's gull, purple heron and an immature white pelican.

One evening we visited a nearby sewage pool where on arrival there was a very showy male little crane in addition to huge numbers of wagtails getting ready to roost. A rather nervous wait then ensued before our target bird Lichtenstein's sandgrouse eventually flew in to drink.

In the hills and rocky deserts surrounding Eilat we found white-crowned wheatear and sand partridge while an early morning visit to a known wintering site rewarded us with Sinai rosefinch. Overhead the raptor passage lived up to expectations with several steppe buzzards and black kites passing through along with smaller numbers of steppe eagles and long-legged buzzards and a few of each booted eagle, short-toed eagle and marsh harrier. Eilat is also a well

known stop over for thousands of migrating passerines, and although numbers were not as high as in some years we still had many interesting finds including citrine wagtail, red-throated pipit, bluethroat, wryneck, masked shrike and ortolan bunting. Warblers were well represented with Rüppell's, eastern Bonelli's, eastern Orphea and olivaceous all recorded.

With Yotvata only some 40 km to the north of Eilat, we couldn't resist making a couple of return visits to this most rewarding of sites, and this time in daylight. Highlights included, bimaculated lark, Barbary falcon, our only Namaqua doves, a stunning male pallid harrier and excellent views of little green bee-eater amongst many others. Not to mention the three adult summer Caspian plovers which were much better seen by daylight.

Sadly it was time to leave Eilat behind and make a start on our return to Tel-Aviv, arriving with just enough time to spare for a quick visit to one of the many parks on the Yarkon River. Here common myna was plentiful and three pied kingfishers showed very well and were a fitting way to end the tour. Birding over we returned the airport, concluding what had been an amazing tour.

We recorded a very respectable total of 170 species of birds, along with 7 species of mammal. A more detailed trip report and a photo gallery from this tour can be found on our website at www.laniusbirdtours.co.uk where you can also find details of all 2012 tours, including a return to Israel at the same time this year.

NOMINATION FOR COMMITTEE (2012 to 2013)

I agree to stand for election to the RSPB Lincoln group committee and, if elected, attend meetings and serve on the committee.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
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Completed forms to be returned to the secretary, Stewart Foster, 24 Hewson Road, Lincoln LN1 1RX by Friday 4 May 2012.

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS

It's time for all you photographers to start polishing your lenses and getting your photographer's eye in because we are repeating the very popular photographic competition we ran in 2008. The competition will be open to all amateur photographers. We want to see your best nature photographs and you could easily walk away with £60 worth of prizes.

There are three categories for you to enter, Wild Birds, Wildlife (other than wild birds) and Wild Places. The photographs can be taken either in Britain or abroad and can feature any species. Participants can enter as many photographs as they want in as many categories as they want. The entrance fee will be £3 for one to four photographs and £5 for five or more photographs. Photographs entered must be the work of the photographer who has entered them and the copyright must belong to that photographer.

We don't want to restrict your artistic talents but the first rule of wildlife photography must be adhered to i.e. the subject must come first and no wildlife must be disturbed by taking the photographs. It is also important to remember that some species require special licences to photograph them. Any photographers that enter photographs of such species must have the relevant licences and evidence of this will be sought by the judges.

The photos will be exhibited in the community room at Lincoln Central Library in October. The closing date for entries is 30 September 2012.

If you are not the competitive type but would like to have some of your work exhibited, there is a special category for you. The entrance fees are the



Starlings at sunrise
One of the winning photographs in 2008

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same but the photographs will be for exhibition only and not entered into the competition.

Please don't worry that you haven't got an expensive camera or big lenses. They are often just not necessary and really superb images can be produced with basic point and shoot equipment.

All entries are to be in the form of prints, minimum size 7 x 5 inches and maximum size 12 x 10 inches. So, get those shutters clicking and start producing those works of wildlife art.

A competition entry form and rules can be downloaded from our website or picked up at an indoor meeting.

COOTLESS IN EXTREMADURA

Angela Clarke
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Mallard, swallow, house sparrow, and house martin every day wherever we looked but no coots. There was plenty of water around, small pools, big pools, rivers, streams but no coot.

The idea of the title for this article came one day as we were reminiscing about the birds we had seen during our week long holiday to Extremadura when Stewart said, "We haven't seen a coot."

