

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2023

TONIGHT'S MEETING (7th December)

We welcome tonight our very own member Dave Swann who is going to talk to us about one of his adventures.

Dave has been a photographer from his early twenties and has been birdwatching with Julie since 2003. He once went birdwatching in a pair of bright yellow shorts and an iridescent tee shirt much to the dismay of the serious twitchers all in camouflage gear. However that day he saw a scarlet-backed flowerpecker whereas the group in camo gear missed it!

Dave is also an active member on our Committee.

His talk tonight takes us to the Central American country of Belize which he and Julie visited in February this year.

The Christmas Buffet will take place from 8.30pm. Please bring your own plate, glasses will be provided.

There will be a small cover charge of £3 if you wish to attend the buffet, payment with the correct change please.

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

The next indoor meeting will take place on Thursday 4th January starting at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Bill Morton who will talk about "Frodsham Marshes".

Hope to see you all then.

LAPWING HALL LAKE WALK AND CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Final details regarding our day out on Saturday 16th December.

Can we meet at 9.30am at Lapwing Hall Pool. There are lay-bys for parking at the end of Lapwing Lane. Lapwing lane is the second road on the left about half a mile south of Chelford roundabout on the A535.

If you are unable to attend on the day please let Dave 07983392685 or myself Julie 07956668994 know so we can inform the Egerton Arms.

For those who finish the walk early or decide to go straight to the pub, the doors will be open from 11.30am. Tea and coffee will be available £2.50 per cup if required.

The balance outstanding per person or per couple can be paid in cash or card at the end, this will include a service charge and any additional item i.e. tea coffee or drinks.

For all those yet to commit come and join us, there is still time to book your place just let either of us know and thanks.

We look forward to seeing you all on the day.
Fingers crossed for good weather and great sightings.

JULIE AND DAVE

COACH TRIPS

The next coach trip is on Sunday 28th January to Far Ings and North Cave Wetlands reserves departing from the Guild at 8am.

These reserves lie on either side of the Humber Estuary, North Cave on the north side (although Inland) and Far Ings on the south side beside the Humber Bridge. Both are mainly wetland reserves so we should see a good variety of wildfowl and waders. Kingfishers and bittern are frequently seen at Far Ings. North Cave is surrounded by agricultural land so farmland species can usually be seen here as well. There are hides at both reserves.

North Cave is managed by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and entry is free. Far Ings is managed by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. No information about entry fee is supplied so may also be free. There are toilet and refreshment facilities at both sites.

Book your seat at the desk.

The February field trip is the weekend away to Minsmere.

JULIE & DAVE'S HUNGARIAN ADVENTURE – AUGUST 2023

Arriving from a damp and dreary UK, we arrived in Budapest to a balmy 28C. Our guide was Roy Adams who is a retired police wildlife crime officer from Devon and has lived in Hungary for several years. He has worked closely with the RSPB and the Forestry Commission and is well known for his love and study of the Hawfinch.

The drive to our hotel in Eger took almost 2 hours. We arrived as the sun was setting and just had time to have a walk around the gardens and were very lucky to spot a Long-eared Owl sat on a branch.

After observing the owl, we retired for the evening.



Long-eared Owl



Black Woodpecker

The following morning Roy took us to a nearby woodland where we saw several varieties of woodpecker, including Lesser Spotted, Middle Spotted, Grey Headed, and the very large Black Woodpecker which is almost the size of a Crow. It was a wonderful sight to see. Also seen were Wood Warblers, Hawfinch and a solitary Golden Oriole.



Whiskered Terns

After a couple of hours we returned to our hotel for a well earned breakfast. Now fully recharged, we set off for the day to the local fish ponds where we saw White Storks, Pygmy Cormorant, Yellow-legged and Caspian Gulls, White-tailed Eagles and Whiskered Terns having a squabble.

As we walked along the paths, also noted in the bushes were Common Redstart, Icterine Warblers, juvenile Penduline Tit and more Hawfinches.

