

Essex Birdwatching Society Newsletter



EBwS.org.uk

Connecting Essex birders for over 60 years

Registered Charity No:1142734

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February 2018

Dear Birders

The field trips for the 2018 started with a great visit to RSPB Rainham Marshes lead by Steve Grimwade from Swallow Birding, see further pages for a write up of the day. The 4th EBwS Conservation Conference is now not far away; tickets are selling fast with only 100 delegate places for the day, please see below and the next page for booking details.

Emma

EBwS Field Trip

Sunday 11 February

DUNGENESS RSPB RESERVE

This remote shingle expanse with unique vegetation and flooded gravel pits attracts many winter visitors and the occasional rarity along with divers, grebes, gulls and auks in the warm water of the 'patch' just off shore from the power station.

For more details, latest sightings and a map of the reserve go to the [RSPB website page](#).

*Coach trip commences from Trinity Church (opposite the County Hotel) at 07:15am for 07:30am, with **pick-ups as required at Shenfield 07:45am and Grays 08:00am**. There is a large 'free' car park next to County Hotel in Chelmsford. Please call Gerry Johnson on 07775 663166 (after 7:00pm) for more details and to reserve coach seats. Coach trips cost £20.00-£23.00 each, subject to destination and attendance. Accompanied juniors travel 'free'. **To avoid disappointing anyone on a waiting list, non-attended coach bookings, without cancellation notice, will incur the full trip cost.***

EBwS Talk

Join us on **Friday 2 February** at 8pm for a talk about:

NIGHTJARS, WOODLARKS & DARTFORD WARBLERS by Dr Greg Conway

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 82 Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2QL

Members £3.00 each, Guests £4.00 each on the door.

Dr Greg Conway, Research Ecologist with the Terrestrial Ecology Team at the BTO enlightens us about these special species often seen on Field Trip Meetings, especially when on heathlands or in the unique 'Brecklands' area of Suffolk and Norfolk.

EBwS Conference

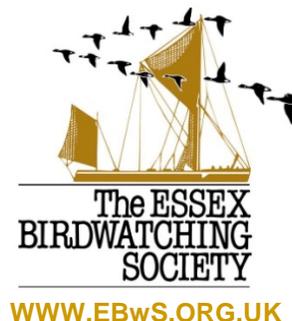
Saturday 17 March - Coastal and Marshland Birds of Essex

Tickets are priced at £20 adult (accompanied under 16's £5) and include refreshments and lunch and are now available from Secretary Lesley Collins, 07515 338999 or email essexbirdwatchingsociety@gmail.com

There is a limit of only 100 delegates, tickets are selling fast, don't miss out!

Please see next page for full details.

4th CONSERVATION CONFERENCE



'COASTAL & MARSHLAND BIRDS of ESSEX'

Saturday 17th March 2018, Northumberland Lecture Theatre, Writtle University College, Writtle, CM1 3RP

08:45-09:45 Registration and refreshments – *with time to view the exhibits and displays*

10:00-10:05 Welcome address by **GERRY JOHNSON MBNA**, *EBwS Chairman*

MORNING SESSION Chaired by **M *******

10:05-10:40 **"CONSERVING THE COASTAL BIRDS OF ESSEX – REFLECTIONS FROM 30-YEARS ON THE FRONT LINE"**

Dr CHRIS GIBSON FBNA, *Ecologist, Conservationist, Broadcaster and Author*

10:40-10:50 Beyond the Podium – up to ten minutes of delegate's 'Questions & Answers' with Chris Gibson

10:50-11:25 **"BREEDING SEASON POPULATIONS OF WADERS – WINNERS AND LOSERS"**

Dr DAWN BALMER, *BTO Ecologist, Head of Surveys and National Survey Coordinator*

11:25-11:35 Beyond the Podium – up to ten minutes of delegate's 'Questions & Answers' with Dawn Balmer

11:35-12:10 **"NEW MOON ON THE WANE – THE CURSE OF THE CURLEWS"**

RICK SIMPSON, *Wader Quest*

12:10-12:20 Beyond the Podium – up to ten minutes of delegate's 'Questions & Answers' with Rick Simpson

