

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2024

TONIGHT'S MEETING (3rd October)

Tonight we welcome the return of Jeff Clark who will tell us "Why They Flock".

Jeff has been a frequent visitor to the Guild in recent years and is a popular speaker on a wide range of subjects related to the natural environment. All his talks are liberally sprinkled with humour and anecdotes that guarantees a memorable night for the audience.

Jeff last visited us in April 2022.

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

COACH TRIPS

Our first coach trip of the season is on Sunday 20th October to Spurn nature reserve on the Yorkshire coast, departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Spurn is often the destination for our first coach trip since Spurn has proved to be a very successful destination over the years. This reserve can be exceptionally good at this time of year – just about anything can turn up here while migration is in full swing. A good variety of seabirds, waders and wildfowl can be found on the coast and pools, while migrating passerines can be found on the extensive scrub and bush area. There is an excellent Visitor Centre on site with toilets and a café available.

The next coach trip after that is on Sunday 24th November to Martin Mere and Lunt Meadows departing from the Guild at 8am.

Book your seat for both trips at the desk.

COACH TRIP TO BEMPTON & FLAMBOROUGH – 12th MAY 2024

Our final trip of the season saw 23 members heading off to the coast on a warm but cloudy day but hopefully the sun would come out at some point.



Jackdaw

We stopped on route at a service station and noted a robin nearby plus a Blackcap singing in the nearby tree.

On the way we spotted in the fields and ponds Canada Geese, Grey Partridge, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Mallard, Moorhen and Buzzards flying.

Just over an hour late due to an accident, we arrived at Bempton and some members were excited, as it was their first visit to the area. Right on cue the sun came out, a good omen for the day ahead.



Northern Gannet

After a short introduction by one of the staff, we made our way to the cliffs via the meadow and here we saw Corn Bunting, Whitethroat, Skylark and a Kestrel hovering looking for its next meal. Also present were Swallows and Sand Martins flying overhead.

At the cliffs, we spotted Rock Doves perched on a ledge, Magpies and Jackdaws plus a couple of Puffins. Also present in the sea and on the cliffs were Northern Gannets, Kittiwakes,

Razorbills, Guillemots, Lesser & Greater Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls and a Fulmar. It was nice to see Gannets pairing up and were collecting grass and plant material for their nests.



Northern Gannet

In the bushes away from the cliffs, Chiffchaffs were heard singing as well as a Cetti's Warbler, plus also seen were Wren, Blackbird, Stonechat, Whitethroat, Blue & Great Tit, Blackcap and some people even saw a Sparrowhawk hunting.

Before we left, we were informed that a Spotted Flycatcher was seen in some bushes nearby, so we all went hunting for it and luckily we found it.

After a short journey, we arrived at Flamborough and the place was heaving with visitors. As we disembarked the coach, a Raven was seen very close by plus a couple of Pied Wagtails. A good start to the afternoon and hopefully more sightings to come.

After a short walk past the lighthouse, we saw two Barn Owls over the gorse bushes and we stood there in awe just watching them hunt. This was even more spectacular, as it was mid afternoon.

At the cliffs the seabirds were the same at Bempton with the addition of Shag, Oystercatcher and Cormorant while a Meadow Pipit was seen flitting between bushes nearby.

A Peregrine Falcon was seen by a few members, but unfortunately most of us missed it.



Barn Owl

As the day progressed, we walked along the cliff tops and saw numerous seals basking in the sunshine and we took time out to watch them.

The day was coming to an end and we slowly made our way back to the coach, keeping a look out for further sightings along the way. We spotted the Ice Cream van, which most of the party headed for. After sitting in the sunshine with our ice creams and discussing the days events, it was a perfect end to what had been great day.

Photos by Dave S

DAVE S

CAR TRIP TO TITTESWORTH RESERVOIR – 15th June 2024

Tittesworth Water is a large reservoir in the Staffordshire Moorlands and is managed by the Severn Trent Water. The area comprises of not only the large reservoir itself but also the water catchment area made up of a mixture of different habitats, Willow scrub, mixed woodland, open pastureland and established wildflower meadows. It is situated with the town of Leek to the south and sheltered by the Roaches escarpment to the north and straddles the Peak District Park boundary.

The site is well served with several walking routes of varying length and a Visitor centre.

This was the Group's last trip of the 2023/24 birdwatching season, and our destination was a new site for some of the ten members who met in the visitor centres car park at 9.00am. The days preceding our visit had been a long period of very wet weather so we were very pleased to arrive in with sunshine. This was however to soon change.



