

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2022

TONIGHT'S MEETING (Thursday 1st September)

A warm welcome to all our members as we begin our 55th season of the Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group. This season sees a major change to our indoor meetings as we move from the traditional Friday evenings to Thursday evenings. Also, our meetings will now be biased towards the first half of the month rather than the second half.

For tonight's meeting we have a change to the speaker advertised on the membership card. Unfortunately Ian Newton had to cancel at short notice due to family reasons.

However we are pleased to welcome instead Tony Parker who will talk about Moore Nature Reserve near Warrington (not to be confused with the RSPB Old Moor reserve in Yorkshire).

Until March he was a zoology curator at Liverpool Museum, he is also vice-chair of CAWOS and Mersey Estuary Conservation Group, has been birdwatching at Moore since the early 1980s and currently undertakes WeBS counts on the reserve.

The talk will look at the wildlife and habitats of Moore Nature Reserve in relation to neighbouring sites along the Upper Mersey estuary, in particular how the natural history of the area has changed since the reserve opened in 1986.

Please join me in welcoming Tony tonight for what I am sure will be a very entertaining evening.

COACH TRIPS

Our first coach trip of the season is on Sunday 16th October to the RSPB's Saltholme reserve, departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Saltholme is an RSPB wetland reserve in the industrial heartland of the Tees Valley near Middlesbrough. Large numbers of waders congregate on the reserve at this time of year, as well as large numbers of wildfowl. Raptors are frequently seen hunting in the area. Several feeder areas attract small birds. There is often a Starling murmuration at dusk.

Facilities include hides, an excellent tearoom/restaurant, shop and toilets. There is an entry fee of £4 for non-members so RSPB members should bring their cards. We last visited in March 2019.

Although this trip takes place just after the October indoor meeting please book your place tonight.

The coach trip after that is on Sunday 20th November to North Wales and Conway.

WEEKEND AWAY 24 – 26 FEBRUARY 2023

This year we are returning to the Somerset Levels and will be based at The Royal Hotel, Weston-super-Mare.

COST	Single Room	£285
	Double/Twin for sole use	£325
	Double or Twin sharing	£265 per person

DEPOSIT of £140 per person payable by 13 October 2022
BALANCE remaining and packed lunch money payable by
01 December 2022

Cheques payable to WILMSLOW GUILD please.

The terms we have obtained from the hotel are extremely competitive, representing an excellent discount for the weekend on the current published rates.

INCLUDES Coach Travel and 2 nights Dinner, Bed and Breakfast

HOTEL The Royal Hotel, 1 South Parade, Weston-super-Mare
01934 423 100

Packed lunches are available from the hotel costing £8 per person per day. Please order on the booking form.

We will be leaving the Guild at **7.30 am on the Friday morning**. Bring a packed lunch with you if you prefer but there will be hot food available at Slimbridge.

Our itinerary for the weekend is as follows.

Friday: Leaving Wilmslow at 7.30 am, we intend to stop at Slimbridge WWT reserve for about 5 hours, aiming to arrive at the hotel 5.30 – 6.00 pm.

Saturday and Sunday: We will be visiting the Avalon Marshes, Ham Wall and Shapwick Heath, as well as WWT Steart Marshes near Bridgwater.

Sunday: Leave for home at 2.30 pm and arriving back in Wilmslow about 7.30 pm.

Don't forget to bring your WWT and RSPB cards plus ICE form with you this weekend.

For those of you who have not been away with us before, you will enjoy some excellent birding at a number of sites and habitats in the area. Members are willing to assist those without telescopes to ensure that nothing is missed. Our evening meal is a relaxed, enjoyable, social get together.

Cancellation charges

After 13 October : Loss of deposit

After 22 January 2023: Refund **only** if I can find a replacement for you.

A copy of the booking form is included as a separate attachment with the e-newsletter. For convenience you may wish to print the booking form and complete it ahead of the meeting.

COACH TRIP TO LEIGHTON MOSS APRIL 24th 2022

RSPB Leighton Moss and Morecambe Bay Nature reserves, the penultimate coach trip for this season for the group set off with 19 birdwatchers at 7.30am. A clear sunny morning with a cold start, 9C.



Common Pochard

En route Goldfinch, Magpie, Wood Pigeons, Blackbird, Crow and Pheasant were spotted in the fresh Spring green fields. Bluebells and Spring blossom in full bloom, lambs frolicked in the fields. The temperature in the coach rose to 24C due to a fault, so it was with some relief we disembarked at Leighton Moss reserve. Fabian our driver assured us he would try fix the air conditioning.

