

## **Gordon Allison (1961-2012)**

### **Alan Johnson**

Gordon Allison, the Warden for the RSPB Elmley Marshes nature reserve, died on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2012.

Born in America, but raised in Kent and Glasgow, he expressed a keen interest in natural history from a young age. He was the classic young naturalist in the Gerald Durrell mode, keeping spiders in matchboxes, collecting bones and feathers and keeping notes of the things he saw. At the age of five he knew the names all the dinosaurs.

Gordon developed his interest in natural history at the University of Glasgow, where he studied Botany. University also provided an opportunity to develop his love of music, which was usually loud and alternative.

After university, Gordon wanted to work with wildlife and pursued a career in conservation. Having volunteered in various places, he got his break working for the National Trust on the Farne Islands in 1990, protecting and monitoring seabirds and seals.

Gordon's career with the RSPB began in 1992 and he worked at a number of reserves across the country, including Lake Vyrnwy, Blacktoft Sands, Loch Ruthven, Lumbister Skerries, Blean Woods, Fowlmere, Arne, Dorset Heathlands, Northward Hill and Shorne Marshes. In 2008, Gordon became the Warden for Elmley Marshes, a reserve that he was particularly fond of. The care and dedication he put in to managing the habitat on the reserve was a reflection of his enthusiasm and concern for wildlife. Gordon was a renowned birder and a rare source of knowledge on the distribution and movements of birds in Kent. He also travelled widely, particularly to the Indian sub-continent. He was an active member of the Kent Ornithological Society, chairing the Conservation & Surveys Committee.

Gordon was marvellous company. He was a gentle soul with a dry sense of humour. He had a range of interests that often focused on the quirky and obscure. He wrestled with the identification of large gull plumages and went to concerts to listen to bands that no one else had heard of. He was a keen supporter of the Scottish football team Queens Park.

Gordon was more than happy to share his wildlife knowledge with others and he will be fondly remembered by those that knew him well, to those that met him out on the reserve, listened to his talks or read his articles and bird updates.

His dedication to conserving and managing the North Kent Marshes will provide a lasting legacy for someone who had so much more to offer the area and enriched the lives of many.

