

BIRD WATCHING 2024

January 2024: WOLLATON PARK

How fortunate we are in Nottinghamshire to have a wealth of parks, gardens, forest/woods, nature reserves, lakes/lagoons, canals and rivers and their embankments. What a gift for us birders! Wollaton Park is a great place. It has lovely gardens, park land (rough or mown) a bit of wood, a conservation area and a lake. So it's no surprise that various sorts of birds have either made a home here or visit. Combine this with a great cafe and loos and it starts to look like a great place to spot birds!! So here we were come January wondering if we'd see any of our favourite birdies?

But before we set off we raised our coffees and cakes to our good friend and keen birder Jill Garner who sadly passed away at the end of December. She was such a friendly person and had a keen eye and will be very much missed.

We were pleased to see the Parakeets, the Egyptian Geese and the Herons perched in their willow tree on the lake. The Goldcrests were there popping around looking for insects, but no Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, Redwings or Owl to be seen on this visit. We were very entertained in the garden by a small rat who chanced his life to nibble on the bird seed we put down - to be chased away repeatedly by a crow and Magpie. His persistence paid off and he got his treat as the birds got fed up and flew off!



What else was to be seen? – Robins, Blackbirds, Great and Blue Tits, Jackdaws, Wrens, Mallards, Coots, Moorhens, Common Gulls, Tufted Ducks, Pochards, Shovellers, Swans, Canada Geese.

February 2024: WAXWINGS

Another cancellation of a birding trip! What is the weather doing? However, this doesn't mean the group haven't been busy. It's been a Waxwing winter and some of us have been searching for this beautiful visitor to our shores.

Waxwings are winter visitors and are more numerous some years than others. This year fortunately has been a bumper year for them.

They head to Scotland from their usual homes in Scandinavia and Russia migrating in search of food. They are partial to red berries and our country has these in abundance.

Arriving in October they move south consuming berries as they go eventually arriving in Nottinghamshire!



Keeping an eye on bird watching sites I was able to let the group know some places where they had been spotted in Nottingham itself; being seen around Trent Bridge and the Train Station, near Lidl in Wollaton and in larger numbers in Gedling Country Park! This is where Robert was able to take a pic of a small group of them and where some of us were lucky to see them!

As you see from the pics they are striking looking birds with a very distinctive profile. They have a red waxy secretion which is visible on the tips of their secondary wings. Hence the name. Large flocks of them are called irruptions.

They are quite long lived birds and may make it to 13 years on average. They usually head homewards April time so you might still see them in areas with plenty of red berries but perhaps not GCP they scooped most of the berries and are moving on!

So some compensation then for missing Sherwood Forest.

March 2024: WONDERFUL WHISBY

Yes we actually got there! Great weather, excellent cafe and facilities, good company and birds!!!

After 2 recent cancelled visits it was most welcome to actually have a lovely sunny day and see some of our feathered friends. On the way we spotted Swans and Buzzards, while at Whisby we saw Cormorants, Canada Geese, Gulls (black headed, common) Tufted Ducks, Gadwalls, Pochards (with some speculation that they might have been Goldeneyes), Teals, Mallards, Coots, Moorhens, Grebes, Heron (Blue), Great and Long Tail tits, Blackbird, Robin, possible Green Finch and Siskins, and we heard a Wren.



April 2024: NETHERFIELD LAGOONS

No Bitterns or Bearded Tits if anyone was wondering if we spotted any as mentioned in the last newsletter. We still had a great days birding at the Netherfield Lagoons and the ponds on the field by the Rivendell estate.

Really our spotting started as we were having a coffee on the retail park (before we fired up our binoculars!) and saw a Heron leisurely flying past! They really have a prehistoric look about them in flight as their neck is pulled into their body unlike swans ducks or geese who extend their necks in flight.

Two of our group had discovered a bird identification app (Merlin) that actually did just what it said. I can see we'll all be downloading it as it greatly helped in identifying birds.