As the day progressed and the temperature started to rise, we headed to local farmland where we saw Red-backed Shrike (these are now extremely rare as breeding birds in the UK, but common and widespread in Hungary). Also seen were Stonechat, Northern

Wheatear, Tree Sparrows and Common Buzzard. We returned to our hotel for dinner after a very productive day of bird watching, the highlight of the day being the Woodpeckers.



Crested Lark



Montagu's Harrier

The itinerary for the next few days was similar to the first day, but also seen were Crested Lark, Whinchat, Wryneck, Black Redstart, Saker Falcon, and dozens of Kestrels. Over 50 European Bee Eaters sat on a pylon and a beautiful Montagu's Harrier flew overhead and I was lucky enough to photograph it. Julie and myself had never seen one before, so it was a wonderful sighting.

The next morning Roy took us to his village where we saw Green Woodpecker, Golden Oriole, Spotted Flycatcher, Common Nightingale, Song Thrush, European Serin and a Yellowhammer. Overall a good morning.

We then left the village and travelled to Lake Tisza, the largest artificial lake in Hungary.

Wildfowl birds were a-plenty on the lake, these being Bar-headed Goose, Teal, Mallard, Garganey, Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Dabchick, Black-crowned Night Heron and Squacco Heron.



Black-crowned Night Heron

After a fabulous days birding, we visited Hungary's famous wine valley to sample the local delights!!!

The next morning we travel to the Hortobagy National Park. This is one of Europe's best birding locations. The first bird we spotted was a Little Crane. Roy hadn't seen one for years so was well chuffed. Other birds seen were Glossy Ibis, Black Stork, Common Crane, Black-winged Stilt, Red Knot, Jack Snipe, Wood Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank.

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Also present were numerous varieties of raptors including Marsh Harrier, Northern Goshawk, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Honey Buzzard.

It had been a long day but worth it.

On our final morning, we headed to a nearby woodland where we saw Meadow Pipit, Blackcap, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Jay and a Common Cuckoo.



Honey Buzzard

Overall a wonderful week and a great time to visit with an excellent tour guide.

We highly recommend this tour – see www.HungarianBirdTours.com

JULIE & DAVE

WILMSLOW GUILD BIRD GROUP FIELD TRIP TO ATTENBOROUGH 19.11.23

As usual, our coach and driver Mustafa were waiting for us to leave at 8am. A dull morning with a fine drizzle.

Attenborough Nature Reserve was established in 1966 in Nottinghamshire and opened by Sir David Attenborough. It is cited as one of the best places in the UK to see Kingfisher and home to rare wildlife including Bittern and Otters. The nature reserve is a wet grassland area and is a mosaic of habitat for number of breeding birds and a variety of other species. We had information that there was a footpath diversion due to a footbridge repair.

Arriving at 10.30am the group gradually separated out to walk along Barton Lane. Cetti's Warbler was heard and later seen. Across the water looking from the bridge two Great Crested Grebes, Tufted ducks, Mute swans, Cormorant, a selection of gulls, Canada Geese, and Mallards were spotted along with the elegant Gadwall. Woodpigeon, Long-tailed Tits and Blue Tits were busy in the bushes feeding on the red berries and a Robin sat on a rock unconcerned by the eager visitors.



Great Crested Grebe

Continuing along the path alongside the meadows the church bells rang out, a lovely sound on a Sunday morning. A Crow pecked for breakfast and a couple of Greylag

Geese flew over, a flock of Lapwing followed later. Two Fieldfares were spotted in the far distance on top of a leafless tree, a good sighting.



Wigeon

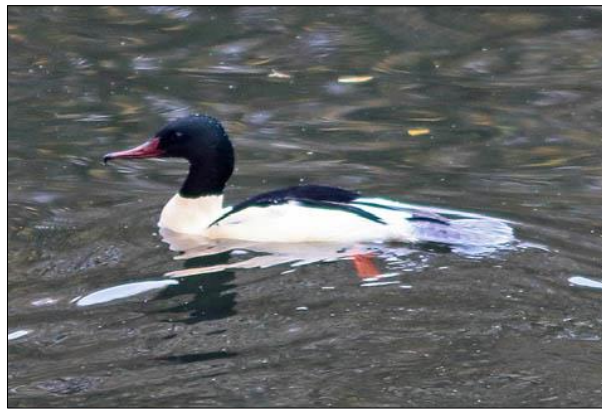
Over Church pond Lapwing were wheeling and tumbling to land and wander on an island. Cormorants were there on the water, along with Mute Swans, Moorhen, Coot, Widgeon, Teal, some Little Grebes were diving.

