

BIRD WATCHING 2016

JANUARY 2016: Potteric Carr RSPB

On a bright, sunny Friday morning, 14 members made their way by mini-bus to Potteric Carr Nature Reserve, near Doncaster. This site is run by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and covers 490 acres of marshland, reed beds, woodland and scrub. There are 14 viewing hides, plus a visitor centre and cafe, the excellent pathways provide excellent access for wheelchairs.

We were fortunate to see the following birds - Coal Tit, Willow Tit, Long Tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Bullfinch, Redwing, Shoveller, Widgeon, Snipe, Great Crested Grebe, Herring Gull, Black Headed Gull, Goosander, Real Pochard, Chaffinch, Heron.



Coal Tit



Chaffinch



Shoveller

FEBRUARY 2016: Skylarks Nature Reserve

February saw a small group of 6 enthusiasts enjoying a morning out at Skylarks Nature Reserve, a wetland reserve owned by the Notts Wildlife Trust close to Holme Pierrepont, so right on our doorsteps. Our usual experts (and photographer!) were on holiday, so we had to rely on our RSPB bird books and long consultation with one another to identify the birds.

We decided to start with the easy ones and were quickly able to add swans (some of us are only beginners!), Canada geese, a grey heron, cormorants, coots and moorhens to our list of sightings. We showed a bit more skill by identifying several great crested grebes, tufted ducks, lapwings, lots of pochards and even a goldeneye. We all felt our morning stroll in beautiful, peaceful surroundings had been really worthwhile, despite the chilly feet and the mud, and we know that this would not be our last visit to such a lovely, local reserve.

One of our group was a visiting member from Arnold U3A and she was very impressed when we told her about our varied monthly programme with visits, both local and further afield to good bird-watching places - thanks to Joan and Mo who do all the organising.



Brent Geese



Redshank



Reed Bunting



Ruff

MARCH 2016: RSPB Frampton Marsh

On a beautiful sunny morning, 18 members travelled to RSPB Frampton Marsh, near Boston, Lincs. This is a coastal wetland reserve which includes reed beds, freshwater scrapes and grassland. There are 3 hides, a welcoming visitor centre, which is also a viewing area providing scopes and binoculars and extremely informative staff who were keen to share their knowledge.

From the moment we entered the car park the sky was full of birds arriving and taking off, including murmurations of golden plover performing their aerial displays, much to everyone's delight.

We were lucky to see many birds, some of the more noteworthy being: Yellowhammer, Skylark, Avocet, Pintail, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Goldeneye, Ruff, Brent Geese, Whooper Swan, Little Stint, Little Ring Plover, Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Reed Bunting, and many, many more.

APRIL 2016: Netherfield Lagoons

Mild, Sun/cloud/rain, Slight breeze (SW).

Sixteen enthusiastic members turned out, bins to hand, hearing aids switched on. Conditions were ideal with a warming sun, a wisp of a breeze and still very little foliage cover. Good southerly winds had moved in migrants in increasing numbers days earlier. The first of which, a Chiffchaff from south of the Sahara, was the first warbler heard some distance away singing its monotonous song. Not to be outdone, another warbler, a Willow Warbler, its song enchanting, from tropical Africa and, like the Chiffchaff earlier, displayed well. These two warblers were prevalent throughout the reserves vegetation, an oasis hidden amidst the urban sprawl of an industrial estate in Netherfield. A true gem.

Cetti's warbler with their explosive outpourings at frequent intervals reminded us that unlike the other warblers they are resident in these isles. But unlike their cousins, these furtive, skulking birds are easily heard but rarely seen.

Other long distance migrants, the Sand Martin and Barn Swallow, members of the Hirundinidae were seen in agile flight trawling between the railway bridge arches for small insects. Good sightings of Reed Bunting of both sexes, more easily seen now in the breeding season afforded good photographic opportunities. Towering Buzzards in good numbers taking advantage of the thermals, dotted the skies before moving on. A single good sighting of another warbler, a Blackcap, up to three Northern Wheatear, ground dwelling birds from Africa, were seen on a newly ploughed patch of earth beyond the scrapes. Finally as we began to think of heading back the Green Woodpecker in its mournful call said cheerio. All in all a very enjoyable visit and with new arrivals over the coming weeks it can only get better. However during these weeks the foliage will create even more cover and

the warblers in particular which spend most of their time concealed in vegetation will create more of a challenge to find, so knowing their calls will help in contacting them.