The return of foliage to the hedge rows does make it harder to spot and then identify what you've seen often from a brief glimpse. But if they sing or call we could confirm it with the app. Brilliant!

On the Rivendell field we had a great view of the Kestrel that hunts here as well as a Heron, Swans, Coots, Moorhens, Mallards and a Gadwall. We also heard the Cettis Warbler, Wren, Blackcap and Chiff Chaff.

At the Lagoons we saw Great Blue and Long Tail Tits, Blackbirds, Green Finches, Chiff Chaff, Cormorants, Tufted Ducks, Teals, Greylag and Canada Geese. We again heard the Cettis and Willow Warbler, Chiff Chaff, Black Cap and The Green Finches.

Our trip was rounded off by the sighting of a Black Cap on the way back. So all in all a good sunny days birding.



May 2024: RUTLAND WATER

The best birding session of the season by a mile was our May meeting at the lovely Rutland Water. It has an amazing variety of habitats so it was no surprise that we spotted 30 different birds and heard a further 9 (including a Bittern by our newest member Heidi)

The scene stealers though was the Oyster Catcher and its chick, which had us all in a collective 'awe so cute moment' Thanks to Rob for a great photo:



The Osprey seen gliding through the air was amazing and a close second!

Birds seen:

Greylag, Egyptian and Canada Geese, Cormorant, Black Headed Gulls, Black and Common Tern, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Mallards, Shelduck, Shoveller, Coot, Swan, Moorhen, Great Crested Grebe, Reed Warbler, Willow Warbler, Reed Bunting, Lapwings, Oystercatcher (and chick), Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Pheasant, Blackbird, Great Tit, Starling, Osprey, Buzzard, Hobby

Birds Heard:

Wren, Chiff Chaff, Black Cap, Cettis Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Song Thrush, Robin, Cuckoo, Bittern

So a very satisfying days bird watching. We have another day out in June where hopefully we can plan where we might like to visit from September onwards.

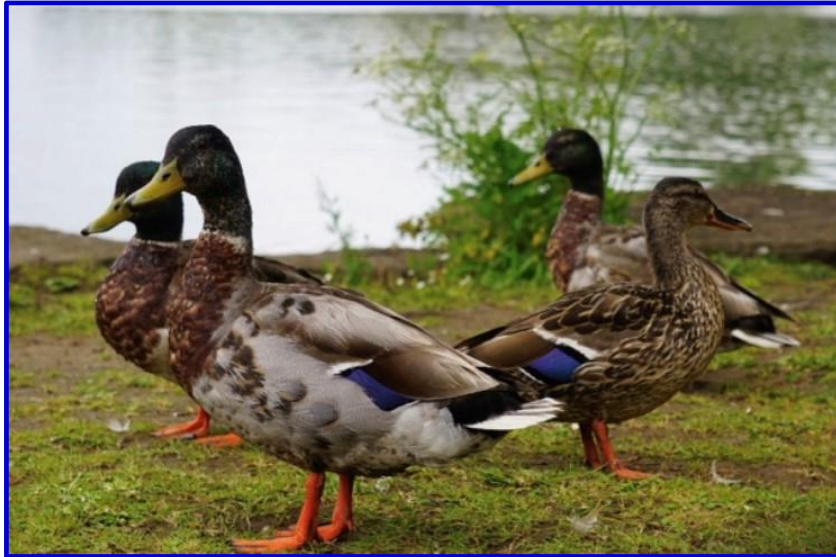
June 2024: COLWICK PARK

Our last meet up until September was to the very lovely Colwick Park. It has had the benefit of EU monies to upgrade most its paths which make for very easy walking from the racecourse car park to the delicious coffee at Wild. The Cafe is more of a permanent structure these days located between the 2 lakes and is focus for the brave wild swimmers after a dip in the West Lake.

Disaster struck as some of our group parked in the main car park in Colwick. Readers never the 2 did meet! However the breakout group spotted an Oystercatcher! A rare sighting at the lakes. The racecourse group spotted a Blackcap in the woods but rain invariably put paid to our spotting and we raced back to our cars.

