

# BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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## NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2025

### TONIGHT'S MEETING (4th September)

A warm welcome to all our members as we begin the 58th season of the Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group. In particular a warm welcome to any new members who have joined us.

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 John Gardner who will give a talk entitled "Hebridean Spring".

John is a professional commercial photographer but has had a life-long interest in birds since being a small boy. He became semi-professional as a wildlife photographer with his work occurring in books, magazines and on calendars. He is president of Wakefield Naturalists' Society and undertakes a large amount of bat conservation work.

John last visited us in March 2023.

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

### COACH TRIPS

Our first coach trip of the season is on Sunday 19th 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. The trip is timed to coincide with the autumn migration and the 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 23rd November to RSPB Leighton Moss reserve departing from the Guild at 8am.

Book your seat for both trips at the desk.

## **NORFOLK BIRDS WEEKEND**

For our 2026 weekend away we will visit North Norfolk.

Save the date: **Friday 20 to Sunday 22 February 2026**

We will stay at Caley Hall Hotel in Hunstanton on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis.

The weekend will include:

- Coach transport for the weekend from Wilmslow
- Accommodation in a single or shared room - your choice
- Breakfast
- 3 course evening meal

### **Cost:**

- Rooms for single occupancy £452.00 per person
- Rooms to share (double or twin) £342.00 per person

Packed lunches - £11 per day to include sandwich, crisps, fruit, cake and water.

**BOOKINGS** will be taken at our meeting on **Thursday 4 September 2025** or by post. See the booking form for payment details and cancellation terms.

Please print and bring Booking Form to the meeting (a booking form is attached to the email with this newsletter, forms will also be available at the meeting)

**Payment by cheque only** (payable to The Guild for Lifelong Learning)

There are lots of excellent birding opportunities in this area. Decisions where to visit will be made nearer the time. As you know the itinerary has to be flexible.

This is already proving to be a popular trip so, as the saying goes ... **BOOK EARLY!!**

## **CHRISTMAS WALK & LUNCH**

This year's festive walk will take place at Neuman's Flash on Saturday 6th December at 9:30am followed by Christmas lunch at the Antrobus Arms at 12:00.

A deposit of £10 is required to secure your booking, payable at tonight's meeting. Cash only please. Further details to follow.

**DAVE & JULIE**

### **COACH TRIP TO BLACKTOFT SANDS AND OLD MOOR – 23 MARCH 2025**

Arriving at Blacktoft Sands on a cool March morning we were treated to a talk by the warden whilst warming ourselves by the stove in the visitor centre. The site is at the confluence of the Rivers Ouse and Trent where they form the Humber. The reserve's reedbed (the largest area of reedbed in England) is prone to flooding at high tides making the waters slightly saline and influencing the birds which visit. The RSPB gradually extended the site as land became available and now it is well known for wetland birds which are rare in Britain.

As the warden talked we watched a pair of Marsh Harriers quartering in front of the centre. He explained that when the floods come there are always concerns that their nests will be badly affected.

In front of the hide, some of our group watched a vole busy in the banking.

We spread out over the site visiting as many hides as we could. The Marshland Hide gave us avocets, snipe both standing around and sleeping, shovelers, wigeon and little egret flying around. As we walked through the reserve to Singleton Hide at the far end we passed beautiful goldfinches on the catkins and an early busy buff-tailed bumblebee. This hide offered plenty of snipe, Canada geese, greylag geese, moorhens, tufted ducks and swans, all very busy.

As we travelled to our next reserve at Old Moor, we saw roe deer, several muntjac and hares. Spring is upon us!

Old Moor was formed as a result of historical mining and is a carefully controlled wetland area. The water is generally kept high then lowered to expose islands for breeding and passing waders. The ditches within the reed beds are managed to allow birds and fauna to navigate without risk from land based predators.

As we walked around the reed beds and down from Bittern Hide to Bittern Bus Stop, we were hopeful of a bittern sighting ... but no!! We did however hear one booming from the reedbeds so the hides are well named. We did manage a good view of a marsh harrier in a tree.

There were cormorants, pochards, shoveler and tufted ducks and we heard Cetti's warbler - another one which is usually only ever heard but not seen.

Retracing our steps we headed to Watch Ings Hide at the eastern end of the reserve. There were cormorants in the trees, coots, gadwall and sand martins. It is always good to see the oystercatchers too.

A super day out!

**JANET & MICHAEL**

## **COACH TRIP TO TOPHILL LOW - 27th APRIL 2025**

Twenty eight WGBG members joined the coach with everybody on board off we set at 7.23am The weather forecast was good, 10°C in the coach and rising.

En route many Crows were spotted pecking in a field, Kestrel on a lamp post, Magpie, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, a Rookery and a low flying Buzzard were also noted through the window of the coach. Bright yellow rape fields and Hawthorn bushes were in full flower. Two more low flying Buzzards and a Red kite, Pheasant and a Rook were added to the list as we neared the site.

Tophill Low is a nature reserve, an SSSI, in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The site was an active water treatment works, lying adjacent to the River Hull. It has two reservoirs D and O, with marshes, ponds, grasslands and woodlands. On arrival we were met by the warden who gave an interesting history of the site.

The group split up, some choosing to walk along the wooded blue route. Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler were heard and later seen. Cetti's Warbler and Blackcap were also heard calling loudly. A Wren plunged into the dense undergrowth.

### **North Marsh Hide**

Not much activity here, but Moorhen paddled around, Reed Bunting and Sedge Warbler were heard, two Brimstone butterflies fluttered past. We wandered back along the path towards the visitors centre, stopping to sit on a very large log for an open-air lunch, peaceful with bird song. Now we saw a Treecreeper, Greylag geese flew over, Long-tailed tits feeding high in the trees, then a Coal tit appeared, a Marsh Harrier flew over in the distance, then a Little Egret flew steadily by, black legs clearly visible.

