



giving  
nature  
a home

September 2013

[www.rspbgravesend.org.uk](http://www.rspbgravesend.org.uk)

## Newsletter of the Gravesend RSPB Local Group

How time flies. It's August 2013 and the need to compile a newsletter reminding you about future meetings and keeping you up-to-date with other RSPB supporters. The re-branding has been done by Paul to show the "refreshed" logo of the RSPB. *Good Birding ...* Pauline Heathcote

### Many volunteers make Group work!

I thought we ought to celebrate and thank the committee members who are keeping the Group running as a co-operative during the important period of recruiting a new Group Leader. You can read more about this on the website.

Following the AGM on 8 May 2013 the committee consists of:

**Group Leader:** <vacant> -  
**Group contact:** Paul Yetman  
**Treasurer:** Neville Lunness-Barnes  
**Membership secretary:** Sue Healey  
**Publicity officer:** Sally Jennings  
**Indoor Meetings organiser:** Penny Leeves  
**Outdoor Meetings organiser:** Paul Yetman  
**Committee secretary:** Sue Provins  
**Non-portfolio:** David Johnson, Julie Peeling, Irene Robson

The committee is assisted by:

**Coach Trip organiser:** Sally Jennings  
**RSPB Sales organiser:** Josie Brown  
**Newsletter editor:** Pauline Heathcote  
**Website editor:** Alan Else  
**Pin Badge sales:** Sally Jennings

*Plus many others who help out at our indoor meetings, outdoor trips, special events and volunteering activities.*

*Please contact any committee member if you would like to volunteer to help or even take on the role of Group Leader.*

**Wednesday 11 September 7:45pm - 10pm**

**St Botolph's Hall, Northfleet**

### **PANAMANIAN PUDDLES**

Pauline and Peter Heathcote with a fascinating story of birds and animals in the forests of Panama in the rainy season.

**Tuesday 24 September 2pm - 4pm**

**Woodville Halls, Gravesend**

### **THE BIRDS OF KENYA**

Phil and Ann Farrer share a journey starting and finishing in Nairobi, taking in the Samburu Game Reserve in the north, the lakes of the Rift Valley and the Masai Mara in the south.

## ***Ever wondered about attending an indoor meeting?***

These consist of an illustrated talk by an entertaining speaker and last approximately two hours with a short interval during which refreshments can be obtained. Venues have near-by parking, toilets and disabled access.

**Tuesday afternoon** meetings start at 2pm and will be held in the Kent room at the Woodville Halls, Gravesend, DA12 1AU (TQ647738), on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Admission is £2.50; refreshments can be purchased from the café.

For the 2013 programme, evening meetings are on the second **Wednesday** of the month; they start at 7:45pm and are held at St. Botolph's Hall, Northfleet, DA11 9EX (TQ623741). Admission is £2.50 including refreshments which are available during the interval.

From January 2014 Wednesday evening meetings will be on a **THURSDAY** evening at a new venue at Northfleet School for Girls. More details will be given later during the meetings, on our website and in the December newsletter.

## ***Ever wondered about attending an outdoor meeting?***

We run **outdoor meetings at the weekend approximately twice a month** throughout the year and, also, during the spring and summer, a monthly Tuesday morning meeting. We visit bird-watching "hot spots" in and around Kent and try to ensure everyone has an opportunity to view and enjoy the birds in an informal atmosphere. The relaxed atmosphere gives you the chance to learn how to tell a gull from a tern, a redshank from a ruff and a male blackbird from a female or to chat about habitats and other environmental issues. Oh yes..... and sometimes the world is sorted out too!

Our leaders are familiar with the locations but if you are uncertain about whether you should come along, or would like further information about a location or in the case of inclement weather, please see our website or contact the leader.

Bring a packed lunch with you and wear appropriate clothing and footwear and please be aware of your own capabilities. When visiting RSPB reserves please remember to bring your RSPB membership card. *There is no charge for the outdoor meetings, unless otherwise indicated.*

***If you have not been to one of our meetings before, please come along and introduce yourself.  
Our meetings are open to all and you will be made very welcome!***

## ***Sally Jennings reports on the highlights of recent outdoor meetings ...***

I am sure those of you who visit our website regularly are familiar with Sue Healey's trip reports - excellent accounts of our outdoor meetings with super photos to illustrate. This is just a short summary of some recent highlights which may entice more of you to join our outdoor meetings.

