

## Trip to Wales - 21 to 24 May 2024

In May 33 people spent four days in Wales staying at the Royal Victoria Hotel in Llanberis. We left Lincoln at 7.30 am and despite three delays on the motorways and a compulsory break we arrived at Conway RSPB Reserve at 1 pm. This reserve is on the Conway Estuary so there is saltmarsh as well as reedbeds and wetlands.

We walked round the outside of the reserve and warblers were singing everywhere. We also saw Blackcaps, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Sedge Warblers and Reed Warblers. In the reedbeds and wetlands there were Canada Geese, Mute Swans, Mallards, Gadwalls, Lapwings, Tufted Ducks, a Little Egret, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe and Coots. On the estuary we found Herring Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Shelducks, Black-tailed Godwits, Curlews, a Grey Heron and Oystercatcher. Carrion Crows, Jackdaws, House Martins and Swifts were flying around and a Common Buzzard was also spotted. Other birds seen were Robin, Magpie, Greenfinch, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Blackbird, Siskin and Great Spotted Woodpecker. There were also butterflies on the wing including Red Admirals, Holly Blues and Speckled Woods. A good variety of wild flowers were in bloom and Marsh Orchids and Bee Orchids were quite common. After a pleasant few hours, we set off for our hotel at Llanberis.



Bee Orchid

The next day, Wednesday, we went to RSPB Ynys-hir which is near Machynlleth so we had quite a long journey through a mountainous terrain. Unfortunately, it was misty and drizzly therefore we were unable to enjoy the spectacular scenery. However, by the time we arrived at the reserve the weather had improved.

This reserve consists of peat bog, reedbeds, saltmarsh and woodlands. Also, there were feeders which were attracting a Robin, Siskin, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Great Tits, Blue Tits and Chaffinches. We decided to do the woodland trail first to hopefully find Pied Flycatchers and I think most of the group were successful. We also spotted a Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, two Red Kites, a Song Thrush and Jay. We then explored the other areas and we saw more new birds which included a Great White Egret, Cattle Egret, Redshank, Shovelers and two Ravens. A Cetti's Warbler was seen and a Grasshopper Warbler was heard.



Pied Flycatcher (male)

We then left Ynys-hir and visited the Dyfi Osprey Project. This is a fantastic place with a wonderful café and information centre where you can learn all about the Ospreys and view the nest on screens. Also, approximately a mile from the centre there is a magnificent, purpose-built observation tower where you can look at the nest through telescopes or view it on screens. While we were there the female was brooding one egg and two chicks were visible in the nest. The male bird was perched nearby. Soon it was time to return to the coach and when we came back along the board walk through the reedbed, we heard a Cuckoo and spotted two Ravens.

On Thursday we intended to go to RSPB South Stack on Anglesey but when we arrived at the Britannia Bridge it was closed because of an incident on the bridge. Unfortunately, the coach exceeded the weight limit on the Menai Bridge, therefore, we were unable to go. A quick decision was made to visit RSPB Burton Mere, on the Dee Estuary, instead and go to South Stack on Friday.

This small, compact reserve consists of freshwater wetlands, mixed farmland and woodland and it has an excellent café. There were the usual waders and wildfowl but we did add some new birds to our list. They included a Greenshank, Avocets, Greylag Geese, a Pintail, Wigeons, Moorhens, Black-headed Gulls and a Marsh Harrier. Other new birds were a Garden Warbler, Stonechat, Redstart, Swallows and Sand Martins.

All too soon it was our final day and with the improvement in the weather, particularly the wind, we were pleased we were visiting South Stack today. We arrived in good time and from the car park we headed towards the lighthouse across heathland where we saw our first Wren and Meadow Pipit of the holiday. When we arrived at the clifftops we spotted Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. We then went up to the lighthouse where

we saw Choughs and Ravens and those who climbed down the 400 steps were rewarded with the view of a pair of nesting Puffins. Gannets and Cormorants were seen as well as Stonechats, Wheatears, Redpolls, Pied Wagtails, Linnets and a Common Whitethroat. In view of the long journey home, we decided to leave the reserve at 3 pm. We had achieved our main objective and seen the Choughs so after a final visit to the café we set off for Lincoln. We had a good journey home and we arrived back in Lincoln at approximately 8.30 pm.

It was a very enjoyable holiday despite the weather and we saw a total of 80 birds. The hotel was very good and our thanks go to our co-leaders Geoff and Graham for organising the trip and looking after us all. We must also thank our wonderful driver, Keith, who managed to get a large coach to some very difficult locations.



Stonechat

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