

Birds of the Somerset Levels
Residential Weekend 2010

The Somerset Levels are a little known area of empty countryside and big skies between Glastonbury Tor and Bridgwater Bay. Slow moving rivers, watermeadows, willow plantations and vast reedbeds make this one of the most significant wetland areas in England, the number of nesting bitterns here being among the highest in the country.

The birdlife here is diverse and constantly changing. As the winter floodwaters recede, spring brings a rush of wild flowers and nesting migrants, the dawn chorus of warblers and hedgerow birds being underscored by cuckoos calling and bitterns booming. Bearded tits and marsh harriers are regularly seen. Hobbies skim over the pools in search of dragonflies and, as dusk falls, silent barn owls seek their prey.

Following our weekend in May 2009, during which we saw and/or heard over 60 different bird species, we are planning a similar weekend in 2010:

Friday 14 May - Sunday 16 May

Once again we shall be based at the comfortable Meare Manor Hotel in the heart of the Levels (brochure and map available on booking).

The total cost for the weekend will be £250 per person. This will include bed, breakfast and evening meal at the hotel. There will be a single room supplement of £10 per night. Also included will be an introductory illustrated lecture *Man and*

Bird on the Somerset Levels, all transport between sites and guidance/ accompanying commentaries by Mike Johnson and Charles Martin. The group will be kept at about 12 in number to maximise opportunities for personal conversation and questions.

Although our various walks will not be arduous, you may wish to make your own holiday insurance arrangements.

Both Mike and Charles are experienced ornithologists with extensive knowledge of the Levels. Mike was the RSPB assistant warden at Ham Wall Reserve for 8 years. Charles has worked as an RSPB volunteer at the reserve for 10 years and has run field trips to the area for Bristol Community Education and U3A.

If you require further information in addition to the above you are welcome to phone Mike (0117 9532545) or Charles (0117 9744366).

Booking arrangements should be completed via Meare Manor Hotel, St Mary's Road, Meare, Nr Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9SR (01458 860449).

Mike Johnson

Charles Martin

September 2009