

## RSPB Hitchin & Letchworth Local Group Spring Walks Programme 2024

*Please car share if possible, especially for more distant trips*

*Any questions – please contact [hitchinletchworthrspb.trips@outlook.com](mailto:hitchinletchworthrspb.trips@outlook.com)*

Date	Time	Venue	Leader	Access / Parking	Reason for choice / other information
<b>APRIL</b>  <b>Thursday</b> <b>11/04</b>	<b>Daytime</b>  Meet at 10:00  Finish at 13:00 approx	<b>Kingfisher's Bridge, Wicken, Ely</b> 36a Stretham Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire Post code: CB7 5XL Grid ref: TL547729 What3Words: gloom.blazers.cured  <u>Distance from Letchworth 44 miles</u> <u>Travel time by car 1 hr, 20 mins</u>	Martin Johnson	Meet in the visitor car park. There is a charge of £5 to park. No entrance charge.  There is a small gift shop, toilets and a café which sells cake and other light refreshments.	Situated just 15 miles north of Cambridge and bordered by the River Cam, the reserve has employed pioneering conservation techniques that have led to a remarkable recovery in both flora and fauna. A circular route around the reserve is a 2.5 mile walk, giving a closer view of the lake. This is a seasonal path and may be closed between March and June to avoid disturbing breeding birds. There are paths through woodland and along the riverbank.  The main hide is a converted container. This overlooks the lake and gives wonderful views of the migratory birds, as well as the native species that make Kingfishers Bridge their home. There are other viewing points around the reserve, giving the opportunity to observe different habitat and species.  Birds to look out for include Kingfisher, Bittern, Cetti's Warbler, Marsh Harrier.
<b>APRIL</b>  <b>Saturday</b> <b>20/04</b>	<b>Daytime</b>  Meet at 10:00  Finish at 13:00 approx	<b>RSPB Hope Farm, Knapwell, Cambs</b> Grange Farm, High Street, Knapwell, Cambs Post code: CB23 4NR Grid ref: TL333626 What3Words: blushed.wharfs.incurring  <u>Distance from Letchworth 26 miles</u> <u>Travel time by car 45 mins</u>  <b>** Please note that numbers are limited to 25 persons. Priority will be given to members of RSPB H&amp;L local group. To reserve your place please contact Tony Gammage at <a href="mailto:tonygammage@live.com">tonygammage@live.com</a></b>	Tony Gammage	Meet in the visitor car park.  Toilets are available and there is a covered barn with seating for those bringing packed lunches.	Our group were recently given a superb presentation by a member of the Hope Farm team, explaining the amazing work that the RSPB are doing on their farm to encourage wildlife-friendly farming. This is an opportunity to see for yourself how it's possible to run a successful farming business, that produces food, makes a profit, and is valuable for wildlife as well.  A Hope Farm team member will take our group on a 2 hour guided walk to demonstrate the amazing wildlife-friendly initiatives that are being developed at the Farm. We expect to see a variety of breeding farmland birds such as Linnet, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting and Skylark which have at least tripled in number since the farm was taken over. Lapwings, Grey Partridges, Corn Buntings, and Yellow Wagtails have all returned as breeding species.  There is option to stay at the farm for about an hour after the guided tour, to enjoy a packed lunch in the barn and/or to explore at your leisure.
<b>MAY</b>  <b>Thursday</b> <b>09/05</b>	<b>Evening</b>  Meet at 18:30  Finish at 20:30 approx	<b>Sandy Smith Nature Reserve, Clophill, Beds</b> near Speeds Dairy Farm, Beadlow Postcode: for Speeds Farmhouse is SG17 5PL Grid ref: TL109387 What3Words: inflating.nickname.detonated  <u>Distance from Letchworth 11 miles</u> <u>Travel time by car 25 mins</u>  <b>** Please note that this walk will be along an established track with a long but steady incline.</b>	Kathy Blackmore	Small parking area on the lane beyond Speeds Dairy Farm, Shefford Road, Beadlow, Shefford.  The Nature Reserve is sign-posted at the bend in Shefford Rd beside Top Farm.  There are no facilities on this walk.	This circular walk will be approximately 2 miles along an established track.  Owned and managed by The Greensand Trust, Sandy Smith lies on the floodplain and northern slopes of the Flit Valley between Clophill and Chicksands, covering an area of 93ha. The River Flit flows through the southern end of the site; either side are wet marshy grassland, ponds, small areas of reeds and wet woodland. Plants such as meadow sweet and purple loosestrife can be found here, together with dragonflies and damselflies.  Since the site became a nature reserve in 2006 hedgerows have been planted to create smaller fields and the land has been grazed. It is now developing into a valuable area of grassland and scrub, home to farmland birds such as Skylarks, Yellowhammers, Barn Owls, Reed Bunting and Sedge Warblers. Harvest Mice can also be found on the reserve.