### **Hempholme Meadow Hide**

The water was higher here, Greylag geese, Coot sitting on a nest, Mallard, Grey Heron were added to the list. Sharp-eyed Hilary pointed out a Snipe resting in the marshy edge of the water. High up in the sky Sand Martins were swooping down for insects over the water.

The sun was hotter now, back on the path we walked slowly along the D reservoir path, a long trail with the reservoir on the left, bushes, trees and fields on the right.

Lapwing flew overhead, and a Grey Heron. Willow Warbler was heard again in the foliage, then a Whitethroat appeared to give a lovely surprise sighting. Yellow Wagtail running and bobbing along the reservoir wall was a special treat. Back to the visitors centre we stopped to have a chat with a member of staff. He told us where to look for the elusive Tawny Owl. Off we set on the red route to the area. Eyes and necks straining we could not find the owl, but at least we could hear him hooting. Blackbird and Dunnock made an appearance, two Crows mobbing a Marsh Harrier.

Leaving to walk slowly on we met a man in a hurry to see the owl so we quickly turned to follow him, and he found it at a glance at almost the exact spot where we had been looking. Beautifully camouflaged high in the trees, his facial disc clear to see. What a sighting!

### **Last part of call North Lagoon Hide**

Mute Swan sailing around, Canada Goose on a nest, Mallard, Little Egret and Gadwall made it to our final bird list. Many Marsh frogs were there wallowing in the murky water to give a wonderful loud farewell croaking chorus.

Also seen were a few butterflies, Orange tip, Brimstone, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Small white.

A brown hare and roe deer in the fields added to a great day out.

**JENNY I**

### **BLACK LAKE AND LINDOW MOSS WALK – SATURDAY 24 MAY 2025**

Four weeks of glorious weather came to an abrupt end with heavy rain on the Friday evening before our planned Saturday walk. Nevertheless eight members braved the lowering grey skies and were waiting, eager to start at 7.30 am.



Eurasian Jay

Walking from the car park towards Black Lake, we had good views of a Jay as it flew parallel to us on the footpath. As we approached the water, the usual Grey Heron was on sentry duty on the raft. There were a couple of Coots both with families, a Moorhen with a single chick, a lone Great crested Grebe and ten or so Mallards. Birdsong was all around us, but the birds remained out of sight. The Lake was looking at its best with Yellow Iris on the margins all along one side and Purple Orchids (Marsh Orchids?) on the banks behind them.

We completed a circuit of the Lake and crossing the Common headed for Newgate. Walking along towards the Nature Reserve, avoiding the early morning traffic, we added Jackdaw, Chiffchaff, Blackbird, Greenfinch, and Goldfinch to the list. Once in the reserve, we spent 30 minutes or so wandering over the uneven grassy ground searching all the bushes and brambles for the elusive Whitethroats. They were very vocal but just impossible to locate.

At the end of Newgate we spotted a Goldcrest in a fir tree, then turned left at the crossroads and took the Bridle Path in the direction of Moor Lane. Part way along this path there was an opening on the right and we stepped over an old railway sleeper on to the peat bog. It was now 9.45 am.

Almost immediately a couple of Swifts flew overhead, followed shortly by a Parakeet. We walked slowly along the main pathway, Brian pointing out on the left hand side, the willow figures still in situ, made for last year's commemoration. The weather was starting to improve, it was warming up with some blue in the sky and the sun beginning to break



Great Crested Grebe

through. One by one, jackets and cagoules were taken off and slung over shoulders or tied around waists.

An early elevenses (10.10 am) was taken, then we resumed our exploration of the area as far as the two bridges. At this point we turned round to begin the journey back to the Bridle Path. On the way we deviated on to a little used track to investigate two small pools. Here Brian showed us a couple of patches of Sundew plants, one suffering due to the dry conditions but the other very healthy and attractive. Still on the bog, we heard and found a most obliging Willow Warbler atop a smallish tree. Albeit slowly, we were gradually converting our "heard" list into actual sightings.



Eurasian Coot & chicks

Over the sleeper and back on to the Bridle Path, Brian recounted the history of the peat bog as we wandered along, pointing out where the most recent cuttings had occurred. Walking along Battery Lane we finally saw one of the many Whitethroats we had heard throughout the morning. It was then only a short stretch back to the cars via Lindow Lane and the Common.

Our 4 hour walk covered 4.5 miles. We saw 20 birds and heard another 8, which was good given the difficult conditions. Brian's knowledge and enthusiasm for the area made the walk so interesting and enjoyable and we were all so pleased he was at last able to lead the group.



Grey Heron



Common Whitethroat

*photos by Robert D*

**BARBARA P**

## **INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS**

We encourage all of our members to join the group email list. This confers several advantages. You will receive the monthly newsletter by email a few days before the monthly meeting, allowing you time to read through it before the meeting. And if you are unable to attend a meeting you still get your copy of the newsletter!

We also use the email list to communicate urgent news to the members. For example if an indoor meeting has to be cancelled at short notice (which occasionally happens during the winter months) we can sent out an email to warn the members, so saving an unnecessary journey.

Email addresses are kept private since all emails are sent out as BCC format.

To join the email list please see me, Robert, at the meeting or send an email to the address at the end of this newsletter.

We would also like to invite you to join our WhatsApp group. This is a forum for sharing information about all things birding, news, sightings and more. See Dave S at the meeting for more information.

## **NEXT MONTH'S MEETING**

The next indoor meeting will be on Thursday 2nd October at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Gary Jones with a talk entitled "Osprey Talk".

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 Thursday before the meeting.