

January Bird Walk, Trimpley and Arley

JANE POPE

The 2014 Bird Walk on January 25th occurred during a spell of relatively mild but very wet weather and we knew we were in for a muddy time. However, there was brightness and even sun as we assembled on the car park at Eymore Wood. It seemed there was an alarmingly huge attendance until we realised that a rambling group was using the same assembly point!

We picked our way carefully down a slippery grass slope towards the railway line, noting typical hedgerow dwellers such as Dunnock, Robin and Blackbird. The footpath then led through conifers where the keen-eared ornithologists alerted us to Tree Creeper, Goldcrest and other small birds high up in the canopy. Beyond the railway, the reservoir appeared unusually quiet - not much to be seen except for Coot, Mallard and a Cormorant that seemed to have been sitting on an orange marker since time began and didn't intend to leave it! A solitary Heron sat hunched high in a tree and there was no sign of Mute Swans – they were found later at Arley.

As we headed towards Arley on the riverside path a Goosander flew along the river and a Canada Goose was seen grazing in the meadow. We were able to note some of the more usual finds, such as Buzzard, thrushes, corvids, woodpeckers and finches, though the Greenfinch eluded us until almost the end of the walk. An acrobatic group of tits made their way through the pathside trees and bushes, at the same time as a rather vocal Nuthatch, and disappeared as quickly as they came. A Marsh Tit was also heard and then spotted. When lunch was mentioned we found a sheltered spot in an old orchard, enjoying some rare January sunshine. Eventually a shooting party came by, advising us to keep our heads down. Shots were heard and we added Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge to our 'bag'. As we neared Arley, a particularly bold Goldcrest was busy in the hedge, entirely unafraid of our presence. There was a Kingfisher in an overhanging

willow, a welcome sighting as there had been much excitement over what turned out to be a salt 'n vinegar crisp packet when viewed through binoculars. Brett caught what was thought to be a flying hoverfly and it turned out to be a honeybee! At the footbridge we saw pigeons, Stock Dove and gulls overhead. Arley was fairly busy and, resisting the shop, we were glad to walk up near the arboretum, where there was interest of various kinds – Mistletoe on oak, magnificent sections of newly-sawn timber and some healthy looking Whitty Pears. The sky was growing cloudy and the light was no longer good for using binoculars.

The footpath back to Eymore Wood led along a muddy track between fields, where a Woodcock rose in front of us and a few more sightings were added to the list. We could hear a thundery storm coming as we headed into the wood. We hoped for Crossbills and they appeared on cue in the larches, a welcome addition to the count. Soon the storm hit, with hail, lightning and an enormous clap of thunder. Fortunately we were nearing our destination, a very bedraggled but well-satisfied bunch of observers.

Many thanks to Jane and Brett who led the walk and kept us in order throughout! 58 species were recorded, a total which compared reasonably well with recent years.

Sightings were as follows: Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Cormorant, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Goosander, Coot, Moorhen, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Red-legged Partridge, Pheasant, Woodcock, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Collared Dove, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Fieldfare, Redwing, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Marsh Tit, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Magpie, Jay, Carrion Crow, Raven, Rook, Jackdaw, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Bullfinch, Crossbill.



January Bird walk, Trimpley Reservoir, 25 January 2014

Rosemary Winnall