Date	Time	Venue	Leader	Access / Parking	Reason for choice / other information
<b>MAY</b> <b>Tuesday</b> <b>21/05</b>	<b>Evening</b>  Meet at 18:30  Finish at 20:30 approx	<b>Ickleford Common, Hitchin</b> Snailswell Lane, Lower Green, Ickleford Post Code: SG5 3PT Grid ref: TL185324 What3Words: seeing.jugs.mediate  <i><u>Distance from Letchworth 3 miles</u></i> <i><u>Travel time by car 10 mins</u></i>  <b>** Please note that Ickleford Common is an area of uneven farmland which will require care when walking along the route. There are also a number of gates for access to / egress from the common</b>	Tony Gammage	Park on roadside on Snailswell Lane, Lower Green.  There is a nearby residential area so please consider residents' access when parking.  There are no facilities on this walk, however toilets can be found at the nearby Plume of Feathers pub.	This 2 mile circular walk will start from Snailswell Lane, continuing along generally flat public footpaths onto Ickleford Common, skirting the edge of the Common and along the River Hiz.  Ickleford Common is a rare example of an unimproved and traditionally managed grassland. It is recognised as a key neutral grassland habitat by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Watercress beds and a number of rough unimproved/semi-improved wet grassland communities are located adjacent to the River Hiz, one of only three rivers in Herts to flow north into Bedfordshire (instead of south to the Thames). Look out for the delicate Water Crowfoot which blooms in Spring.  The Common and riverside are abundant with dragonflies at this time of year. Birds we can expect to see are Red Kite, Buzzard, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Yellowhammer, Grey Wagtail and possibly Barn Owl and Corn Bunting.
<b>JUNE</b> <b>Wed</b> <b>12/06</b>	<b>Evening</b>  Meet at 18:30  Finish at 20:45 approx	<b>RSPB Fowlmere, Cambs</b> Mill Road, Fowlmere, Royston Post code: SG8 6EZ Grid ref: TL408458 What3Words: informed.spreads.petrified  <i><u>Distance from Letchworth 18 miles</u></i> <i><u>Travel time by car 25 mins</u></i>	Helen Lumley	Meet in the reserve car park.  One accessible, unisex toilet is available by the Welcome Centre.	The site covers 40 hectares. There is a 2 mile nature trail and certain sections are wheelchair accessible.  Fowlmeres reedbeds and pools are fed by natural chalk springs and a chalk stream runs through the reserve. Chalk springs are some of the UK's rarest habitats, home to Brown Trout and Water Voles. The reserve has three hides, two of which are wheelchair-accessible.  Bird species include breeding Marsh Harrier, Kingfisher, Water Rail, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, numerous waterfowl and a resident Barn Owl.
<b>JUNE</b> <b>Thursday</b> <b>20/06</b>	<b>Evening</b>  Meet at 19:00  Finish at 20:45 approx	<b>Byron's Pool Local Nature Reserve &amp; Trumpington Meadows Country Park, Cambridge</b> Trumpington Park & Ride, Hauxton Road, Cambridge Post code: CB2 9FT Grid ref: TL442542 What3Words: pine.young.chill  <i><u>Distance from Letchworth 23 miles</u></i> <i><u>Travel time by car 40 mins</u></i>	Jane Havercroft	Meet at Trumpington Park & Ride bus pick up point, assemble adjacent to the toilets, away from bus queues.  Toilets at the Park & Ride can be used before our walk and possibly afterwards.	We will start our walk from the Park & Ride onto Trumpington Meadows, continuing onto Byron's Pool. The return will be by the same route. Total walking distance is between 2 and 3 miles. Most paths are well surfaced but we may briefly use a seasonal path which is unsurfaced.  Managed by Beds, Cambs and Northants Wildlife Trust, Trumpington Meadow is truly spectacular in summer, shimmering with wildflowers such as orchids, knapweed, field scabious, bird's foot trefoil, ox-eye daisy and salad burnet. Butterflies float over the meadow flowers, while dragonflies and damselflies dip and dance along the river.  Byron's Pool is a densely wooded area on the north bank of the River Cam. The path around the reserve takes you through the woods, past some small ponds and along the riverbank. The 4.5 hectare (11 acre) site is named after the poet Lord Byron, who is said to have bathed in a weir pool there while studying at Trinity College. It was declared as a local nature reserve in 2005. The riverside offers beautiful spots to walk and look out for Otters, Kingfishers and many other woodland species.