



# Gravesend RSPB Local Group Newsletter

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

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As I write this I have just returned from the group visit to Dungeness bird observatory and RSPB reserve. Earlier in the week Dungeness was in the birding world headlines as it hosted a European first of an EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHER. This is a small green warbler sized bird that had managed to find itself on the wrong side of the Atlantic. It served to remind me of the enormous migration journeys 'our' birds make each year in order to breed within our shores and the risks they take to do so.

As we walked around Dungeness today, there were no 'mega' rarities on show, but signs of migration were still present: swallows flying south east towards the Dover headland, juvenile common terns feeding at the 'patch' in front of the power stations, preparing for their epic journey to the southern hemisphere, a lone chiffchaff and a family of young stonechats. Each will have to face the long journey to Africa and beyond with many perils on route. Other birds will be returning back to us having bred up beyond the Arctic Circle, making the most of the continuous daylight there. Amongst these are the enigmatic wild swans: Bewick's and Whooper. On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November we have organised a coach trip to Welney which plays host to large numbers of these swans over the winter. Welney is a magical place that can give a true mass spectacle as the swans, geese and other wildfowl gather in front of the heated observation gallery to feed and roost. It is an experience that is not to be missed. If you have not done so already, I strongly advise you book your place soon to avoid disappointment.

Our nearby Cliffe Pools RSPB reserve is another important site for wildlife, hosting breeding colonies of avocets, terns and black-headed gulls in the summer, a 'service station' stop off point for migrating waders and a winter site for large numbers of wildfowl in the winter. To help with the upkeep of Cliffe Pools reserve, this year the group has organised a **volunteering day on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October**. We aim to clear the rubbish that collects around the reserve, help clear the paths and assist with annual scrub clearance. Meet at the Salt Lane car park for a 10am start. We will work until about 1pm. There will also be the opportunity to stay for some bird watching on the reserve at Cliffe or at nearby Northward Hill in the afternoon. Don't forget to bring lunch and a warm drink. Please note the nearest toilets are in Cliffe village (near the church). All tools will be provided, but wear clothing suitable for the outdoors and weather. Please bring old gloves and wear steel toe cap boots if you have them – or else sturdy walking boots – wellies will not be necessary unless you prefer them. So that we have an idea of numbers, please let me know if you are interested in joining us.

## Gravesend Group at the local regatta



On Saturday the Gravesend Local Group ran a stall at the 169th annual Gravesend Regatta, which is held along Gordons Promenade. The weather was sunny throughout the day and there was a lot going on with a variety of community stalls, the FusionFestival stage, fun fair, food zone, the Northfleet Carnival and of course the boat races themselves.

Our main attraction this year was wildlife masks which children could colour in and wear. We found ourselves busy from about 11am to 5:30pm with some wonderfully

creative masks produced. There was a 'Who's who' picture quiz where people tried to name 10 of our most commonly seen garden birds. There were also cakes and sunflowers available, free information leaflets and some pocket money gifts. Through the day we spoke to a wide variety of people: my own favourite point was a lovely couple who answered the quiz, while their children were busy colouring in, by writing down all the bird's names in Polish – fantastic to share the same wildlife across languages.

## Group events coming up soon.

Clean up at Cliffe – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October – contact Paul 01474 332417

Christmas Fayre – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November - Irene Robson

We are once again having a stall at Northfleet School for Girls' Christmas Fayre, being held this November. There will be a sales table selling RSPB Christmas cards and gifts and maybe a cake or two. Also there will be pin badges on offer for a donation and activities for the young and old. Plus there will be many other stall holders present selling various things. So please come along and support us on the 28<sup>th</sup> November at Northfleet School for Girls, Hall Road.

Birds of Kent – Talk by Brian Nobbs. Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October. Masonic Halls, 2pm – 4pm

Coach Trip to Welney Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November

Join us on a trip to see swans, geese & ducks on the Welney Marshes. Get close views when they are fed later by the warden. There is a visitor centre, café, hides and trails. We leave Gravesend at 8.30am from railway station, Clive Rd. and will return about 6pm.

Tickets: Wildfowl & Wetland members **£14** (take membership card)  
Non-WWT members **£19** (includes entry charge)

Make CQs payable to Gravesend RSPB Local Group & send to S. Jennings, 206 Lower Higham Rd, Gravesend DA12 2NN (01474 322171).

Incredible India – Talk by Andrew Lapworth. Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November. Northfleet School for Girls, 7.30pm – 9.45pm.

Visit [www.rspbgravesend.org.uk](http://www.rspbgravesend.org.uk) for details of all of these events and more.