

# BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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## NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2024

### TONIGHT'S MEETING (5th September)

A warm welcome to members old and new as we begin our 57th season of the Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group. We enjoyed a very successful season over the last year in our new Thursday evening time slot and hopefully we can build on that this season.

As always your Committee has organised a full programme of indoor and outdoor meetings to keep us entertained throughout the year until next summer.

For our first speaker of the new season we welcome the return of Paul Hobson who will give a talk entitled "The Peak District".

Paul started photography about 40 years ago with a Pentax SLR using slide film. This seems a bit like the Stone Age today but it did teach him a lot about how to operate a camera well, there was no checking on the back screen then!

Paul has won a number of prestigious international awards. He has been highly commended in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2008), a category winner and highly commended in European Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2010 + 14) and Festival de l'Oiseau et de la Nature (voted the public's favourite image in 2013) and has had numerous images featured in British Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2009-14). Paul has visited us on several previous occasions, most recently in October 2022.

I am sure that we will all enjoy this evening's talk and photographs.

Please join me in welcoming Paul 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.

## **WEEKEND AWAY 2025 – GALLOWAY**

For our 2025 weekend away we have planned a visit to Galloway in South Western Scotland.

**Save the date: Friday 21 to Sunday 23 February 2025**

The Crown Hotel in Newton Stewart has been booked for our stay with some additional rooms at a nearby hotel should that be necessary. We will eat our meals together in the Crown Hotel.

The weekend will include:

Coach transport for the weekend from Wilmslow  
Accommodation at your allotted hotel  
Breakfast at the Crown Hotel  
2 course evening meal at the Crown Hotel – optional 3rd course payable directly to the hotel.

### **Cost:**

Rooms for single occupancy £360.00 per person  
Rooms to share (double or twin) £280.00 per person

Packed lunches - £10 per day.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

Bookings and payments will be taken at our Thursday evening Birds meetings on

5 September and 3 October 2024.

## See the booking form for payment details

As you know the itinerary has to be flexible but the aim is to include:

Caerlaverock WWT  
Loch Ryan and the Mull of Galloway  
Birding around the local hot spots

**As the saying goes ... BOOK EARLY!!**

### COACH TRIP TO RUTLAND WATER – 28 APRIL 2024

It was 2018 when we last visited Rutland and despite an awful weather forecast for the day, our group was as usual upbeat and anticipating another good days birding.

Heading south in the rain it soon became obvious that there had been very heavy rainfall in the previous 24 – 36 hours. We drove through several flooded roads, ditches were brimming and streams and rivers overflowing.

Approaching Melton Mowbray our driver decided to take the scenic route on narrow winding roads rather than the most direct one. We rounded a bend to find our way blocked due to a serious accident (we were the last vehicle through before the police closed the road). The unfortunate driver had aquaplaned on a bend, lost control and ploughed into a tree. Several police cars, a couple of ambulances and paramedics responding to the call were in attendance. The top of the car had to be cut away to enable the lady driver to be carefully extracted. Once stretchered into the ambulance, she was stabilised and finally driven away slowly to hospital. Everyone was wishing her well and hoping for her complete recovery.

As a consequence we were held up for almost an hour and didn't arrive at Rutland until mid-day. Once there, we had to wade through standing water to reach the visitor centre. It was no surprise at all to be informed that Lyndon VC and all the hides there were inaccessible due to flooding. Plan B (or was it C?) was quickly decided upon and we concentrated on the 12 hides to the north of the main visitor centre, all of which had good access. These hides overlooked various lagoons around Rutland Water.

From the large viewing area at the visitor centre we had extensive views over Lagoon 1 and the list



Egyptian Goose



Little Egret

quickly grew. Canada, Greylag and a lone Egyptian Goose were on the water with Mute Swans, Great Crested Grebe and raucous Black-headed Gulls. In the air a Common Tern was obvious with its different flight pattern.

Whilst walking to our first hide, on the path was a Song Thrush and in a nearby flooded field were a Little Egret and Pied Wagtail. The main group soon split up into smaller groups as we spread out between the hides. By now the rain had eased but there were still plenty of rain bearing clouds around.

Our first stop was Redshank Hide where we added Tufted Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Coot, Moorhen and one Oystercatcher. We also had great views of 30 – 40 Sand Martins flying in and out of the concrete nesting wall. Grebe Hide gave more of the same and the only new additions were Reed Bunting and Blackbird.



Red Kite



Black Tern

From Osprey Hide we watched a pair of Blackcaps foraging through the bushes with a Great Tit. By now word filtered through that an Osprey had been seen by a few members so we knew that there was at least one around.

We stayed a good half hour in Sandpiper Hide watching the Shelduck, Teal and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Lagoon 4. On a far sand bank we were lucky enough to find a group of 8 Whimbrel; what a sight that was when they all took to the wing and flew away towards the horizon. We then had our first sighting of a Red Kite as it flew low over the hide. WOW!

Our next port of call was Bittern Hide and what a treat was in store. There were two Black Terns diving and wheeling around directly in front of us. It was quite mesmerising. A Marsh Harrier slowly flapped past and not to be outdone, a couple of Grey Herons flew into the nearby reeds. Imagine our amazement when out popped a Cetti's closely followed by a Reed Warbler.

More group members were reporting Osprey sightings but it was proving to be an elusive one for our small group. We crossed back to Lagoon 4 and Plover Hide. There on a sand spit we saw 3 Dunlin, a Common Ringed Plover and watched another display by a Red Kite.



