

## August 2017

**Sunday 27** Own transport trip to **RSPB Lakenheath Fen**. Lakenheath Fen has rapidly matured into one of the UK's top reedbed reserves, complete with breeding bitterns, bearded tits, marsh harriers, hobbies and cranes. On our walk we should also enjoy seeing a wide variety of insect life, especially dragonflies.  
Meet at visitor centre car park (O/S143; TL 722 866) at 9.30am.  
**Leader:** Martin Johnson

### Members' Subscriptions Due

## September Friday 1

**Primates of the World - Steve Lovell**  
Primates, our closest relatives, are found throughout the world. This talk will look at their status, behaviour and distribution as well as the threats to their very survival.

**Sunday 17** Coach trip to **RSPB Titchwell** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).  
Our visit to this magnificent RSPB 'bird watching heaven' on the North Norfolk coast is timed to coincide with the period of peak migration. Waders, in particular, will be to the fore.  
Stevenage: 7.35am. Hitchin: 7.45am.  
Letchworth: 8.00am. Royston: 8.20am  
**Leader:** Helen Lumley

## October Friday 6

**Life in the Wild - Tom Mason**  
Tom shares his stories and projects from the UK to the Amazon on his journey to becoming a full time wildlife photographer

**Sunday 15** Coach trip to **Holkham and Wells** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).  
The varied habitats of this section of the North Norfolk coast attract a wide range of migrant birds, both entering the country and on passage, at this time of year. Rarities (and a huge bird list) are likely! The coach will return from Wells.  
Stevenage: 7.20am. Hitchin: 7.30am.  
Letchworth: 7.45am. Royston: 8.05am.  
**Leader:** Helen Lumley

## November Friday 3

**Spoon-billed Sandpipers – a Tiny Flagship for a Huge Flyway- Dr Guy Anderson**  
Guy talks about his role as a lead on the RSPB's tagging and survey work on one of its global priority species.

**Sunday 19** Coach trip to **RSPB Rainham Marshes**.  
Situating close to the Dartford Tunnel and alongside the River Thames, Rainham Marshes holds a wide selection of wildfowl and waders in autumn and winter, which attract the attention of raptors (especially peregrine). Wintering water pipits and rock pipits can often be found here and by the river.  
Letchworth: 8.00am. Hitchin: 8.15am.  
Stevenage: 8.25am.  
**Leader:** Malcolm Ingram

## December Friday 1

**What has the Osprey Ever Done for Us? - Lucy McRobert and Dr Rob Lambert**  
This talk will examine and interpret the changing and complex relationships between people and ospreys over time. From exploitation to extinction to ecotourism icon the osprey has been on a journey with us, and is perceived by many to be our best known modern conservation success story.

**Sunday 10** Own transport trip to **Paxton Pits and Woodwalton Fen**.  
The morning will be spent at the flooded Paxton gravel pits, looking for wildfowl and woodland birds. Those who wish to can then move on to the wild habitat of Woodwalton Fen, which hosts wintering raptors (hen harrier possible) and one of the world's highest concentrations of the endangered Chinese water deer!  
Meet at Paxton Pits nature reserve car park (O/S 153; TL 195 628) at 9.30am.  
**Leader:** Martin Johnson

**Merry Christmas And A Happy New Year  
To All Our Members**

## January 2018 Friday 5

**In Search of Damsels and Dragons – Steve Cham**  
Steve has been National Dragonfly Recorder and is lead author of the new book Atlas of Dragonflies of Great Britain and Ireland. The talk will look at the natural history and behaviour of dragonflies, most of it with local relevance.

**Sunday 21** Coach trip to **RSPB Fen Drayton and WWT Welney**.  
After spending the morning at Fen Drayton looking for wildfowl, waders, passerines and possible wintering owls we will head to WWT Welney to enjoy the 'swan spectacular', including the feeding of the swans. Note that

due to possible winter flooding this itinerary is subject to change! Welney group rate admission prices (subject to change): adults £6.53, concessions £5.02, WWT members free.  
Hitchin: 8.00am. Letchworth: 8.15am. Royston: 8.35am.  
**Leader:** Martin Johnson

## February Friday 2

**Birds in the Landscape - Andy Clements, CEO of the BTO**  
Andy tells us about research being undertaken on changes in wildlife populations, in particular birds, and how the research is used.

**Sunday 18** Coach trip to **RSPB Pulborough Brooks** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG).  
In winter the flooded meadows of this beautiful Arun Valley reserve, within the South Downs National Park, teem with ducks, geese and swans whilst the mature woodland and heathland host a wide variety of passerine birds. There is also an excellent visitor centre!  
Letchworth: 7.30am. Hitchin: 7.45am.  
Stevenage: 7.55am.  
**Leader:** Malcolm Ingram

## March Friday 2

**RSPB Saving Nature Strategy - Martin Harper, Director for Global Conservation.**  
Martin looks ahead to our future plans for saving nature in a changing world.