12:20-13:40 **'Light' sandwich lunch break – time for informal discussions with speakers and to view the displays**

AFTERNOON SESSION Chaired by **M *******

13:40-14:15 **"LITTLE TERNS – BIG CHALLENGES"**

SUE RENDELL-READ, *RSPB Ecologist, Project Manager EU LIFE and Little Tern Project*

14:15-14:25 Beyond the Podium – up to ten minutes of delegate's 'Questions & Answers' with Sue Rendell-Read

14:25-15:00 **"WATER BIRDS OF THE COAST IN WINTER"**

Dr TERESA FROST, *BTO Ecologist Wetland Birds Survey National Organiser*

15:00-15:10 Beyond the Podium – up to ten minutes of delegate's 'Questions & Answers' with Teresa Frost

15:10-15:45 **"DEVELOPMENT OF RESERVES – FROM RAINHAM TO WALLASEA"**

GRAHAM WHITE, *RSPB Senior Wetland Ecologist*

15:45-15:55 Beyond the Podium – up to ten minutes of delegate's 'Questions & Answers' with Graham White

15:55-16:30 Summing up and 'Grand Raffle' draw with so many splendid prizes to be won.

EBwS News

January Field Trip – Rainham Marshes by Steve Grimwade

28 of us set off from the visitor centre and wandered in an anti-clockwise direction around the reserve. The woodland was rather quiet although we did manage to find several singing Song Thrushes which hopefully meant that spring wasn't too far away!

Redwings, Goldfinches and plenty of Chaffinches were seen in the scrub bordering the railway line and a little further on, we all had good scope views of a roosting Barn Owl. Scanning from the Ken Barrett hide yielded up to 16 Common Snipe plus a young male Marsh Harrier hunting close-by.

Further along the trails we found a couple of feeding Common Chiffchaffs in an area of Sallows and a few European Stonechats flitted from post to post nearby. A male Peregrine Falcon surveyed the area from a pylon, no doubt eyeing up the flocks of Lapwing and Wigeon.

The Shooting Butts hide gave us elevated views over the wet marshes and with diligent scanning we found up to five Ruff plus Black-tailed Godwits and a very brief Water Pipit that flew off calling.

With our stomachs rumbling, we headed back to the centre via the seawall as the tide was dropping. A small flock of Avocet and Redshank fed voraciously on the foreshore, whilst flocks of Wigeon bobbed upon the mirror flat River Thames.

It was great to have a hot drink and lunch before a hardy few headed out again. A Dark-bellied Brent Goose feeding on Purple-flowered Scilla was a good bird for the reserve and a lucky few found a male Bullfinch and a Firecrest in the woodland – a fine end to the day!



Photos by Emma Robinson



Winter Birding Day – EWT Fingringhoe Reserve

On Sunday 29th January Essex Birdwatching Society and Swallow Birding returned to EWT Fingringhoe Reserve for a Winter Birding Day. There were two guided walks by Steve Grimwade from Swallow Birding which were very well attended with 40 people on the morning walk and 20 on the afternoon walk. It was a bright sunny winter's day which made for excellent viewing on the reserve in particular from Margaret's Hide. The birds of the day included, Brent Geese, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Avocet, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Bullfinch and close views of a Kingfisher. It was great to see so many people outside enjoying the reserve and participating in birdwatching.



EBwS News

Swift Conservation - A Plea for Help!

Our Society is now working in partnership with the Essex Wildlife Trust (Swifts now included in their 'Living Landscapes' remit) to install Swift nest boxes on buildings in the county. RSPB data indicates that we have nationally lost c.50% of our breeding Swifts since 1995. Several reasons are contributing to this decline but one aspect that we as individuals can address is to install a series of Swift nestboxes on our houses. The traditional nesting sites of Swifts under the eaves are steadily being blocked off with the addition of soffit and fascia boards when dwellings are renovated to improve their insulation.