Sightings Log:

Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Cetti's warblers heard,
Heard Green Woodpecker,
Sand martin, Barn Swallow, Common Reed Bunting,

Northern Wheatear,
Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel
Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Eurasian Teal, Common Pochard, Little Egret.

Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell



Chiff Chaff



Chiff Chaff



Male Reed Bunting



Female Reed Bunting

MAY 2016: Attenborough Nature Reserve

Mild, sun/cloud, fresh wind.

A good turnout of 16 gathered at the reserve despite the disappointment of the cancelled Whisby trip. Early good sightings of Black Tern, a 'marsh tern', which unlike their cousins the 'sea terns' feed principally on insects. A 'first sighting' for most for what would eventually top a long report. Common terns were more abundant, but despite a lot of effort that long distant migrant, the Arctic Tern could not join the list.

As we approached the visitor centre an excited number of our group were congratulating themselves after identifying a fine pair of Red Crested Pochard. And, as we left the centre, two Barnacle Geese, winter visitors reluctant to head north, caused a frantic flurry of activity through bird guiding books. After satisfying themselves that they weren't Grasshopper Warblers they re-joined the group!

On the reserve proper the wind made good sightings of newly arrived warblers difficult. However, two waders, a Common Redshank and a Little Ringed Plover, both of which spend most of their time feeding on the water margins made up for it. Hirundines, at last, joined by the later arrivals, the Swift and House Martin strafed the skies for insects, many feeding in formation, the effect like a scene from the Battle of Britain!

Despite the conditions excellent sightings were to come. First the Cetti's Warbler, which at regular intervals had challenged us to find them. Then at last, a beautiful Sedge Warbler, entralling its audience with cascades of excited trills and whistles.

Just as concentration levels were sagging and our visit nearing an end we hit the jackpot. Having heard a Lesser Whitethroat in deep scrub and after patiently awaiting, a view of the owner of it finally emerged flying directly upwards into a nearby tree. Brilliant!

A fitting conclusion to a good session birding, in good surroundings and most importantly in good company.

Sightings Log:

Egyptian Goose
Greylag Goose

Little Ring Plover
Common Redshank

Blackcap
Common Whitethroat

Barnacle Goose
Red Crested Pochard
Common Pochard
Gadwall
Northern Shoveller
Common Buzzard
Common Kestrel

Lesser Black Backed Gull
Common Tern
Black Tern
Common Swift
Barn Swallow
Common Sand Martin
Common House Martin

Lesser Whitethroat
Cetti's Warbler
Sedge Warbler
Reed Warbler
Chiff Chaff
Bullfinch
Linnet



Red Crested Pochard



Ringed Plover



Sedge Warbler

JUNE 2016: Rutland Water

Mild, cloud, breeze (SW).

The peace and tranquillity around England's largest reservoir, Rutland Water, was about to be interrupted by 16 ornithological pretenders from Carlton U3A. Surprisingly, the group gathered at the Egleton car park without hindrance, despite the authorities of Anglian Water, the Wildlife Trusts and the local residents having been alerted in advance!

Following the familiar stampede to alleviate what needed alleviating, two separate paths lured two groups in opposing directions. Half the group heading north to cover lagoons 2, 3 and 4, the other half south covering lagoons 5, 6, 7 and 8. The latter a larger area covered by 15 hides.

Heading north only a dozen steps from the visitor centre, a Garden Warbler in thick shrubbery mockingly sang, unseen. Our destination, Plover Hide, took us by lush buttercup meadows, thick hedgerows and mixed woods all of which provided the cover for Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Blackcap, Cetti's Warbler and Garden Warblers. As Plover hide was approached along the eastern side of lagoon 4, more lush vegetation emitted bird calls and songs helping to locate Reed Bunting, Song Thrush and Whitethroat, but despite a very vocal pair of Garden Warblers, again no sightings. Nightingales were expected in this location but disappointingly none were heard or seen.

A Jay and Green Woodpecker were spotted near Plover Hide. On Lagoon 4 good sightings were recorded of a pair of Oystercatchers with chicks, six Little Egret, two Little Ringed Plover, a Common Sandpiper and Common Tern. Lagoon 3, from Bittern hide, rewarded the group with excellent

displays by Reed Warblers, however, our sadly 'world renowned' photographer was absent on this trip and missed this amazing opportunity.