**Sunday 18** Coach trip to **EWT Fingringhoe Wick**.  
We visit this beautiful estuarine and woodland reserve when its residents (which may include basking adders!) are just waking up for the spring. A good selection of birds, which may include early summer visitors, is guaranteed.  
Letchworth: 7.45am. Hitchin: 8.00am.  
Stevenage: 8.10am.  
**Leader:** Martin Johnson

## April Friday 6

**Life of a Bird Detective - Mark Thomas**  
What is it like to investigate crimes against wild birds? What goes on behind the scenes? How do you catch the killers? All will be revealed!

**Sunday 15** Coach trip to **Titchfield Haven NNR** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG). We visit this attractive reserve on the Hampshire coast at a time when summer visitors will be flooding into the country, often making first landfall here. The reedbed and surrounding woodland should be full of activity! Note that the coach will have to park some distance from the reserve after dropping people off and that visitor permits cost £4.00 for all.  
Letchworth: 7.30 am. Hitchin: 7.45 am.  
Stevenage: 7.55 am.  
**Leader:** Malcolm Ingram

**May**  
**Friday 4** **In Search of Hummingbirds - John Dingemans**  
John's quest to see and photograph the three species of hummingbirds in Texas, down Mexico way.

**Sunday 20** Coach trip to **The New Forest**. Spring in The New Forest provides us with the opportunity to look for birds (such as tree pipit, redstart, Dartford warbler and possibly wood warbler) that don't breed in our region. The delightful mixed habitat of ancient woodland, heathland and bog also acts as a refuge for a wide variety of resident insect, reptile and mammal life.  
Letchworth: 7.30am. Hitchin: 7.45am.  
Stevenage: 7.55am.  
**Leader:** Martin Johnson

**June**  
**Sunday 17** Coach trip to **Stodmarsh NNR and Blean Woods** (Joint trip with RSPB Stevenage LG). This visit to Kent is ideal for the all-round naturalist! Breeding birds at Stodmarsh include marsh harriers, bearded tits and Cetti's warblers and this is one of the best sites in the country to see the rapidly declining turtle dove. A wide variety of insects and other animals will be active and, if conditions are favourable, we will visit nearby Blean Woods to observe a colony of rare heath fritillary butterflies.  
Letchworth: 7.15am. Hitchin: 7.30am.  
Stevenage: 7.40am.  
**Leader:** Martin Johnson

### **Summer Meetings**

Evening 'own transport' trips to local venues will be arranged for the summer months. Details will be announced before the end of April, or can be obtained from Martin Johnson. It may be possible to arrange for members to share cars, if required. Contact Martin if you need or can offer a lift.

**An Annual Subscription** of **£14.00** per member (**£7.00** for juniors under 18) is payable to cover expenses and will admit members to all meetings for the period of the programme.

**Visitors** will be admitted on payment of a **£3.00** admission fee.

**Indoor Meetings** will be held on Fridays in accordance with the programme, at 'The Settlement', Nevells Road, Letchworth, SG6 4UB, commencing at 7.30pm.

**Outdoor Meetings** by coach are subject to a fee of **£15.00** per adult (juniors under 18 **£7.50**). This fee is liable to alteration should hire charges increase. Bookings cannot be considered firm until payment is received.

### **All Bookings and Payments to:**

Malcolm Ingram - 5 Redhill Road Hitchin Herts, SG5 2NQ

**Tel: 01462 451320**

Or at prior Indoor Meetings.

### **Coach Pick-up Points**

Hitchin – St. Mary's Square  
Letchworth – Bus Stop adjacent Library Broadway Gdns.  
Baldock – By prior arrangement  
\*Royston – Newmarket Road  
\*Stevenage – Waitrose's car park, Primett Road

(\* only where specified in the programme) and agreed points en route.

**Group Leader:** Martin Johnson - 1 Cartwright Road Royston Herts. SG8 9ET - Tel: 01763 249459

**Treasurer:** Malcolm Ingram - 5 Redhill Road Hitchin Herts. SG5 2NQ - Tel: 01462 451320

### **Outdoor Meetings Secretary:**

Martin Johnson (trips): Malcolm Ingram (bookings)

### **Indoor Meetings Secretary:**

Kathy Blackmore Tel: 01462 646371

### **Committee Members:**

Colin Hawkins (Fund Raising) Tel: 01462 676457  
Helen Lumley (Publicity) Tel: 01438 315683  
Janet Southwood (Raffles) Tel: 01462 491617

Visit our Web site at  
[www.rspb.org.uk/groups/hitchinandletchworth](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/hitchinandletchworth)



**The Royal Society**

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**Protection of Birds**

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**Hitchin and Letchworth  
Local Group**

**Programme**

**August 2017 – June 2018**