

## Understanding Birds in Spring

---

<b>Start date</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2017	<b>End date</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2017
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutor</b>	Peter Holden MBE	<b>Course code</b>	1617NTX005

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings  
Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
**For further information on this course, please contact** [clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

---

### Tutor biography:

#### **Peter Holden MBE**

Peter is an ornithologist, author and lecturer. He was member of the RSPB Headquarters staff for more than 40 years and remains contracted to the organisation as a freelance lecturer.

His RSPB career was devoted to public education – both developing the junior membership and wider public engagement activities including originating the annual Big Garden Birdwatch (the largest citizen science project in the world).

Peter has authored more than a dozen books, with total sales passing a million copies. Best selling titles have been two *RSPB Handbooks*: one on British Birds and the other on Garden Wildlife.

In addition to RSPB lecturing commitments each winter, Peter is frequently invited to join cruise ships – where he gives talks on all forms of wildlife which he illustrates with his own photos. He also has regular lecturing engagements with Madingley Hall and the Bedford Education Centre. Occasionally he lectures with his Artist son, Andy Holden, at venues that have included Tate Britain, Royal College of Art and the New York Biennale of Performance Arts.

During his RSPB years he was also a consultant to BBC's *Blue Peter* and frequently appeared in the garden! He also co-presented two series of live programmes, *Bird in the Nest*, with Bill Oddie that became a proto-type for Springwatch.

Peter was awarded an MBE for his services to nature conservation in the 2009 New Year's Honours List and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is currently Director of close2nature, a company specialising in developing public interest in nature.

---

## Course programme

---

### Sunday

Please plan to arrive between 10:00 and 12:00. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

13.00	Lunch
<b>14.30 – 16:00</b>	<b>Session 1 – Introduction: winter into spring – all change</b>
16.00	Tea
<b>16.30 – 18.00</b>	<b>Session 2 – Birds without borders – the story of migration part 1</b>
18.00 - 18.30	Free
18.30	Dinner
<b>20.00 – 21.30</b>	<b>Session 3 – Birds without borders – the story of migration part 2</b>
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Monday

06.00	Early morning Birdwatch
07:30	Breakfast
<b>09:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>Session 4 – Bird communications - the study of bird songs and calls</b>
10:30	Coffee
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>Session 5 - Nests and eggs</b>
12.45	Lunch
<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>Session 6 - Breeding strategies – and course summary with suggestions for practical follow-up</b>
15.30	Course disperses

---

## Course syllabus

---

### Aims:

To encourage students' appreciation of the seasonal changes and their impact on local bird species and behaviour

To understand how birds prepare for the seasonal changes and how to recognise and interpret these behavioural differences

To understand the size and complexity of bird movements and migrations – especially British species

To produce a personal checklist of what to look for in spring

### Content:

First we will consider changes in behaviour and biology as birds prepare for the breeding season and deal with seasonal changes. We will consider changes in plumage, diet and territorial requirements. Next we will overview the subject of bird migration across the earth's surface: we will look at methods of scientific tools used by ornithologists today and in the past and we will consider the physical resources required and the senses that birds have to help navigate on these incredible journeys.

An outdoor session in the grounds of Madingley Hall will allow students to observe at first hand some of the aspects of bird behaviour and song and have an opportunity to learn the songs and calls of a number of woodland species.

We will consider aspects of nesting and the wide variety of strategies used by different species and begin to analyse how these may have developed and what advantages they have for the species. We will briefly consider the egg and how different eggs are adapted for their unique environments

Finally we will consider bird communication oral and mechanical, and especially the role of songs and calls. Students will have the opportunity to learn some common songs and calls in the course of the sessions.

### Presentation of the course:

A wide range of teaching methods will be employed. Lectures using the tutor's own photographic material will be the basis of each indoor session. Discussion will be encouraged and several specific topics will be chosen to encourage class interaction and share personal observations that illustrate aspects of the lectures. There will be a field outing in the grounds where hearing sounds will be as important as personal sightings

### As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- Explain how and why birds migrate and give examples of at least 5 different strategies
- Recognise 10-20 common bird songs or calls
- Describe the complexity of bird breeding strategies and the diversity of nests-types
- Produce a personal checklist of things to look out for as spring approaches

---

## Reading and resources list

---

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Holden & Cleeves	<i>RSPB Handbook of British Birds</i>	Bloomsbury 2015
Holden	<i>Birds: their hidden world</i>	Bloomsbury 2014
Newton	<i>Migration</i>	Collins 2010
Couzens	<i>Secret Lives of Garden Birds</i>	Helm 2004
Elphick	<i>The World of Birds</i>	NHM 2014
Brooke & Burkhead	<i>Ornithology</i>	Cambridge 1991
Marler & Slabbekoom	<i>Natures Music</i>	Elsevier 2004

### Website addresses

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

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

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 08 February 2017