As Shoveller hide was approached, nightingales again, disappointingly proved absent, but an excellent sighting of a Garden Warbler, at last made up for it.

On lagoon 2, across the Sand Martin Bank, all visiting Hirundines marauded the skies. Also a beautiful Red Crested Pochard Drake again, as at Attenborough, caused an excited commotion. Back at the centre around the Woodpecker hide, Jackdaws, a Collared Dove and a Greater Spotted Woodpecker were recorded. As the groups reunited sightings of Avocet and a Cuckoo calling were reported.

Once again, a most enjoyable session with fair weather and beautiful surroundings shared with lovely company.

Sightings Log:

Avocet	Common Shelduck	Garden Warbler
Barn Swallows	Common Swift	Great Crested Grebe
Black Headed Gull	Common Tern	Great Spotted Woodpecker
Blackcap	Common Whitethroat	Green Woodpecker
Cetti's Warbler heard	Cormorant	Little Egret
Common Chiffchaffs	Egyptian Goose	Little Ringed Plover
Common Cuckoo (heard)	Eurasian Bullfinch	Northern Lapwing
Common House Martin	Eurasian Collared Dove	Northern Shoveller
Common Pochard	Eurasian Jay	Red Crested Pochard
Common Reed Bunting	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Song Thrush
Common Sand Martin	Eurasian Reed Warbler	Western Jackdaw
Common Sandpiper	Eurasian Teal	Willow Warbler

SEPTEMBER 2016: Gibraltar Point

Very warm, sun/cloud, wind 2-3 (SW).

10 members.

During these Autumn months of migration, particularly following favourable winds, where better to focus our 'bins' than the lovely Lincolnshire coast especially with its new visitor centre and exceptional habitats, Gibraltar Point.

On arrival, having successfully bypassed Skegness' other attractions without a mutiny, 'lattes' were ordered all round, and enjoyed in comfort on the outdoor terrace. From the roof of the centre an all-round view of the reserve is offered and on a small sand bar a number of grey seals were relaxing before the tide moved them on.

A gentle meander through the plantation, voices lowered, eyes keen, produced several willow warblers, replenishing supplies before continuing south beyond the Sahara. A Treecreeper and Tits in good numbers, moved from tree to tree ahead of us and we eventually left the wood as a Great Spotted Woodpecker entered.

On the recce visit Jackson Marsh produced excellent sightings. This visit did not disappoint. Many 'first sightings' should have gone in log books with good views of Spoonbill, Avocet, Dunlin, Little Stint, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank and Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Blacktailed Godwits, and Snipe. The majority of which, like the warblers, are migrants on their southerly passage to S Europe and Africa. We knew again from the recce that Tennyson Sands was unlikely to add many new

sightings to a good list, but there's always the chance of a rarity turning up. However, that didn't happen, but what Tennyson hides lacked in species made up for it in numbers. Especially those of the Godwits which could be counted in hundreds, stitching the fertile mud with long bills.

Following such a great session it was an opportune moment to enjoy the rest of the reserve, and so groups took advantage of the weather and wonderful views to enjoy a leisurely stroll southwards through East Dunes and back to the centre. Others, less adventurous, took lunch under the cooling shade of a pine tree and were rewarded with 2 Goldcrest in the branches doing the same.

Finally, what could be a more fitting end to such a fantastic day than to enjoy 'fish and chips' in Skeggy with your birdwatching friends?

Rob Parkes



**Curlew
Sandpiper**



Ruff



SEPTEMBER 2016: Attenborough Nature Reserve

Mild, sun/cloud, wind 1-2 (W)

Nine members met at the railway station car park, glad to be back on our local patches. Conditions were ideal but not being the M1 of migration routes, the east coast, expectations were not high. As if to disprove that, excellent sightings of a Whinchat, passing through to its wintering grounds in tropical Africa, and a Common Stonechat presumably doing likewise but not so far south. What could follow that? Well, one of the group, newly acquainted to the recently purchased spotting scope, identified a Ringed Plover from the Kingfisher Hide.

These were the highlights. A change of route and scenery back to the car park ended the session nicely.

Sightings Log:

Little Egret.	(C) Ringed Plover	(C) Snipe	Black Headed Gull
Lesser Black Back Gull	Whinchat	Stonechat	

OCTOBER 2016: 'The Spurn' 2

.....undeterred, another party, with reinforcements this time approaching from the west and a rapid response renaissance team from the north, made a second attempt to gain a foothold into 'The Spurn'.....(to be continued).