Leighton Moss boasts the largest reed bed in north-west England and home to a range of wild life including otters and Bearded Tits. Four of us set off to Lillian's Hide. Some members went in the opposite direction to the Causeway.

Little Grebe, Black Headed Gulls, Coot, Greylag and Canada Geese, Shoveler in full breeding plumage with an impressive shovel-like bill, Mallard, and Shelduck were all present on the pool, with a Moorhen feeding alongside the reeds of the pool. Lesser

Black-backed Gull bobbed on the water. It was noted there were fewer water birds here than seen in the past.

Walking along the Woodland trail we stopped to have a discussion with a group to ascertain if we had seen a Willow Tit or Marsh Tit. After much discussion, it was decided we saw a Willow Tit. A handsome Mistle Thrush feeding on seeds and invertebrates was a pleasure to see, along with Chiffchaff, Robin, Coal Tit, Blue Tit and a couple of Wrens. Reed Warbler was heard, and the diminutive Coal Tit fluttered in the hedges.



Eurasian Oystercatcher



Greylag Goose & goslings

Settling down in Grisedale hide Canada Geese with goslings, Greylag Geese with goslings were interesting to watch feeding on the scrapes, while the sociable Lapwing were feeding, calling and tumbling with their aerial display. Gadwall dabbled in the shallow water. The Osprey platform appeared not to have a resident. Sedge Warbler was heard. Coots with their punk red-headed babies skulked on the edges of the reed bed.

Onwards then to Tim Jackson hide. Black-headed Gull, Lapwing and Greylag Geese again. Then a call from the far end of the hide – Bittern! I missed it, but 3 lucky birdwatchers saw it in flight. This hide also had few water birds and waders on the pool.

Walking back along the Woodland trail Treecreeper was spotted shuffling searching for insect prey around and up the trunk of a tree, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Chaffinch added to our list.

We now headed to the Causeway hide. Cormorant sunning themselves, and a group of Pochard were seen on this large lagoon which has smaller reed bed pools. Great Crested Grebe, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Mallard feeding here. Strolling along the long walk to the Lower Hide we heard Cetti's and Willow Warbler and the Bittern booming.



Western Marsh Harrier



Pied Avocet on nest

In the Lower Hide Grey Heron stood still at the waters' edge, Mute Swans, Tufted Ducks Oystercatchers were also probing for food, but best of all Swallows swooping low over the water catching lunch on the wing. Teal were busy dabbling for lunch.

Time to head back to board the coach at 2.30pm, via the Reed-edge trail. Butterflies were out and about, Speckled Wood, Orange Tip, Peacock, Small White. Stopping at the birdfeeders near the Sensory garden Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Chaffinch,

Goldfinch, Blue Tit, House Sparrows, Robin, Dunnock all made an appearance and a Collared Dove pecked away along the pathway.

We met up with the rest of the group to take the short journey by coach to visit the Morecambe Bay hides. Passing the fields we spotted Barnacle and Greylag Geese grazing.

Allen Hide gave a stunning view of Avocet nesting on the scrapes, sweeping bills for shrimps and worms. Noisy Black-headed Gulls and Shelduck on the spit were noted here but again no other waders.



Black-tailed Godwit

Further down the pathway we entered Eric Morecambe Hide. A stunning sight of over 200 Black-tailed Godwits stood in the brackish waters in full breeding plumage. Also adding to our count Dunlin, Wigeon, a solitary Pintail duck were noted and Redshank. We admired the view across the bay towards Heysham.

Time to return to the coach, Skylark was singing and a Goldfinch flitting in the hedge.

Outdoor temperature had risen to 14C, skies had remained clear but a cool wind had started to create small waves on the waters but a very happy day. RSPB Leighton Moss is a special place with its bird habitat, large reedbeds, nature trails and saltmarsh. We did not see the Otter or Bearded Tit but nevertheless had a good field count of 75, although many commented on the absence in numbers of water fowl, and waders.



Dunlin

Returning home the coach temperature rose to 28C, unfortunately Fabian had not managed to repair the air conditioning, many flushed, over warm looking birdwatchers disembarked to look forward to a cooling beer.

Other sightings - Little Grebe, Little Egret, Garganey, Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Snipe, Water Rail, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, Mediterranean Gull, Tawny Owl, Green Woodpecker, Great Black-backed Gull, Pied Wagtail, Jay, Rook.

