

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2023

TONIGHT'S MEETING (9th February)

Tonight we welcome the return of Brian Anderson with a talk entitled "Feathers and Wings".

A photographer, educator and adventurer based on the Wirral, Brian is afflicted with wanderlust. This love of, and need to travel, has taken him to over 60 nations and territories around the world.

Please welcome Brian for what I am sure will be a very entertaining evening.

COACH TRIPS

Our February coach trip is the weekend away to Somerset Levels (see next item).

After that the next coach trip is on Sunday 12th March to Potteric Carr reserve in South Yorkshire, departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Potteric Carr near Doncaster is the flagship reserve run by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. It is a mixed reserve of 200 hectares with pools and woodland and several hides. The site is fabulous for birdwatching, with marsh and water birds being particularly numerous. Over 230 species of birds have been recorded and 102 species have bred, with over 65 species breeding each year. The site holds breeding marsh harriers and bitterns (20% of Yorkshire's total).

The reserve has a new Visitor Centre with a shop and tearoom with lakeside views. There is an admission charge of £5 for adults, £4 for concessions, and free to members of the Wildlife Trusts.

We last visited this reserve in April 2017.

Please book your place on this trip at tonight's meeting since it takes place before our March indoor meeting.

SOMERSET LEVELS 24 – 26 FEBRUARY 2023 Pre-trip IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Our trip is only a few weeks way now and below is some important pre-trip information.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS for the whole weekend

Barbara 07980 661 503

Steve 07766 865 315

The coach will leave promptly at **7.30 am on FRIDAY 24 February** from the usual pick-up place on the corner of Bourne Street and Altrincham Road.

Please ensure you arrive by 7.15 am so that all luggage can be loaded before departure.

Cars can be parked at the **back of the Guild** for the weekend. Please ensure that you don't park on the yellow-hatched lines.

We will be stopping at Slimbridge WWT for about 5 hours on the way, so please remember to bring your binoculars/ telescopes etc and packed lunch on to the coach with you plus your **WWT and RSPB membership card**.

An additional requirement is an **up to date ICE form** to be carried in your rucksack. I will have spare forms with me if required.

There will be 28 members on the coach so that gives almost everyone a double seat. If you have a spare seat next to you please offer to take an extra rucksack or bag.

Breakfast will be at 8.00 am each morning and dinner at 7.30 pm.

Finally, isn't it just great to be getting out and about again! Let's hope the Somerset Levels have dried out and we have a great birding weekend ahead.

BARBARA P

CAR TRIP TO MARBURY COUNTRY PARK – SATURDAY 10th DECEMBER 2022

Our car trip to Marbury Country Park turned out to be a memorable event for those who managed to get there. We were at the beginning of the December cold snap. It had snowed quite heavily overnight and it remained freezing on the morning leading to some tricky driving conditions on the roads. About 7 or 8 brave adventurers made it to the car park and I am sure we all had a few hairy moments on the ice during the journey.



Redwing

Once there, the snow provided an amazing backdrop for the morning's birding and provided a wonderful opportunity to practice photography in the snow.

We first had a look around the arboretum area. There were redwings and fieldfares flying about overhead but one of the first birds we got a good look at was a nice male siskin sitting at the top of a tree near the Ranger Office. Almost immediately afterwards a redwing landed in one of the nearby yew trees to give an excellent view.

We then moved down to the bird hide overlooking the Coward reedbed at the end of Budworth Mere. This is a new hide to replace the previous one that had been burned down by the local vandals earlier in the year. It retained the same basic design but was located slightly further to the left. Unfortunately the bird table had not been replaced. I could see the old one lying half in the water at the foot of the bank. I don't know if that was the work of the vandals as well. However it did mean that there was no bird food on offer for the local birds.



Water Rail

Nevertheless we had some good sightings. Stars of the show undoubtedly were the water rails with the kingfishers a very close second. There were at least 2, maybe 3, water rails moving in and out of the reedbed to our immediate left. The best view was when one came closer and walked along a log lying in the water just below the hide. There were moorhens in the area as well so this was a good opportunity to take note of the differences. Two kingfishers then emerged from a bush behind the water

rails and flew off down Budworth Mere in a dazzling flash of azure blue. That made the morning all worthwhile.



Despite the lack of food there were a few small birds in the area. Blue tits and great tits were around and a friendly robin kept an eye on us while we were having a welcome coffee break, no doubt hoping to scavenge some crumbs. A female blackbird had a similar idea. We even briefly had a nuthatch pass through

Budworth Mere was relatively ice free so there a number of birds out on the water. There was a large flock of about a dozen goosanders, males and females, way out in the middle. There were also some mallards and tufted ducks, and several great crested grebes looking rather plain in their drab winter plumage.

Over on the grassy field behind the spit there was a large flock of Canada geese which also contained a small number of greylags. On the spit area were a large number of gulls, mostly black-headed gulls, several lesser black-backed gulls and maybe a common gull or two. Great cormorants were also present.



