

Group visit to RSPB Titchwell Marsh - 24 March 2024

RSPB Titchwell is a premier nature reserve on the North Norfolk coast between the villages of Titchwell and Thornham. It is one of several important reserves along this coast, all of which are important for significant numbers of wintering geese, waders, and wildfowl. The reserve consists of a range of different habitats including reedbeds, saltmarsh and several large freshwater lagoons. There is also access to a large sandy beach with extensive views over the sea.

Thirty members were on the coach from Lincoln, and several new people were welcomed aboard, which was very good to see. We arrived at the reserve at 10 am and made our way through the car park to the Visitor Centre and Café through a wooded glade where we heard Chiffchaff and Robin singing. The Visitor Centre has a Meet and Greet hut, gift shop and café.

Our first port of call was to the bird feeding viewing area where we saw Great and Blue Tits, Robin, Wood pigeon, Wren, and Dunnock. From there our party headed down the West Bank path which opened to vast areas of saltmarsh, reedbeds and freshwater lagoons. Looking out over the saltmarsh we picked out both Greylag and Canada Geese, a Little Egret, and a small Chinese Water Deer.

It was a partly sunny day as we walked down the path but there was a bitterly cold wind blowing which kept the temperature down!

Most of the birdlife was to be found on the freshwater lagoons. An RSPB volunteer showed us a pair of Garganey, which for some was their first ever sighting of these ducks. However, this sighting was soon overshadowed by the presence of over 100 Mediterranean Gulls amid thousands of Black-headed Gulls. These gulls are beautiful, having true black heads (unlike the Black-headed ones), red bill and red or black legs and a haunting call.

The lagoons also held many wildfowl and waders including both Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, Avocets, Redshank, Turnstone, Shelduck, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Brent Geese, Red-breasted Merganser, Coots and Moorhens. Flying overhead to the consternation of the birds on the lagoons were at least four magnificent Marsh Harriers.

The West Bank path leads down to the beach where some members saw a flock of Common Scoter on the sea as well as many waders on the shoreline including hundreds of Oystercatchers, Sanderlings, Curlews, Ringed Plovers, and a solitary Grey Plover.

The afternoon saw our party heading down the Fen Trail and the East Trail where there were two viewing areas. We found two Snipe on the East Trail lagoon as well as a single Mute Swan. En route back to the Centre we were told of a Tawny Owl hiding in a densely ivy-covered tree. We located the tree, but most people were unable to see the bird although a couple said they saw it move its head!

Returning to the café meant a warm cup of tea and a lovely cheese scone before going to the coach. Even this threw up the sighting of a lovely Grey Wagtail in the car park which was the icing on the cake of a splendid day out. Many thanks are due to Mike for the original organisation of the trip and to Geoff and Graham for looking after us on the actual day.

During the day the group saw a total number of just under 70 birds, a record for recent years. These were as follows: Black-headed Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Herring Gull, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jay, Wood pigeon, Blackbird, Starling, Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Bearded Tit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Brent Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Red Kite, Tawny Owl, Cormorant, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Garganey, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Shelduck, Teal, Pintail, Wigeon, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Scoter, Coot, Moorhen, Little Grebe, Avocet, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Sandwich Tern, Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Knot, Sanderling, Snipe, Pied and Grey Wagtail, Mute Swan, Red-legged Partridge, Goldcrest and Firecrest.



Mediterranean Gull

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