North Cave Wetlands. Friday 14th October 2016

Cool, cloud, wind 1-2 (ESE)

.....once again the Spurn trip was cancelled. Nearby, 2000 twitchers and a SIBERIAN ACCENTOR, the latter a beautiful bundle of fluff, it's first ever visit to our shores all the way from the Urals in North Siberia, beat us to it. This time we were only 30 miles from our venue and following a quick revision of plans, North Cave Wetlands became the alternative destination.

Just a sparrow's flight from the M62 the Wetlands is a compact mixture of beautifully matured lakes, ponds, and flood meadows amongst well laid out scrub, all of which is bordered by well-established trees and shrubs.

From the new covered viewing picnic area conveniently located opposite the car park cafe, the trumpeting calls of hundreds of GREYLAG, CANADA, and the odd PINK FOOTED goose, cleansed 'The Spurn' from the mind. Newly arrived WIGEON, a vegetarian amongst the dabblers, with the males in particular in resplendent breeding plumage. Some males, flightless in eclipse plumage, showed a mix of male and female plumage.

Two hides later, with good views of SNIPE and REDSHANK, and most of the commoner passage/wintering ducks now being identified correctly by more of the members.

Leaving the round hide, a delightful stroll around the reserve produced excellent sightings of wintering BRAMBLING. This bird is very similar in plumage to the Chaffinch, but where the Chaffinch is pretty, the Brambling is beautiful. Feeding on bushes abounding with berries were hordes of FIELDFARE and REDWING.

The highlight of the sightings was a brilliantly coloured KINGFISHER, luckily caught on camera. Only the photographer, Paul, recorded this momentresult.....the rest of the group being grateful to see the wonderful photo. Later, a BUZZARD, perched on a fence post across the flood meadow watched us depart having had another wonderful day with our friends.

Grateful thanks go to our driver Geoff for his patience and consideration and driving us safely on the day.

Sightings Log:

Greylag	Pink Footed Canada Goose	(c) Shelduck	Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe	Little Egret	(ES) Teal	Gadwall
Shoveler	(ES) Wigeon	(C) Pochard	Grey Partridge
(G) Cormorant	(C) Buzzard	(C) Kestrel	(C) Redshank
(C) Snipe	Black-Headed Gull	Common Gull	(C) Kingfisher
Redwing	Fieldfare	Brambling	



NOVEMBER 2016: Kingsbury Water Park

Cool, sun/cloud, breeze (W)

After a slight malfunction the group arrived at Broomey Croft NR car park. This northern end of the reserve is bordered by the Fazeley Canal, the River Tame and the M42. This site, like so many inland wetland reserves was a gravel extraction area, now reclaimed for all to enjoy.

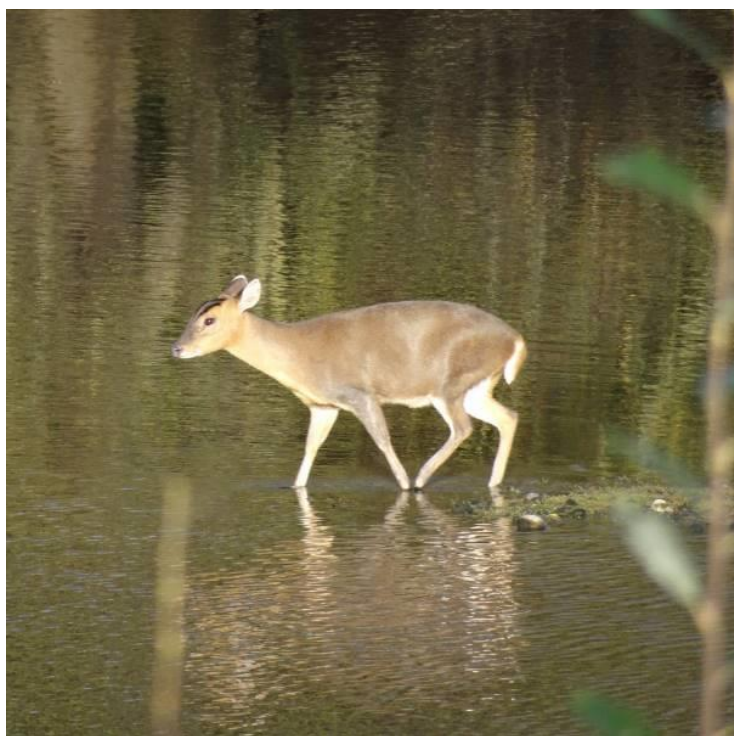
In beautiful autumnal sunshine smaller groups formed and went their preferred route, the larger group heading for the hides. Being the time of year, and as the earlier recce, passerines were going to be few on the ground, and in the bush for that matter. So, binoculars were concentrated on the four ponds, one of which was covered by 3 hides and the remotest pond by 1 hide.