In **April**, 24 members met for a Tuesday visit to Riverside Country Park. Spring migrants were not disappointing. Blackcap, chiffchaff, wren, Cetti's warbler, whitethroats and many more, were singing fit to burst. The highlights though were the Grass-snake and breeding toads in the pond, neither species easy to see normally but on this occasion they were out in the open and acting naturally.

In **May** our coach trip to Minsmere was a great success if only because we avoided the rain in Kent. As the sun shone, we watched patrolling marsh harriers over the reed beds, terns and black-headed gulls on nests, a tawny owl placidly sitting high in a pine tree and a spotted flycatcher catching flies near the woodland path. But, perhaps, the highlight was the rare summer visitor, the stone curlew, nesting at the very edge of the reserve, a great distance away. Group members who had telescopes kindly gave us all the chance to see this unusual bird.

At Knole Park in **June** the common redstart was tracked down when its fluty song caught our ears. In fact it is not a common bird at all, only a few pairs breed in Kent, possibly all at Knole. It is not easy to find either, being well camouflaged by the foliage of Knole's large trees. The colourful male sang high in a sycamore and we all had good views, and cricked necks.

In **July** our mission to see nightjars was partially successful when we heard their strange chirring song fill the air at Goathurst Common. Some were lucky and saw the birds. Just as special perhaps were the tiny lights of

glow-worms lighting the path as we returned. We caught two mating and were surprised to see that the female was still in the larval stage while the male was definitely an adult beetle. Strange....

Our visit to Ashdown Forest gave us a chance to see wood lark, rarely seen in Kent. Two of them emerged from a conifer and paused long enough for us to have a short sighting of their streaky patterns and crests. It was a treat too, to see two gorgeous Golden-ringed dragonflies patrolling a stream. Their alternate black and yellow bands stood out against the overhanging heather.

These are just a few of the exciting things we see and, though it's always fun to see something 'special', our days out are not about ticking rarities. We learn from each other and enjoy - anything that moves! So do join us.

## **The PIN BADGE SCHEME**

**Sally Jennings reports** The Gravesend Group has participated in the RSPB's Pin Badge scheme for many years now, with a box of badges for 'sale' at most Group meetings. A few years ago we placed boxes in a couple of shops in Gravesend and were very pleased to see that donations at these produced a small, but steady income for the RSPB. We have a box in **Stamps & Hobbies** in the High St and another in **Pets Inc.** at The Overcliffe. Both continue to raise good amounts for the RSPB. The pet shop steadfastly raises at least £250 annually. Jamie, the owner, actively encourages his customers to purchase badges. His shop is also an RSPB information point, advertising our Group's activities and holding a stock of RSPB advice leaflets. Both stores are very supportive of our Group and the RSPB, and I would like to thank them both for their efforts.

The badges that sell well tend to be garden birds but some time ago the RSPB introduced other kinds of wildlife on badges and these are popular too. Perhaps this was in anticipation of the change of direction the RSPB has taken? The most recent additions are badges with 'No Estuary Airport' backing cards. These are popular with collectors for some reason.... Last year Purple Heron badges appeared, introduced in a rash moment when it looked as if the Purple Heron that bred at Dungeness in 2011 was here to stay!

***Minding a pin badge box is not difficult. Donations have to be collected and paid into the RSPB's account but this can be done whenever convenient. If you know of a suitable place for a box of badges and would be happy to 'mind' the box, please do get in touch. (Details with coach trip information)***

## **Christmas Sales**

As usual Josie Brown is selling items from the RSPB Catalogue at the indoor meetings ... afternoon and evening..... You can pre-order from Josie (01474 706464) or simply buy from the stock on display.

You **save postage** costs and the RSPB give the group a percentage of the sales to donate to a project in the local area. You can pre-order cards, gifts and bird food and collect from Josie.

