

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2025

TONIGHT'S MEETING (9th January)

A very Happy New Year to all our members and welcome to our first meeting of 2025. Let's hope this is a good year for birding.

Tonight we welcome Chris Galvin who will talk about "Bee-eaters and Kingfishers".

Chris has been passionate about wildlife since a very early age and a serious birder since his early teens. He has travelled widely through Europe, Asia and Africa in search of some of the greatest wildlife experiences on the planet. His most recent highlight was being the only person other than the skipper on a pelagic out of Kaikōura, New Zealand.

Chris has previously co-led birding trips in Sweden, Netherlands & USA and at some of the large birding festivals such as Space Coast in Florida, Rio Grande Valley in Texas and pelagic trips off the coast of San Diego, California. He has also led specialist photographic safaris to Kenya in search of Africa's Big 5 mammals, Cheetah & African Wild Dog.

His images have been widely published in books, field guides, magazines & journals in the UK & USA and he is an established speaker on the RSPB/Bird Club circuit in the UK.

This is Chris's first visit to the Group. Please join me in welcoming Chris.

Chris and friend in
Sudan



COACH TRIPS

Our next coach trip will take place on Sunday 19th January to the North Lancashire coast, departing from the Guild at 8am.

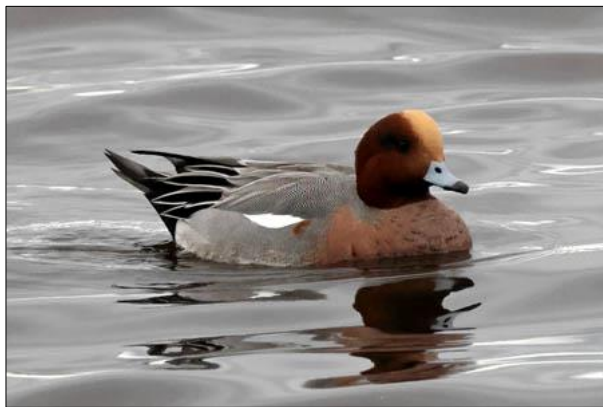
We will visit various sites along the coast that attract large numbers of wildfowl and waders during the winter months. The area is good for raptors as well. Locations we may well visit include Knott End, Pilling Lane End, Glasson Basin Marina and even Heysham Nuclear Power Station. Older members may recall the time there when we were challenged by two machine gun wielding police officers!

We last made this trip in January 2019. Book your seat at the desk.

The February coach trip is the weekend away to Solway.

COACH TRIP TO MARTIN MERE - 24th NOVEMBER 2024

We had Storms Ashley for Spurn, Bert for Martin Mere and Darragh for the Christmas lunch. If Storm Floris hits the UK on January 19th, the date of our North Lancs coast trip, I will offer your committee's storm prediction service to the MET Office.



Eurasian Wigeon (male)

Despite the threat from Storm Bert, thirty one members set off in showery conditions, the highest turnout since May 2019. After a discussion it was decided to give Lunt Meadows a miss and go directly to Martin Mere in view of the lack of facilities and hides and possible path flooding at Lunt. A quick coffee and comfort stop at Lymm services ensured we arrived just after the opening time of 9.30 at the Wildfowl and Wetland Reserve. We were greeted by one of the reserve managers who gave us an outline of the reserve and likely sightings.

The first port of call for many of the group was the impressive Discovery hide, a large glass fronted hide overlooking the mere. There were good numbers of Wigeon, Pintail, Mallard, Teal and Shelduck on show together with a few Tufted Ducks, Shoveler and Pochard. Also present were plenty of Greylags, Whooper Swans, Moorhens and Coots. The most numerous wader was the Lapwing but the stars of the show had to be the Ruff and Black-tailed Godwits. Both of these two waders took no searching for: they paraded up and down the edge of the mere right in front of the window. It was a rare opportunity to observe the finer



Northern Pintail (male)

details, without the need for a scope and really appreciate what an elegant wader the Black-tailed Godwit is. I was quite shocked to learn that there are only 50 breeding pairs left in the UK. The WWT has established the world's first conservation breeding programme, rescuing eggs from flooding and predation, incubating them, and re-introducing them into safe wetlands to breed.