Common Ringed Plover



Osprey

Our last stop of the day was Shoveler Hide, which lived up to its name and gave us excellent views of a pair of Shovelers busily feeding. Suddenly, in the distance, a bird of prey appeared. Could it be our bogey bird? Yes, it was and we couldn't stop smiling. An Osprey at last, albeit somewhat far away. But the white breast was obvious. It was now 4.05 and just time to leave the hide and walk back to the visitor centre and coach. In one field as we strolled back, we saw a lovely swathe of gold and purple, Marsh Marigolds and Marsh Fritillary gleaming in the sunshine.

Our journey home was uneventful, as we appreciated the lovely views over the countryside bathed in the late afternoon sun.

The group as a whole saw 71 birds including a good selection of summer visitors. We recorded Arctic, Common and Black Terns and for the warblers Sedge, Cetti's, Reed, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Blackcap.

It was generally agreed that it had been another great day's birding.

*Photos by Robert D (not necessarily at Rutland!)*

**BARBARA P**

### **CAR TRIP TO GOYT VALLEY – 25 MAY 2024**

On a spring bank holiday morning, ten of our group made an early start for a walk along the Goyt Valley. After the rain of the previous few days, we considered ourselves very fortunate to have blue skies. Brian led our group along the road and we looked out for owls which had been spotted recently but to no avail. We were hearing lots of birds: chiffchaff, blackcap and a distant pheasant but frustratingly few sightings. As the water of the reservoir came into view we saw plenty of Canada geese and mallard too with their stunning colours; quite underrated I think. There was also an ethereal call from a curlew high on the tops of the hills. Michael and I were treated to a fly-past by a curlew as we left the valley later.



Grey Wagtail

A little further along and we became very excited to spot a bird on the top of a distant dead tree. What could it be? It was quite large, and still, very still ... then we realised it

was just the top of the dead tree in a shape designed to torment the bird spotter. And even worse, we fell for its trick on our last visit too! The decoy bird!

Moving along the reservoir, we watched a cormorant diving and eventually, having had his fill, he surfaced and climbed onto a branch to dry himself. It looked like a juvenile and had clearly been ringed.

Taking the higher path we started to see a few more birds. Two chiffchaff chased each other through the trees, a blackbird busied himself and willow warblers were seen, all to the accompaniment of a song thrush. Brian spotted a tree pipit high up in a distant tree and through his scope was able to give us all a fabulous view. What a loud song from such a small bird.



Willow Warbler



Mistle Thrush

Dropping to the lower path a mistle thrush sang from a tree and we saw goldcrests and coal tits. All eyes were now peeled for pied flycatcher which were known to be in this area. Despite some of us taking the lower path and Barbara and Tina returning to take the high road, thus covering all views, we were disappointed to fail in our mission.

trees and soaring away up into the blue sky.

By now we were becoming peckish and the group divided a little as some headed off more quickly to the picnic spot. Michael and I were dawdling, distracted by a sound when we were rewarded by a red kite appearing from the



Pied Flycatcher

It was lovely to sit in the sun to eat our picnic and watch a dipper in the stream even if a little distant. We were also treated to a close view of a grey wagtail showing his beautiful colours from a perch at the top of a tree.

Retracing our path, we heard the distinct call of a cuckoo quite close but no sighting. We compensated ourselves with three buzzards rising on thermals so effortlessly.

Our hopes were raised as we reached a nesting box and tried again to see a pied flycatcher. Nothing ... until suddenly Tina and I said together 'there's a face'. Sure enough from the bird box hole, a bird checked the area and then the female hopped out

onto a branch and perched for a while to give us all a fabulous view. A few minutes later, dad arrived with a juicy caterpillar. We stayed for a few more moments then moved on so we didn't disturb them, but what a treat after our efforts.

In the trees Annette spotted a nuthatch and Michael saw a siskin and on the fields across the reservoir we realised there was a huge flock of Canada geese complete with their goslings everywhere grazing. The more we looked, the more we saw!

By the time we returned to our cars, everyone agreed what a fabulous morning we had enjoyed. However, we had still only heard a redstart ... but we must leave something to ensure a return visit.



Spotted Flycatcher

Barbara and Tina later reported they travelled home via Derbyshire Bridge where they added red grouse and raven to their list.

An excellent outing and a total of 35 species ... and one decoy bird!!

*Photos by Michael T*

**JANET T**



Group birding in the Goyt Valley

## **CHRISTMAS WALK AND LUNCH**

This year we will be taking our walk around Dunham Massey and our festive lunch will be at the Axe and Cleaver at 12.00 on Saturday 7th December. Parking will be provided and will be free.

Unfortunately there has been a change of date, we are no longer going on the 14th December and have had to bring it forward by a week.

Last year's event was very successful with a good day weather-wise, good bird sightings and a lovely meal at the Egerton Arms with excellent company. We hope you can make this date and we look forward to seeing you on the day, it's a great way to spend the day with birds, good company and good food.

Further details to follow.

Dave will be at the desk at the first meeting. If anyone is interested, please leave your name with him and we will be in touch. The Axe and Cleaver want just £5 deposit per person to secure the booking. Please bring the money with you on Thursday to reserve your place.

We are looking forward to the start of what will be hopefully a great year for all us birders and to catch up with you all

**JULIE AND DAVE**

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next indoor meeting will be on Thursday 3rd October at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Jeff Clarke who will tell us "Why They Flock".

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.