Great Crested Grebe

So now it was time to make our way to the Spinner & Bergamot pub in Comberbach for our Christmas lunch. By now the temperature had risen somewhat and there was a very wet sleety rain falling gently which helped clear the snow from the roads. Several other members had taken advantage of the improving conditions and managed to join us at the venue. In all about 16 members enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch.

Many thanks to Julie and Dave for organising the morning out and the lunch, and a big thank you to all the members who braved the elements to attend.



Photos by Robert D and Michael T

ROBERT D

COACH TRIP TO FAIRBURN INGS ON SUNDAY 22nd JANUARY 2023

An 8am start with a glorious sunrise, various shades of pink, finally turning into a bright golden sun, clear skies.



Bullfinch

En route Wood Pigeons flying over rooftops were noted along with a couple of Carrion Crows. A Buzzard sat on the top of a tree warming in the early morning sun. Kestrel hovered overhead and Magpies in the fields. We had a pleasant journey as we admired the winter landscape.

Arriving at 10am the shutters were down at the RSPB information centre, soon opened by enthusiastic volunteer staff. First stop to the bird feeders to record Blue tit, Great Tit, Dunnock and Blackbird.

Maps in hand some chose the red route along the river and to the hides, others opted for the green route, the Roy Taylor green path, but first to walk along the purple route. Here a Bullfinch skulked in the hedges.



View from the Pickup Hide

Pickup hide – A lovely winter landscape, Highland cattle grazing in the distance. Cormorants flew over. More feeders with Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Great Tit and the elusive Willow Tit. A Buzzard sat on a pylon, another on top of a tree. Continuing along the path we heard tapping, a Woodpecker?. No, a Great Tit enlarging the entrance hole of a bird box. Stopping at the screen feeding station Mallard, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Robin were all enjoying breakfast. Following the path, we admired the icy grasses, reeds, and

shrubs, while a fine low mist gave a ghostly look to the area.

Going up the hill to join the green route Lapwing flew over, a flock of Jacob sheep grazed happily on the grasses. Looking across the flash a large group of Black-headed Gulls gathered on the frozen water, amongst them Tufted Ducks. Up the hill a little further to an embankment with spectacular views of the flashes, and fields on either side.

We looked across the second flash where two Mute Swans were quietly still, many Tufted Ducks, Coots, Black Headed Gulls were sitting on a frozen island. Pochard with his rich red head, further out where the ice had melted added to our list. Then we saw Robert with his 'scope, looking through it we saw two Common Gulls with their distinctive yellow/green legs. Without the 'scope we saw another Common Gull standing

on the edge of the frozen water. Nearer to us a Little Grebe was diving for small fish and insects. Four Goosanders were in the distance. Bearded Tit had been seen in this reedy area but no luck today. Another Buzzard in the far distance to the right of the embankment sat viewing the scene. Also down on the fields were Canada Geese, Greylag Geese and Lapwings. Beyond these even further across the fields, we spotted some waders by the water's edge but could not ID them.

Leaving the Roy Taylor trail we heard Green Woodpecker had been spotted, we waited a while, eyes straining, but again no luck. Back on the red trail we called in at Bob Dickens hide.

Grey Heron, distant Mute Swans, many Black-headed Gulls, a Lesser Black-backed, several Greater Black-backed Gulls, Mallards, Coots, Shoveler, Pochard, and few Teal all added to our final tally of the day. A call went up for Red Kite but I missed it.

Suddenly a fox was spotted on the icy flash, walking across toward what we thought may be a duck. He passed the "duck" (which turned out to be a log with reflection, we think) he had a sniff around then wandered back to the bank. An astonishing sight.



Photos by Robert D

JENNY I



Morning frost at Fairburn Ings

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM is usually held at the start of our final indoor meeting of the season in April. However this year our final indoor meeting has been moved to the beginning of May due to Easter in April. Since we appreciate that many members may be planning holidays from May onwards we have decided to bring the AGM forward to the March meeting.

Therefore this year our AGM will be held on Thursday 16th March, starting at 7:15pm.

The AGM is your opportunity to express any comments (or complaints) on the way that the Group is run and to make suggestions.

The Committee are always keen to attract new members onto the Committee. We need new members to bring fresh ideas to the running of the Group. Being a Committee member is not a difficult task; we only meet for a couple of hours in the evening about 3 times a year. We have vacancies on the Committee.

Send nominations, with proposer and seconder, to the email address at the end of the newsletter, preferably in advance of the meeting. Similarly, any motions for discussion at the AGM should be sent to the same email address.

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

The March meeting will be held on Thursday 16th March, when our speaker will be John Gardner with a talk entitled "Bird Life at Home".

Before that we will have our Annual General Meeting. **The AGM will start at 7:15pm.**

Hope to see you all then.

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.