Photos by Robert D

JENNY I

CAR TRIP TO THE GOYT VALLEY 14.05.2022

It was a fine sunny morning and our hopes were high for a good birding day as we set off from the Street Car Park and the possibility in mind of seeing Pied Flycatchers which regularly nest here every year. Its prime territory for this elusive bird as its favoured habitat is the Sessile Oak woodland found on the upper slopes of the reservoir.



Canada Geese & goslings

Walking out of the car park a Cuckoo was calling some way off on the far side of the valley always good to hear and one of the iconic sounds of a British spring lasting for a period of only about six weeks and sadly not so common as it was. It was the first for me this year. Walking alongside the reservoir Curlews and Chiffchaffs were calling whilst Swallows and House Martins were spotted overhead. On the reservoir itself Canada geese were present and Cormorants were soaking up the sunshine on the shoreline.

We stopped by the bridge spanning the side stream to the reservoir, sadly now clad in a galvanised fence, looking very much out of place in its surroundings but thought necessary to prevent access to the water. Its normally a good vantage point for birders and sure enough there were good views of a Common Sandpiper on the sandy bankside busily searching for food whilst displaying the characteristic bobbing of its tail.



Grey Heron

Passing by the Errwood car park Wrens and Song Thrushes were singing as we started uphill flanked on either side by the Oak woodland favoured by the Pied Flycatcher. A number of years ago nest boxes had been erected in the woodland specifically to attract the Flycatchers but now were beginning to look a little bit tired and weary.

We spent some time scanning and watching the nest boxes and the surrounding woodland but all was in vain. Not a single Pied Flycatcher was to be seen. And neither for the rest of the day. Was this because we were too early and the birds simply had not yet arrived? According to the Cheshire records the average early arrival date calculated overall ten year period from 2010 – 2019 is between the 9th to the 18th April so on that basis we were not too early. Maybe we were just plain unlucky.

Progressing through the woods all seemed very quiet and there was little bird activity one would normal associate with Spring and it was quite noticeable. Emerging at the top of the woods and into more open moorland a Kestrel and Buzzard were spotted and then quite unexpectedly a Red Kite came into view. Its a relatively scarce sighting in Cheshire but one that may become more frequently seen as the Kite extends its normal range.



Red Kite

Back down the hill again there was a sudden flurry of bird activity in one of the roadside lay-bys, Blue, Great and Coal Tits were busy along with Chaffinch all feeding on some bird food that had been put left for them. The star of all this was however a stunning male Siskin in bright yellow breeding plumage.



Siskin

Further on down the hill we crossed over the road to a footpath skirting the top of the woodland on one side and open heather clad heath on the other. This was very favourable habitat for our next sighting a Tree Pipit repeatedly parachuting from its high perch at the top of the trees. Close by we found a Redstart, seen in almost the same location when we visited as a group several years before and then followed by Blackcap displaying on the edge of the woodland.

Coming to the end of our day we drove up to the car park at the top of the Goyt for our last sighting, not a bird but a butterfly and an unusual one, a Green Hairstreak bring our count of butterflies up to five and including, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Green-veined White and Brimstone.

Reflecting back on the day by and large it was quite quiet in terms of overall bird activity and movement given the time of year and low foliage density making for good observation. However the quality and variety of birds seen was excellent. It was a good day.



Common Redstart

Photos by Robert D

STUART M

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

This year's Christmas lunch will be held on Saturday 10th December at the Spinner & Bergamot pub/restaurant in Comberbach at 12:30pm after a morning of birding at Marbury Country Park. A £10 deposit will be required.

The Christmas menu will be available shortly on the pub website at <https://www.spinnerandbergamot.co.uk/> . More details to follow later.

ENROLMENT

If you have not done so already please enrol online on the Guild website (not the Group website) at <https://www.guildlifelonglearning.org/>. If you have previously enrolled online you will need your username and password, new members will need to create an account first. The subscription price for the current year is £34.

NEWSLETTER CIRCULATION LIST

Your Committee encourages all members to sign up to receive your copy of the monthly newsletter by email. The advantage for the Guild is the requirement to print less paper copies, while for members the advantages are twofold – you receive your newsletter a few days before the meeting and you still receive your newsletter even if you can't come to the meeting. In addition we can keep you informed of any developments during the time between meetings.

New members can add their names and email addresses to the list by leaving a note at the desk at any meeting, or by emailing your details to Robert D.

Please remember to inform us if you change your email address!

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Still required – your articles for the newsletter. Tell us all about that birding holiday of a lifetime or that unusual visitor to your garden bird table. Send any interesting photos you have taken on our coach trips.

Deadline is the Friday before the meeting.