

Joint NDOC/BOC trip to Warsash, 31st October 2022

Gray, Elaine and I joined others from BOC and NDOC for a joint trip, led by Bob Lyle, at this interesting site at the bottom end of Southampton Water. There were about ten of us in all.

As we set off southwards along the shore, the weather was superb - sunny and mild - a small window in a very wet autumn. The afternoon was to be a different matter.

There were plenty of House Sparrows in the bushes by the playing field, but we were more focused on the waders on the exposed mud: Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone and Ringed Plover, as well as a Curlew and a dozen or so Brent Geese. More geese were feeding on a spit further out, along with a number of Oystercatcher. On another exposed bar there were several Great Black-backed Gull. A small roosting flock of Black-headed Gull contained several Herring Gull. As we reached the old concrete structure on the shore, I scanned Southampton Water, but found only one Great Crested Grebe, a few gulls and the odd Cormorant.



Peregrine © Ray Reedman

An alert from a local photographer drew our attention to a couple of corvids mobbing a falcon some way back. The bird eventually flew past us close enough for Elaine to get a record shot or two and confirm that it was a young Peregrine. The whole skirmish lasted for some time and was fascinating to watch, as it was clearly more like a romp than a fight.



Glossy Ibis © Ray Reedman

The pools in the inland marsh held a few ducks, but of a great variety: Teal, Wigeon, Gadwall, Pintail, Shoveler and Shelduck were all represented, as well as a Little Grebe. A few Canada Geese were noted too. There were also two or three Little Egret in the marsh.

Eventually we pushed on to a point which Bob had quietly targeted – a boggy patch where a Glossy Ibis was feeding. It was quite close, but unfortunately a sheep fence was in the way. After the Fobney bird earlier this year, and the long-staying

individual at Moor Green, this bird was not quite as exciting as it might have been, but they are still scarce enough to be special.

There was a good range of passerines along the marsh: I saw only one Skylark, but plenty of Stonechat, a flock of Greenfinch, a couple of Dartford Warbler, plus Starling, Crow and Jackdaw. An unseen Cetti's Warbler called several times. There may have been other finches and pipits too, but we were not always able to identify them in brief views. As we came back there were good views of a Rock Pipit on a slipway.

The sky had clouded over by the time we took our picnic lunch at the car park. When we walked up the river Hamble footpath, the light was awful and viewing quite difficult. The tide was in and most birds had been pushed into the marsh and the shallows. We added to our wader list in particular, with good numbers of Dunlin, two Greenshank, several Golden Plover and some Grey Plover. There was also three roosting Heron, plus more Curlew, Ringed Plover and Rock Pipit. A Stock Dove and a juvenile Pied Wagtail were also noted.

Having spent my early life within sight of the North Sea, coasts and marshes are always my favourite sites. Warsash lived up to my expectations, with plenty of birds, a couple of 'specials' - and, of course, good company. Thanks Bob, and to NDOC.

Rain set in as we returned to the cars. Gray had to cope with a torrent as we drove home, while I dozed in the back seat. What are pals for?

Ray Reedman