We made a decision whilst slurping coffee to meet up again on the second Friday in September at Rufford Abbey cafe at 10am. If anyone fancies joining us please get in touch

Lorraine took the lovely snap you see of some Mallards who decided we were hiding food and came to investigate us!



September 2024: RUFFORD ABBEY

My summer was made up by the appearance in my local pond/reed beds of a Grasshopper Warbler, it has a most distinctive song not unlike a grasshopper! Peregrine Falcons also raised a chick in the area too!

Also as summer passed into autumn the same pond hosted not one but 10 Little Egrets! All vied for a bit of space and having a right falling out! It's rare to see these birds other than singly so 10 hanging around for a few days was monumental!

Swallows too were most numerous as the estate housing company changed the design of the eaves of some of the new build homes which just suited their needs!

So as we moved into September the bird watchers headed to Rufford Abbey for their first meet up. Shock horror car parking charges went up 20% to £6 for the day! But we had a pleasant day and the group decided to visit one site through the seasons to try and spot the different birds that make use of Attenborough Nature Reserve at different times of the year.

Rufford still seems depleted of birds but the gulls seemed plentiful and challenged our identification skills. Spot of the day was Lorraine correctly naming a juvenile Black Headed Gull.



October 2024: SHERWOOD FOREST

Sherwood Forest was the Bird Watchers destination for October. Luckily we had a fine warmish sunny day and the most fabulous walk through the beautiful forest. Our eyes and ears were on standby but we hardly saw or heard a bird! Disappointing to say the least! The birds obviously need to sign up to our WhatsApp group *Love Birds!* Some of the little critters are so beautiful I'm surprised they don't line up to be seen! If only eh??



At the bird feeding table we did see lots of Nuthatches and some Coal Tits and as we walked round we could hear Wrens and Robins.



We had our picnic near the Major Oak which looked more bedraggled than when we were last here. But all agreed we'd had a lovely day. Thanks to Lorraine for the Nuthatch pic.

November 2024: ATTENBOROUGH

Novembers Birding meet was to be the first of 3 seasonal visits to Attenborough Nature Reserve where we are hoping to see the different species that visit through the year. Part of our plan was scuppered as the Tower Hide was out of action due to broken steps. So our ability to see the wetland habitat that waders use was much reduced.

However we had a great days birding seeing over 25 different types of birds including my favourites the Long Tail Tits. The swans had clearly had a great breeding season as we could see loads of them from the visitors centre. There were also numerous Wigeons - the photo shows a male in its breeding plumage taken by Rob last year. I'm sure you'll agree they are distinctive and attractive to look at?



I managed to get a snap of a very disgruntled looking Great Tit clearly taking exception to the Squirrel eating its food!

Walking round the eagle eyed amongst us spotted a gaggle of photographers and birders bristling with scopes and serious camera equipment at a hide screen off the path. On closer examination they had identified a Caspian Gull a very rare visitor to the UK. I always find identifying different gulls difficult though Rob especially seems to have a good grasp of the species and their differing plumage as they age and with the seasons. It can be confusing as birds often do look different season to season.

December 2024: CARSINGTON WATER

The closer we got to Carsington Water the gloomier and more drizzly it became. Safe to say we were not positive about seeing any birds at all!

However, a small miracle! The drizzle stopped and it brightened up a bit as we were having a quick coffee and catch up with birder Robert who we were all pleased to see as he hadn't been able to join us for a few months. Heading out we discovered lots of water birds paddling around on the lakes - Jean was chuffed to see lots of Great and Little Grebes and everyone was able to spot the numerous Wigeons, Gadwalls, Teals and a few Pochards.

Tummies were starting to rumble so we headed to the heated hide (yep that's right the fantastic luxury this birding site uniquely offers) to try n spot some waders and have our sarnies! But not a one to be seen and the bird feeders seemed to have disappointingly been discontinued. So not many small birds around either though Jean and I did see some Long Tail Tits on our return for a cup of tea and a mooch round the visitors centre and shops.