

## BOC Day Trip to Isle of Sheppey, 25th February 2023

Five of us, car-sharing, made the drive to the Kent coast, where we were joined by Robert's sister and brother-in-law who live in Kent, to explore the Isle of Sheppey. A chilly northerly was blowing, but at least it was dry. First stop, Elmley National Nature Reserve (ex RSPB). The long drive out to the reserve car park taken slowly can be productive, and we saw a great number of Lapwing, choosing nest sites now, even beside the road (you're allowed to stop but not get out). A Cetti's Warbler was in full voice in the car park as we looked for owls. Short-eared were around but not seen today, nor was last week's Long-eared in the small wood by the toilet block. Instead, we were rewarded with a fine Little Owl in a nearby ruined house, glaring out with its yellow eye. There were Hares and Stonechat in the fields above the marsh.



*Little Owl © Karen Lynch*

Driving to Capel Fleet raptor viewing point, we were distracted by a Red-legged Partridge beside the road, and our car at least missed the ringtail Hen Harrier quartering the fields on the other side, offering great views! At the viewing point, a handy knoll with small car park (RSPB) over grazing fields and marshes, we saw Marsh Harrier, Buzzard and Kestrel; but no Corn Bunting.



*Sanderling © Karen Lynch*

Next to the far tip of Sheppey, Sheerness, a sandy beach of shells, which has a large wader roost at high tide. There was a diver in the choppy waters of the River Swale, which seemed to be a Black-throated, but with no white flank patch visible became a Great Northern. We walked to the pill box for shelter from the wind and lunch, and had close views of plenty of small waders along the beach on the incoming tide: Sanderling, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Dunlin, a few Knot and Grey Plover; several hundred Oystercatcher were on the flooding sand bar. We then walked out the other way along the sea wall, viewing Bewick's Swan (10) and five kinds of geese: Russian White-fronted (c80), Dark-bellied Brent, Greylag, Canada and Egyptian.

The remote hide offered another welcome shelter from the wind, and a large number of Curlew (100), Black-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover, more geese, a Great White Egret, Marsh Harrier (4), and finally a male Hen Harrier to make up for the bird missed earlier!



*Curlew © Karen Lynch*

We had an interesting and varied day out with 58 species seen in all.

John Froy