Anyway, to start at the beginning, some time last year Stewart was asking where the next trip was going to be. We had been to Croatia last May and then to Northern Cyprus in September. Then I said, "What about Extremadura", as I had obtained some information from the BirdFair last August. Leaving all the information in Stewart's capable hands I completely forgot about it until he said he needed a cheque to book the holiday.

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So in the early hours of 1 May, ten of us set off from Tentercroft Street car park to drive to Luton airport for our early morning flight to Madrid. We picked up our hire vehicles on arrival and managed to escape from the confines of the airport for our drive to the small village of Pago de San Clemente some 11 km south of Trujillo.

Our accommodation was a 200 hundred year old building and my room overlooked the meadow with the church in the background, which was topped by the usual stork's nest.

Breakfast was served at 8 am so we were all up and ready to go by 9 am on most mornings. The first day we travelled through Trujillo on the Caceres road where we caught up with spotless starlings, bee-eaters, turtle dove and woodlarks. We travelled further on searching the fields for bustards but to no avail.

The owner of the property we stayed in gave us directions for the next day where we might find eagle owl. So we set off to Parque Natural De Monfrague stopping off first at Salto del Gitano view point. From here looking across the river to the cliffs we had good views of vultures, blue rock thrush and even rock sparrow, a very excellent stopping place indeed. Then on to Monfrague for the eagle owl and, with a bit of luck, Spanish imperial eagle. Following the directions given to us we soon found the area we were looking for, helped by the fact that there were other birders in the area. The eagle performed for us as if on cue.

Each evening on returning to our hotel, Marion and I ordered a pot of tea in the courtyard as it

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faced south and we could sit and enjoy the sunshine before getting ready for dinner. The meals were all local Spanish dishes served with local red wine, which was produced just down the road.

The next day we set off in the direction of Madrigalejo to explore the fields and tracks on either side of the road looking for avadavat and common waxbill. I don't think any of us had seen, let alone heard of, avadavat but they were a lovely little bird more likely to be seen in cages in our country.

Another day found us at Embalse de Arrocampo where we found purple gallinule and little bittern but, sadly, no ducks or coot. The same could be said of Embalse de Sierra Brava, still no coot. The Embalse de Alange was better as there was a huge colony of Alpine swifts and gull-billed terns over the water and breeding Bonelli's eagle and black wheatear on the cliffs. We even managed to find both great and little bustard but only after a long and patient search.

(Continued on page 11)

NOMINATIONS FOR GROUP LEADER'S AWARD

The Group Leader's Award will be presented at the AGM in May to the person who has, in the opinion of the committee, worked hard to help the RSPB over the past year. You can nominate anyone for the award and we hope you will all take the opportunity to nominate someone who, in your opinion, deserves some recognition. Committee members and the previous three winners are not eligible to receive the award. The previous three winners were Janet Watson, Fiona McKenna and Eddy Chandler.

2012 GROUP LEADER'S AWARD—NOMINATION FORM

I would like to nominate:

For the 2012 Group Leader's Award for the following reason:

Nominated by:

Name:
Address:

Signature:

Date:

Completed forms to be returned to the secretary, Stewart Foster, 24 Hewson Road, Lincoln LN1 1RX by Saturday 31 March 2012.

We were lucky with the weather as the sun shone for us nearly every day with just two thunderstorms whilst we were having dinner and one brief shower on the Saturday, which caused me a problem as I had bought a new umbrella and whilst it went up ok it didn't seem to want to come down again!

All in all it was an excellent trip and an exciting and new area of Spain that we explored. The only downside was that there were no coots!

Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)



Coot

LONG SERVICE AWARDS

Long service awards were presented to the following Lincoln Local Group volunteers by Paul Forecast, RSPB Director for Eastern England.

KINGFISHER BADGE FOR 15 YEARS SERVICE

Carol Harvey and Mike Cottingham

BITTERN BADGE FOR 30 YEARS SERVICE

Colin Goulding

RED KITE BADGE FOR 35 YEARS SERVICE

Mike Willey

Congratulations to all four recipients and thank you for volunteering for the RSPB, you're fantastic!

A LETTER TO ED

A PUZZLE FOR THE DARK WINTER NIGHTS

There are at least 30 different kinds of birds in this letter. The first bird is in capitals to give you a start.

Dea**R** ED

STARTing early we took it easily, and at the Bell Inn, Eton, we picked up Jack Dawling and Ernest. One chatted a lot, so time passed swiftly, but rain on the motorway was a grave nuisance. After lunch, I decided to hand over the wheel and steal an hour's sleep, before reaching Ullswater at midnight in gale-force winds.

