

GREENSPACES NATURE - NEWSLETTER

SMALL GROUP, PERSONAL, TAILORED TOURS to watch NATURE

Its about the watching not the listing

Autumn / Winter 2020/21

www.stevelovellgreenspaces.co.uk

Hello to you all, Happy New Year , with a better 2021 to follow. I hope you are all well and making the most of time out of what seems to be like some form of lockdown. You are receiving this newsletter as a means of keeping in touch as you may have booked with us in the past, had a trip deferred or just been on our mailing list.

I would really like to say thankyou to you for your understanding and patience if you were booked in with us for any one of our events in 2020.

It certainly has been a year like no other with wildlife and nature being appreciated by more people than ever before. I have written a piece which is a separate attachment on Lockdown birding and wildlife, recording some local observations.

GENERAL NOTES

Well Covid saw off any plans we all may have had, we managed to get in just one day trip for clients more on that later. Holidays for clients were very stop/ start around hotel availability, staying safe and adhering to strict Covid guidelines where necessary. In the end it became obvious that it was going to be impossible to offer any tour with the same levels of guidance and personal service so cancellation of all events became a necessity.

TRAVELS in the UK

SCOTLAND in February.



Well it was back up to Speyside on a personal trip to stop at the Grant Arms yet again, it was relatively quiet in the locality but great to catch up with some of the locals, one pictured above.

This image was taken at RSPB Loch Garten reserve where the visitor centre was undergoing major refurbishment for the forthcoming season. An afternoon was spent out in the Ladder Hills looking for **Mountain Hares** as you can see below we were successful. Combining **Mountain Hares** with **Brown Hares** and **Rabbits** it was rather it became bit of a lagomorph day.



Mountain Hare in the Ladder Hills

So this led us to lockdown, with a planned personal birdwatching/ walking holiday in Majorca in mid April cancelled, for which Ryanair have still not returned the flight refund. Travellers beware!

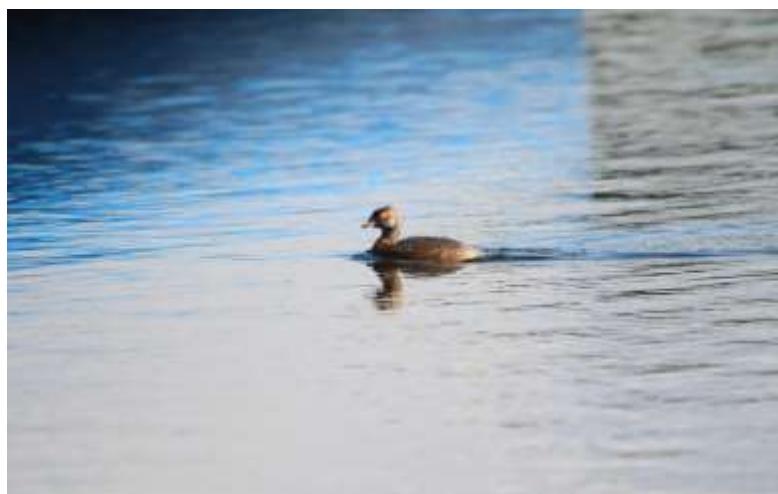
Sadly with all of the restrictions other Greenspaces trips to Norfolk, Somerset and Speyside were cancelled with some guests cancelling or deferring their booking. With the Grant Arms and all my other accommodation providers going into hibernation it was hard to see what life would be like on the other side. So it was with great surprise that Scotland opened up on July 15th again in the unaffected areas. This then took me back to Speyside to fill in with some talks in a gap in the BWWC program

SCOTLAND in August - I will open with this picture and explain further.



This was taken at the RZS site at the Highland Wildlife Park at Kingussie, it is of the two male Polar bears Walker and Arktos having bit of a bathtime love-in. I have to say it was a time limited entry and at all times visitors were socially distanced. There is a captive Scottish Wildcat breeding programme here operating with some degree of success.

During the week highlights were **Ospreys** fishing in Spey Bay, several instances of **Spotted Flycatchers** with fledged young, **Slavonian Grebes** with young at a protected location, incredible close up views of a male **Merlin** sat atop some heather, a good passage of post breeding returning **waders**, **Bottlenose Dolphins** at Chanonry Point, many species of late summer **damsel** and **dragonflies** and a lot more besides.



Slavonian Grebe in the Highlands

Some time was spent on the west coast around Gairloch looking at accommodation and habitat with a view for future tour planning. Stunning scenery and some spectacular birding with close up views of **Sea Eagles**, **Black Throated Divers**, **Great** and **Arctic Skuas** plus discovery of a new locally distilled Gin.



Common Seal – Dornoch Firth

A week in early September with friends on the Thames in a self driven cabin cruiser going from Reading to Oxford in our boat bubble of six was a surprise as further restrictions came in shortly after we returned. It was quite a trip from a wildlife perspective as many **Kingfishers** were seen, **Little Egrets**, **Grey Herons**, **Red Kites** and even an **Otter** early one morning.

SCOTLAND - Speyside in October

This should have been a seven night tour followed by a five night tour for clients with both tours full, sadly Covid restrictions put paid to that plan, however I was committed to the Grant Arms and wanted to show them some support, so going up there in the Autumn to give some talks and lead a couple of walks was a no brainer. I had the pleasure once again of being there when Mike Dilger he of BBC One Show fame was there, so it was good to catch up with him and how life had been affected for him in his wildlife filming role.