Black-tailed Godwit



Ruff

After the Discovery hide I moved onto the Ron Barker hide at the far end of the reserve, overlooking the Marsh. Just before entering the hide there were good flocks of Goldfinches, Chaffinches and the odd Greenfinch in the treetops. As I entered the hide I got a brief glimpse of 3 Cattle Egrets that had been showing well as they flew out of sight. Out on the marsh I soon observed a Kestrel perched on a post and a number of Marsh Harriers in flight. A Great White Egret was seen at some distance as it dropped into a channel though I was able to get a much better view later of the bird in flight from the Hale hide. Two Little Grebes motored along the channel in front of the hide as if they were turbo charged.



Little Egret



European Goldfinch

Walking back towards the Hale hide one of the group members had spotted a Goldcrest flitting above our heads and giving reasonable views. It was from the Hale hide that I eventually caught up with another bird we were told to look for at the briefing, a Snow Goose. The bird was not to be confused with a white feral goose. The Snow Goose with its black tail feathers was believed to be a vagrant that had arrived from Greenland with the Pink-footed Geese. Talking of the latter, there were reports of almost 10,000 birds on the reserve, though the majority of these tended to feed out in surrounding fields during the day. A few could be

picked out at the back of the mere marshland and quite a few more in flight.



Long-tailed Tit

Moving on, back past the Discovery hide to the other end of the reserve, I was told to look out for Snipes by other group members from one of the screens alongside the path. Although well camouflaged, as often is the case, 4 birds were picked out in the grassy reeds. The feeders at the small Janet Kear hide were rather quiet but nonetheless, we recorded Great and Blue Tit, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Long-tailed Tit and Reed Bunting and at least two Brown Rats!

Disappointingly the two tier United Utilities hide which gives good views over the marsh was closed for repairs though there were a couple of new hides to explore since my last visit.

From the Rees hide we observed 2 Kestrels, a Grey Heron in flight and good numbers of Shovelers. In the distance were the herd of Longhorn cattle and these were, as it says on the tin, attracting the Cattle Egrets but also in the same area at least 6 Marsh Harriers.

Time was moving on and I decided to return to the Discovery hide rather than walk the rather flooded paths out to the new Tomlison hide. The feeding event was scheduled for 3.30 and it was another chance to see the spectacle of large numbers of wildfowl at close quarters.



Feeding time at Martin Mere

Tearing myself away it was a quick dash back to the Ron Barker hide for the last half hour of the day in the hope of a Barn Owl sighting, but this was not to be. Marsh Harriers numbered 8 and one of the locals was telling us they have up to 18 birds coming into roost on some days, a bird which first bred on the reserve during Covid.

The weather in the end wasn't a problem. We had very little rain and a respectable bird count of 57. As we climbed aboard the coach for a 4pm departure, it was another successful trip. Wilmslow Birders 1 Storm Bert 0.

Photos by Robert D

STEVE M

CHRISTMAS LUNCH - 7th DECEMBER 2024

After all the months of planning, the festive day finally arrived.

We had 28 people booked for the lunch and prior to that, a walk around Dunham Massey park starting at 9:30am.

We were hoping with fingers crossed that the weather didn't disappoint but it was not to be. Storm Darragh had arrived and we had to make the sad decision to cancel the walk.

With this in mind, most people arrived around 11:30 at the Axe & Cleaver pub and at 12 noon, we sat down to a lovely festive meal.

Everyone was in high spirits despite the weather and we would like to thank everyone for turning up and making it a memorable day.

We look forward to seeing you all again next year.



Robert and Steve enjoy the Christmas lunch

JULIE & DAVE

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

The next indoor meeting will be on Thursday 6th February at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Group member Peter Booth with a talk entitled "Brazil – the Lightning Tour".

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.