Heading towards Tower hide a Little Egret was spotted sitting in a tree and a mixed flock of Redwing and Fieldfare flew over. Sharp eyes Hilary found two Stock Doves perched together in a tree, then a Goosander flew overhead. Goldfinch,

Long-tailed Tits, Great Tit and Goldfinch were noted as we passed alongside Wheatear Field.



Goosander (female)



Goosander (male)

Following a muddy footpath, we found the way to Tower hide to look over Clifton pond. Shovelers, Lesser black-backed gulls, Tufted Ducks, Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls and a Cormorant drying his wings were gathered on this former gravel pit. Back to the muddy path to the safety of the main route. Two more Stock Doves in the field, Great Tit, and male and female Chaffinch and a Redwing feasting on berries added to our growing list.



Shoveler

Onwards to Kingfisher hide. Here we came across Dave finding it difficult to photograph Goldeneye. This handsome diving duck with his distinctive pied plumage was showing well to our delight, regularly diving for lunch, only to bob up in the distance, so we had to relocate him.



Pochard

Male and female Shoveler were busy feeding along with Coots, Gadwall, Wigeon, and Pochard with his striking rich red head.

Following the footpath alongside the fast flowing and swollen river Trent, Greylag Geese were feeding in the fields beyond, with Canada Geese mixed in with the flock. The weather had now turned to be damp and dull. Passing Church pond two pairs of male and female Goosanders were noted. A Goldcrest was later reported to be seen in a nearby bush.

After a warming cup of tea in the café we went to the Sand Martin hide, new for 2014, but nothing to report on here, except for a final sighting of Pied Wagtail running along the Nature Centre's café balcony pecking at fallen crumbs.

Another interesting and enjoyable field trip. The site is very accessible and well maintained, it is quite some time since we last visited.

Photos by Dave S & Robert D

JENNY

PARAKEETS

If you live or work in the south Manchester area, say in Sale, Didsbury or Cheadle, you will probably have been aware for many years that parakeets can be seen here. These are rose-ringed parakeets (also known as ring-necked parakeets). The numbers here are still fairly low, certainly nothing like in their UK stronghold of London, where flocks of over 1000 strong come together to roost in the evenings.



In recent years the parakeets have been gradually spreading south out of Manchester into Cheshire. Over the last 5 years or so Group members living in Wilmslow have been reporting parakeets in the garden, or seen them flying around, especially around the Carrs area.

I live in Macclesfield and I had never seen or heard of parakeets in the town... that is until early last month. I had just gone through to the kitchen to get lunch ready and as usual I glanced out of the window to look at the bird feeders in the garden. To my surprise there was a large green bird sitting on one of the feeders. With its large red beak and long tail it certainly wasn't a green woodpecker – it was a rose-ringed parakeet! Definitely a first for the garden list.



Lunch was on hold while I got the camera out and rattled off a few shots. The bird was checking out the feeders (I have mixed seed, sunflower hearts and peanuts) but it didn't actually try to feed from any of them, apart from hanging on the peanut feeder for a few seconds. Its large beak wouldn't have fitted into the feeder port of the seed feeders and it was disturbed by a squirrel before it could try the peanuts.

After an absence of a couple of weeks a parakeet, presumably the same bird, was back again several times last week during the recent cold spell. It liked to sit in the apple tree



for a while watching the feeders or preening. This time it did try to poke its head in to the seed feeders but I don't think it got anything. It spent most time on the peanuts where it may have managed to extract a few morsels.

I have only seen a single bird in the garden, but a few days after my sighting we had a report and a photo of 4 parakeets in his garden in Chelford from group member Stephen Conquer. Yet more evidence that the parakeets are spreading south in the area. If you are out

on the morning walk or at the Christmas lunch in Chelford on the 16th be sure to look out and listen for parakeets!

ROBERT D

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.