Most of the resident and wintering wildfowl were present plus Little Egret, Grebe and Snipe entered the listings. From the second hide things got animated by the cry of 'fox' later changed to pheasant then to field mouse. Well you've got to laugh. With trembling hands on bins and camera shutters, a beautiful Muntjac stepped from the reeds before wading knee deep across the pond and out of sight. Not to be outdone, another call filled the hide, this time for a Goldcrest which it was for all to enjoy feeding unconcerned just yards from the hide. Also, in the willows on the water's edge below us, Reed Buntings flitted in and out.

All in all a decent sightings list, unfortunately as on the recce minus a Kingfisher. However, finishing with refreshments in the Granary Cafe we were pleased to hear other members had been lucky enough to spot one earlier.

Sightings Log:

(ES) Teal	Gadwall	Tufted Duck	(ES) Wigeon
N Shoveller	(C) Goldeneye	Little Grebe	Great Crested Grebe
Little Egret	Common Buzzard	(C) Snipe	Black Headed Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull	(C) Kingfisher	Goldcrest	(C) Reed Bunting



DECEMBER 2016: Rushcliffe Country Park

Cold, Cloud, Breeze (NW)

The park is a delightfully landscaped site with wild flower meadows and conservation areas, with a good variety of trees. Abundant alders being especially appreciated by the seed eating birds at this time of year. A large lake surrounded by small Reed beds completes the palette.

However, the site has not always looked the picture it is. Two hundred years ago it was a bog which was drained for farmland. In 1940 the Ruddington depot built a bomb making factory which was then decommissioned in 1945. The site was then used for selling surplus army equipment. In 1983 the area was developed for housing and a business park, and finally the Country Park.

The park provides ample parking, a visitor centre and toilets.

It is fortunate that the trees on the outer edge of the woods are alder. These attract most of the birds which were easily located from the well laid paths. Goldfinch and Chaffinch were the main feeders. Although, as expected, sightings were limited it was a pleasant visit and we were rewarded with several good sightings of pairs of Bullfinch, a lone Songthrush and a 'clapped out' Kestrel.

Sightings Log:

(C) Kestrel	Black Headed Gull	Song thrush	Long-Tailed Tit	Great Tit.
(EP) Blue Tit	(C) Chaffinch	(EP) Goldfinch	(ES) Bullfinch	

DECEMBER 2016: Cromford Canal

Mild, Cloud, Breeze (SW)

A good turnout gathered at the Wharf car park and before partaking in a coffee opted to search for Dippers on the River Derwent beyond the church. Although drawing a blank Dipper wise, there was plenty to see on the opposite side of the river in the Willersley Castle grounds. Redwing, lots of them,



and a scattering of Mistlethrush and Fieldfare, mainly passage and winter visitors, were taking advantage of the ample supplies of berries.

After a pleasant break in the Wharf cafe the Canal towpath beckoned. Whereas on the recce earlier in the week, Redwing inhabiting the area like a plague, today they roamed the area in small groups. Again Mistlethrush and Fieldfare showed in numbers, a Jay and a single Nuthatch were picked out also. These and the views from the towpath brought us to High Peak Junction. A grey and a pied Wagtail entertained us to the sounds of 'camera clicks',



also a single Little Grebe looked lost where water from an outflow entered the canal.



Returning to the Wharf, birds feeding high in the tree tops on alder seeds, in the unfavourable light, were a challenge to identify. Trying to put names to dark silhouettes in poor light, and visible plumage markings and colours unseen, not to mention lack of calls is sometimes not possible. However, the odd sight of a dull greenish/yellow bit of a wing bar, ruled out Redpolls in favour of Siskin, not that Redpolls weren't among the group of course.

And finally after another splendid outing, despite conditions, spare a thought for William Jessop and what he'd have thought of the conditions of the Canal he built, a feature of SSI, silted up, toxic and lifeless!

Wishing you all a great New Year's birding with your friends from the Carlton and Gedling U3A.