

## BOC Trip to Lakenheath Fen - 19th June, 2011

A dozen or so people turned out to visit this Suffolk reserve. The strange thing about leading a trip is that you set your sights high and feel a bit disappointed if things are less than perfect. In some ways that was how my day to Lakenheath felt when I returned home, quite tired after a long day out.

No, we didn't see any Golden Orioles, in spite of hearing their rich fluting calls many times and sometimes close: the poplar foliage is dark and dense, the light was leaden and the birds are notoriously elusive. And no, we didn't see the Cranes, in spite of hearing their bugling calls while we were separated from them by the aforesaid dark poplar wood. And no, we didn't see Bearded Tits, because it was just too windy for them. And yes, we did get wet a couple of times - that's June for you!

But, hey! For some of our group the magical sounds of Orioles and Cranes were new experiences and the sounds still thrilled those who knew them. And surely no-one is going to mind seeing a few Bitterns, Hobbies, Marsh Harriers and Cuckoos while waiting for the top birds to show. After all, when were they relegated to the Championship?

In fact I had rarely heard the bubbling calls of our female Cuckoo so well, or so frequently. Nor had I ever seen two male Marsh Harriers dive-bombing an escaped Harris Hawk perched in a bush in the middle of their marsh. That was an odd experience! I noted three good Bittern sightings during the day, and counted at least six Marsh Harriers on a single sweep of just one area they were everywhere! I missed the Montagu's Harrier that Martin and a couple of others saw later, but we did share a distant view of a pretty-convincing female Garganey.

Throw in Common Terns, a lot of Swifts, and an assortment of warblers Reed, Sedge, Whitethroat, Garden, and Cetti's - plus a good helping of Reed Buntings, then even that Blue Tit can be forgiven for raising my pulse-rate by pretending to be a Bearded Tit.

And we mustn't forget the ex-Water Shrew, like a tiny white-bellied Mole, which we found on the path you don't find those every day - and Ian took the trouble to point out the special skin filaments on the feet which enable it to swim. The Weasel which David saw at the car park apparently had a bit more life in it.

And the finale, brief but glorious, was a quick trip to a bit of Breckland to witness some Stone-Curlews being bullied by a Rabbit. And that's a Premiership bird if ever there was one!

Perhaps, on reflection, our cup was considerably more than half-full after all!

*Ray Reedman - June 2011*