Canada Geese & Goslings

Leaving the car park there were Rabbits everywhere as we followed the edge of the water to the first of the bird hides situated at the north end of the water. A Song Thrush was singing loudly and there were Greenfinches present in the trees. We stopped to scan the reservoir and saw a Great Crested Grebe looking very elegant and graceful with its slender neck and dagger like bill, busy diving for fish. Matching in grace a solitary Common Tern was flying overhead. A very beautiful bird and a delight to watch with plunging and swooping flight pattern it came close to the possible to make out the black tip of the

shoreline we were watching from. It was just red bill. Whilst very similar to the Arctic Tern they can be distinguished by the dark tips to the primary feathers forming a wedge shape to the wings. The Arctic Tern also has no black tip to the bill and noticeably shorter legs especially when the two species are seen together on the ground.



Canada Geese & Goslings

We followed a short path leading down to the hide and noticing several corrugated with several iron sheets beside the path and on lifting the first them found plenty of evidence of small mammal activity. Caches of seeds, small perfectly formed nests, well-trod runs and an empty hazelnut shell. When we lifted the second sheet we disturbed a small vole which speedily shot off into the long grass.



Oystercatchers

We made our way down to the small hide overlooking the shallow upper end of the reservoir with a few small islands. Canada Geese, Mallard and Cormorants were resting on the island with a Grey Heron on the shoreline. Noticing movement on the edge of the nearest island we saw a Common Sandpiper actively searching for food.

Retracing our steps back to the visitor's centre there were Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers and Wrens as we followed one of the well-marked trails leading along the edge of the water and along one boundary of an established flower meadow. The meadow was full of colour with Yellow Rattle, Buttercups and many Purple Orchids growing along a range of grasses Crested dogs' tail, Timothy, Annual and Perennial Ryegrass also in full flower.

Making our way through some thick vegetation made very lush by the prolonged wet weather we heard a Garden Warbler singing loudly but not to be seen. Overhead there was a group of Lesser Black backed Gulls whilst Swallows and House Martins were hawking for insect over the water.



Grey Heron

By this time our luck with the weather had begun to run out, blue sky turned to grey and a steady persistent rain meant waterproofs came out and those with them also umbrellas to be unfurled. With the rain dampening the bird activity we wound our way back to the shelter, warmth and snacks to be found at the visitors centre.

Amongst the other birds spotted during the morning included Chaffinch, Nuthatch, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Oystercatcher, Dunnock, Wood Pigeon, Starling, Blue Tits and Great Tits.

The bird of the day for me.....it has to be the Common Tern, such a delight to watch its plunging and swooping graceful flight.

Photos by Michael T

STUART M

WEEKEND AWAY 2025 – GALLOWAY – FINAL CALL

A reminder to book for our popular Weekend Away which this season will take place on Friday 21 to Sunday 23 February 2025.

If you haven't booked your place yet, please note final bookings will be taken at our meeting on 3 October.

For anyone who has paid a deposit, the balance will be due at our October meeting. Don't forget to add £2.75 to cover the Guild's charges.

Full details and a booking form are in the September newsletter or available at the meeting. Please come and have a chat with me or Michael. If you can't come to the meeting or can't wait to book, please call or message me.

The weekend is always a highlight of our calendar so we really hope you can join us.

Happy birding.

JANET AND MICHAEL

WINTER GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

As many of you know, the group carries out a winter garden bird survey. The main survey this season runs from 10 November to 23 March, but you can start in October to familiarise yourself with the process if you wish. Every week we note the birds we see in the garden. If you want you can also count the number of each species you see at any one time.

This year I have 16 members participating and would like to widen the field.

If you are interested please see me at the next meeting.

If you are unable to attend the next meeting I can email details to you.

BARBARA P

FESTIVE LUNCH

Dave will be at the table at the meeting on Thursday to hand out festive lunch menus.

All those already committed please take a copy and bring back at the meeting in November with your choices.

We still have availability so if you are interested just let Dave know with a £5 deposit.

We look forward to seeing you all on the day and hopefully excellent bird sightings at Dunham Massey followed by a wonderful Christmas lunch.

More details to follow

JULIE

NEXT MEETING

The next indoor meeting will be on Thursday 7th November at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Mike Roberts with a talk entitled "Ardnamurchan – Almost an Island".

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.