RSPB Catalogues were included in the recent mailing from the RSPB, are available on-line [www.rspbshop.co.uk](http://www.rspbshop.co.uk) and by telephoning RSPB at **0845 1 200 501**.

**There will be a catalogue in the next mailing.**

**Josie and her merry band of helpers with her sales table will be at the RSPB Wildlife and Countryside Fair at Bromhey Farm on Sunday 8 September (see below).**

**This is a good opportunity to get cards and calendars for posting to friends and family in Australia!**

***Nature at a turning point....***Under the banner of "**giving nature a home**" the RSPB has launched a *refreshed look which retains our proud heritage but has been up-dated to help widen our appeal* (read more from Mike Clarke, Chief Executive, in RSPB BIRDS Autumn 2013)

The RSPB website [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)... reflects this as the Society is described as

*We're Europe's largest wildlife conservation charity - with more than a million members and nearly 20,000 volunteers. Alongside [over 200 nature reserves](#) in the UK, we're [restoring rainforests](#) in Africa and Asia, [saving albatrosses](#) in the southern oceans and planning to restore vast swathes of the UK's [countryside](#) to its former glory. Our vision is a world rich in wildlife — there for everyone to enjoy*

[www.rspbgravesend.org.uk](http://www.rspbgravesend.org.uk) Sign up on our RSPB Gravesend website and receive the latest news and views from the RSPB, members and supporters directly into your inbox. Most reports of outdoor meetings are accompanied by lovely colour images.

Contact Alan Else for more details.

E-mail [webmaster@rspbgravesend.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@rspbgravesend.org.uk)

If you are a Facebook user, "Like" our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/rspbgravesend](http://www.facebook.com/rspbgravesend), and receive updates directly into your Facebook Newsfeed.

**Don't forget..... RSPB Wildlife and Countryside Fair - Sunday 8 September**  
Northward Hill Reserve, Bromhey Farm, Cooling, Rochester, Kent ME3 8DS

## OUTDOOR MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER

Sunday 8 September 10am - 4pm (approx.)

### DUNGENESS OBSERVATORY & DUNGENESS RSPB RESERVE (WC)

Park in the Old Lighthouse car park, TR088169 (TN29 9NB). Afterwards we will visit the RSPB reserve, parking in the main visitor car park at TR067184 (TN29 9NF). For migrant passerines such as black redstart, sea birds such as gannet and skuas, egrets & a variety of wildfowl.

Leader: Paul Yetman.

Sunday 22 September 10am - 4pm (approx.)

### RAINHAM RSPB RESERVE (WC)

Meet in the reserve car park, TQ551790 (RM19 15X). Waders, with possible peregrine, kingfisher & rock pipit. Leaders: Pauline and John Beard.

For more outdoor meetings see our 2013 programme or visit our website.



## Coach trip to RSPB Pulborough Brooks

on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013

**Sally Jennings writes** At the beginning of winter what could be more uplifting than a day at this lovely reserve set in the Arun Valley with views across wet meadows to the South Downs. We hope to see wintering ducks on the river, fieldfares and redwings feasting on berries, nuthatches and tits on feeders by the visitor centre and possibly a flock of siskins in the heathland area which has recently been opened up for visitors.

The reserve has hides, trails, and a good visitor centre with tea room. Please take your RSPB membership card if you are a member. Note there is an entry charge for **those who are not RSPB members** of £3.50 (£2.50 concessions)

The coach will leave Gravesend Rail Station, Clive Rd, Gravesend, at **8.30am** and leave Pulborough at about 4.00pm.

Tickets are **£16** each and are available at Group meetings OR from Sally details above

**Make cheques payable to Gravesend RSPB Local Group**

Please pay for tickets before the trip as the coach has to be paid for in advance.

**Book tickets, giving your name, address and telephone number, with Sally.**

**Remember to tell her how many tickets you require!**

Send to  
**Sally Jennings,**  
**206 Lower Higham Rd,**  
**Gravesend,**  
**Kent, DA12 2NN**

**01474 322171**

*enclose a SAE for tickets please*