The next morning we travelled on to Scotland, where our hotel is in as fine a glen as I have seen, with rushing stream at the bottom of a steep lover's lane. It is all that is now left of an old mill, but it is now renovated and very smart inside—no other one for miles around!

The next day we took a boat trip. Eric rows, though awkwardly, leaving Anne to doze in the stern. Excellent food - no good for taking off inches from the waist or keeping wide awake. Nothing is wanting, except perhaps regular kilts and pipers.

Love from all,

Ardelle.

P.S. I haven't forgotten that it is a birding holiday.

E-mail your list of birds, in the order in which they occur to info@lincolnrspb.org.uk or hand your list in at an indoor meeting. All correct answers received by 30 March 2012 will be entered into a prize draw for a RSPB bird feeder. Answers in the next newsletter.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVERY MONTH

First Sunday of every month: BIRDWATCHING FOR BEGINNERS. Free Guided Walks for members and non-members—everyone welcome. Meet outside the information centre in Hartsholme Country Park at 10.30 am. Warm clothes and stout footwear are advisable during winter months. The walks take between 1 and 2 hours.

JANUARY

Saturday 14 & Sunday 15: WINTER WEEKEND TO NORTH KENT visiting Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve and RSPB Elmley Marshes. The price of £95 per person for a twin or double room or £110 per person for a single room includes all coach travel from Lincoln and one night half-board at the Abbots Barton Hotel, Canterbury. Cancellation insurance is *not* included.

Saturday 28 & Sunday 29: THE BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH; a nationwide RSPB Event. Details in the winter edition of *Birds* magazine or from Sarah Kelly, The Lodge, Sandy SG19 2DL. T: 01767 680551.

FEBRUARY

Thursday 9: THE NATIONAL PARKS OF NORTHERN TANZANIA by **Steve Lovell**. Come and see some of the amazing wildlife that can be seen in Tanzania. 7.30 pm at Bishop Grosseteste University College. Sponsored by a group member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Sunday 26: COACH OUTING to RSPB Frampton Marsh reserve, Lincolnshire. Depart Lincoln 9 am. Depart reserve 4 pm. Adults £12, one child free, additional children £8. H, IC, NT, WC.

MARCH

Thursday 8: TRINIDAD & TOBAGO—TROPICBIRDS, TROGONS AND TURTLES by **Steve Cale** (www.steve-cale-artist.co.uk). 7.30 pm at Bishop Grosseteste University College. Sponsored by Carol Upton and Mike Willey.

APRIL

Thursday 12: AN EVENING WITH OWLS by **David Garner** (www.hushwings.co.uk) 7.30 pm at

Any advertisements enclosed with this newsletter are not specifically endorsed by the RSPB or the Lincoln Local Group.

Bishop Grosseteste University College. Sponsored by Michael Carter Travel, 77 High Street, Lincoln LN5 8AA. T: 01522 524595.

Friday 13, Saturday 14 & Sunday 15: RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND at the University of York. Details in *Birds* magazine or from Gillian Baggot, Events Team, The Lodge, Sandy SG19 2DL. T: 01767 680551.

Sunday 22: COACH OUTING to RSPB Minsmere nature reserve, Suffolk. Depart Lincoln 7 am. Depart reserve 5 pm. Adults £25, one child free, additional children £16. H, IC, NT, WC.

MAY

Tuesday 8: EVENING MEETING at Lincoln University Riseholme Campus for a walk around the lake and woods. Meet at 7.15 pm in the University car park at Riseholme.

Thursday 10: NORFOLK—A PERSONAL VIEW by **Steve Rowland**. 7.30 pm at Bishop Grosseteste University College. Sponsored by Sleafordian Coaches, Pride Parkway, East Road, Sleaford NG34 7EH. T: 01529 303333. W: www.sleafordian.co.uk.

Nature reserve facilities are shown thus: H = Hides, IC = Information Centre NT = Nature Trail, WC = Toilets. One child free for each full fare-paying adult booked on the Sunday coach trips (any admission charges still apply). To book coach outings phone Mike on 01526 321917 (evenings or weekends).



a million
voices for
nature

The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing—help us keep it that way.

The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations

Website: <http://www.rspb.org.uk>

The RSPB Lincoln Local Group holds regular events to which RSPB members and members of the public are welcome.

Website: <http://www.lincolnrspb.org.uk>