Our Swifts are slowly becoming homeless! Swifts are communal nesters, so a recommended way forward is to attach 3 Swift nestboxes at the eaves level and install a tweeter in one of the boxes connected to a small amplifier that emits their duetting courtship call. This will bring Swifts down that are passing by to investigate the offer of new homes.

So we are looking for suitable sites to install Swift nestboxes. Please contact John at john_smart3@btinternet.com (underscore) for fuller details. Having a Swift colony on one's house is a privilege and a marvel! In the evening the birds race over the rooftops in their traditional '**screaming parties**' – the **Sound of Summer!** They are only with us for c.100 days a year and soon return to the insect rich skies over the African Congo. But they'll be back in early May 2018!

We have already installed boxes at Writtle University College, Chelmsford Museum in Moulsham Street, at EWT's Head Office at Abbots Hall, on an agricultural barn at Blackmore and on several residential houses and are in the process of completing a project on the 6 storey campus library roof at the University of Essex in Colchester. But the quest to install more continues! **Can you help please?**

Thank you, S.o.S = Save our Swifts!



EBwS Bird Records

Thank you for adding all your bird sightings on our website- EBwS.org.uk

Your contributions are really valuable as they help to build our knowledge of the birds of Essex which supports our conservation work.

Other News

BTO Grey Herons and Little Egrets – Census

Rod Bleach the BTO Regional Rep for NE Essex is asking for help with the Grey Heron and Little Egret Census. This year is the 90th anniversary of the start of the census. The aim is to count as many heronries as possible each year and to ensure that newly established sites are quickly discovered and brought into the programme of annual counts. In north-east Essex, counts in recent years have been a bit sketchy. If you do know the location of any grey heron or little egret nest sites in Essex.

Please email Rod at essexnebto@gmail.com giving the location/s of the nest sites.

Other Field Trips

Saturday 10 February

Introduction to the Birds and other Wildlife of the Ingrebourne Valley

EWT Ingrebourne Valley Visitor Centre

Join local naturalist Dave McGough on a walk around Hornchurch Country Park and the surrounding Living Landscape to experience the fantastic array of wildlife that the valley holds. Suitable for beginners. For more information see - <http://www.essexwt.org.uk/events>

Saturday 17 February

Walk – Old Hall Marshes (RSPB)

RSPB Chelmsford & Central Essex Local Group

Kieren Alexander, OHM Site Manager, will lead this walk. The walk should last 2.5 to 3 hours. For more information see - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/chelmsford>

Sunday 18 February

Car Trip to Abberton (EWT)

RSPB Colchester Local Group

For car trips, no bookings are required, just meet at the venue, where, weather permitting, we hope you will have an enjoyable day of watching wildlife with like-minded folk. Car sharing is encouraged, especially for the longer trips. For more information see - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/colchester>

Saturday 24 February

Coach Outing - RSPB Frampton Marsh, Lincolnshire

RSPB Havering Local Group

A major new extension to this coastal wetland reserve includes a reedbed, large freshwater scrapes and wet grassland. These habitats have all been created to bring the wildlife of the Wash closer to you. Frampton Marsh is at the leading edge of visitor and habitat nature conservation planning. Designed to maximise every aspect of the new habitats and facilities for wildlife and visitors. There are three hides for you to view nature. For more information - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/havering>

Other Talks

Wednesday 7 February

A Passion for Owls by Richard Brooks

RSPB South East Essex Local Group

This talk covers all UK owl species, with the exception of the Snowy owl. It particularly focuses on Barn owls, including Richard's conservation work with them over 20 years, and their breeding cycle. The other owl species are also well represented and Richard will touch on some foreign species if time permits. For more information - <http://www.southendrspb.co.uk>

Wednesday 14 February

A Tale of Two Towers

EWT Basildon Natural History Society

Edward Jackson presents 'A Tale of Two Towers - how we are working to save Suffolk Swifts'. For more information see - <http://www.essexwt.org.uk/events>

*These field trips/talks/events are only a selection of activities from across the Essex area.
Please see your relevant local wildlife groups for further activities.*