Hills above Glenshee

As the picture shows travelling right through the Highlands rather than the A9 route took me through the Spittal of Glenshee, Braemar, Ballater, Balmoral and into Speyside from the Eastside. It is a wonderful drive and on this occasion a distant view of a **Golden Eagle**, **Buzzards**, **Mountain Hares** and masses of **Red Deer** made it even better.

Throughout the week many of the old sites plus a few new ones were visited, highlights were thousands of **Pink Footed Geese** in Udale bay in vibrant morning light. **Common and Velvet Scoters** at Roseisle Bay, a raptor fest in upper Findhorn valley with eight species seen in a single day. Close up views of a very confiding **Otter** on Beauly Firth, **Red Deer** rutting at several sites all this against a backdrop of fantastic autumn colours. Below are few of the images from this particular trip.



Dipper on the River Spey



Snow Buntings at Spey Bay



Pink footed Geese by the thousand - Udale Bay



Otter on Beauly Firth

So returning via southwest Scotland to check out the Solway Firth for a future tour, the Svalbard **Barnacle Geese** were back in their thousands at RSPB Mearsehead and along the coast at WWT Caerlaverock. These along with a large **Starling** roost , 600 plus **Pintail** and a host of other waterfowl made for an enjoyable couple of days prior to coming home.



Roe Deer with Barnacle Geese at RSPB Mearsehead

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021

We hope to get going again at some stage in 2021 with the following trips planned for next year.

THESE ARE ALL SUBJECT TO COVID CONDITIONS AT THE TIME OF THE TOUR.

There are spaces available on the following Tours with a minimum of three persons required to ensure the tour will operate.

NORTH NORFOLK – A Winter Birds Special - Sunday 24th to Thursday 28th January - 4 nights

THE SOLWAY FIRTH - Geese and much more - Saturday 6th to Thursday 11th February - 4 nights

SOMERSET - Birds, Insects, Mammals and Flora - Friday 14th to Tuesday 18th May – 4 nights

THE FARNE ISLANDS and the best of NORTHUMBRIA – Seabirds, coastline, woods and forest
Tuesday 1st to Sunday 6th June - 5 nights

AUTUMN in SPEYSIDE/ CAIRNGORMS and MORAY - The very best of the Highlands - Saturday 16th to Saturday 23rd October - 7 nights.

AS IT STANDS THE TRIP TO SOMERSET WILL BE THE FIRST OF OUR 2021 TOURS TO GO AHEAD

For further details see; www.stevelovellgreenspaces.co.uk

DAYTRIPS

We operate these out of our base at Lincoln and go out of county into Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Norfolk and Derbyshire to some of our favourite spots looking for the best that they have to offer. Our last trip pre Covid was into East Yorkshire looking for **Adders** and also birdwatching at a brilliant site North Cave Wetlands all of these days are never more than two hours travel away and include all travel and packed lunches. We even do tailor made days out, as we have a group of ladies whom we are taking to Bempton Cliffs for a seabird spectacular for a special birthday. We are hoping that a group of Lady Birdwatchers will be coming over from the Bahamas in August to complete a Tour throughout GB with us which has been postponed from 2020 .



Male Adder – East Yorkshire

We will shortly be posting the dates of next years daytrips onto the website, book early to avoid disappointment.

LINCOLNSHIRE

We continue to promote our home county of Lincolnshire and all of its rich and underwatched wildlife with its high tide spectaculairs of the wash, seal colonies around the Humber, its extensive whispering reedbeds with their myriad of treasures and inland sites such as gravel pits and also meadows rich in flora and butterflies. We are constantly finding new local sites that will be as much interest to you as to ourselves.

See :-

[**www.stevelovellgreenspaces.co.uk**](http://www.stevelovellgreenspaces.co.uk)

TALKS

As you will appreciate these have taken a real hit with all from March onwards getting cancelled some being rebooked, others are waiting and others being lost completely. It is in recent times that I have gone onto Zoom presentations for clubs at their request until we get back to whatever normal may be. Certainly if all bookings come to fruition I will be meeting some new RSPB, U3A and Wildlife / Natural History societies in this coming year.



Silver Washed Fritillary - Chambers Farm Wood, Lincs

LOOKING FORWARD

We are always looking to try something different and in 2021 we are hoping to try some wildlife / flora photography tuition days here in Lincs and maybe over the border in Nottinghamshire. We have always tried to help out our clients with their optics so this is a natural progression.

On a different note it was very pleasing to see the Scottish Government state that they will implement the findings of the Werrity report to license driven Grouse shoots, stop mountain hare culls and control the amount of Muirburn in the uplands, this will come into force in 2021.

Also the National Trust and other national land estate holdings banning ‘ Trail ’ hunting on their land due to some recently uncovered evidence of malpractice by some members of the hunt fraternity.

Finally the banning of Lead shot being used in gun cartridges by the EU, throughout the EU which can only be good for wildlife and the wider environment.

If you have any personal requirements or have an idea that you would like to put to us regarding a group holiday or a small group day tour, just give us a call we will do our best to organise it for you.

GIFT VOUCHERS

These are available in multiples of £20 and can be used against any of our events for two years from the purchase date, so why not treat someone !

For further information see

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