

Wilmslow Guild **BIRDWATCHING** *Group*

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NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2019

TONIGHT'S MEETING (Friday 25th October)

Tonight we welcome the return of Jim Almond with a talk entitled "2014 – Jim's Big Year". We will hear about what made 2014 so special.

Jim is an experienced birder/photographer and former Biomedical Scientist who has taken early retirement and now spends much of his spare time in the field enjoying birding or on the hunt for rare or unusual birds and photographing them. He spends part of the summer continuing to seek out the UK's Butterflies, Dragonflies and Damselflies. Jim last visited us in January 2017.

Please join me in welcoming Jim for what I am sure will be a very entertaining evening.

FIELD TRIPS

Our first coach trip is this weekend on Sunday 27th October to Spurn nature reserve on the Yorkshire coast, departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Over the years Spurn has proved to be a very successful destination for our first trip because this 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 are toilets and a café available on site.

You can have an extra hour in bed before the trip since the clocks change on Sunday. Remember to set your alarm clock **1 hour back** before going to bed on Saturday.

The next coach trip after that is on Sunday 24th November to Martin Mere and Lunt Meadows reserves in Lancashire, departing from the Guild at 8am.

Book your seat for both trips at the desk.

COACH TRIP TO YNIS HIR – 12th MAY 2019

For the trip to Ynys-hir we had a smaller coach as access to the reserve was rather tricky. The reserve is situated beside the Dyfi estuary in Ceredigion between Aberystwth and Machynlleth. The trip was fully booked but luckily for John who arrived but was not on Steve's list there was one lady who had to cancel so there was a spare seat.



Wood Warbler

Our coach arrived on time with a lady driver who has driven us on a previous occasion. She was a good smooth driver and manoeuvred the coach beautifully round the tight corners and the country lanes. The only complaint was the coach was too hot and couldn't be cooled down for some reason.

We set off on time from Wilmslow on a beautiful sunny morning, even though the temperature was only about 6C whilst waiting for the coach.

We arrived at the reserve but before we reached the Visitor Centre we were greeted by the song of the, I am told, rare Wood Warbler. Everybody immediately was quiet and waited for a view of the bird. Eventually someone managed to spot it and we all had good views which was very exciting. We continued on to the Visitor Centre and again before we arrived we saw a male Pied Flycatcher perched on a tree trunk. It was very obliging and kept posing for us. Eventually we arrived at the Visitor Centre where we saw a Siskin and a Nuthatch on a huge feeder. Finally we made it into the Centre where the warden informed us of what had been seen and where and also provided everyone with a map.



Pied Flycatcher



Garden Warbler

The group split into several small groups all going their different routes round the reserve. We took the Saltmarsh Trail passing a beautiful Dragonfly sculpture and a huge bug hotel. A good favourite, the Robin was seen and heard and two herons were seen on the pond. Carrying on we heard a Garden Warbler and several saw the Greater Spotted Woodpecker in a tree and then flying off. On the boardwalk there were lots of dead-looking trees. A male Stonechat was heard but difficult to spot with binoculars but easy through the scope. A Raven was seen and heard at the top of a tree and later seen flying. On the way to the Ynys

Feurig hide we were all trying to spot the elusive Redpoll. I saw one in the greenery by the boardwalk with the help of John who pointed out the red on the top of its head. We

think it was nesting there as it kept appearing with grass and other bits in its beak. Also I saw a Wren in the undergrowth near the hide.

We continued on to the hide overlooking the pond where we spotted a Lapwing with 3 chicks, a Barnacle Goose, and some members were lucky enough to see the Cuckoo fly past right in front of the hide. Moving on a Willow Warbler and Tree Pipit were seen. We continued on up through the woodland in the hope of seeing the Redstart. Unfortunately it was heard but not seen. On the way to the Marian Maw hide we saw a pair of Pied Flycatchers. Lovely to watch flitting in and out of the branches. At the hide Canada Geese, Moorhen, a Cormorant flying, Redshanks and Shelducks were seen. A Goosander was spotted near the bank and when she moved away she was followed by 9 young ones.



Barnacle Goose & Canada Goose



Sedge warbler

Jenny & Ian decided to leave our group and were lucky to spot the Osprey, Cuckoo and heard the Cetti's Warbler. Also they saw a Mistle Thrush with a rather large twig in its beak.

As we were walking round, the Cuckoo was very vocal but unseen but several Buzzards were spotted on the thermals. Lots of butterflies - Brimstones, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Small Copper, and an Orange Tip were about most of the day. Chiffchaffs, Pheasants, Tits, Chaffinch and the regular birds were seen and heard. A grass snake was also seen to slither away into the undergrowth.

On the way to look at the Saltings Hide a Little Egret was spotted and then 3 more came into view. We didn't make it to the hide as time was getting short. Some members who did get there were lucky to see a Spoonbill roosting by the pool before it flew away towards the estuary.



Eurasian Spoonbill

Too soon it was time to leave and head home. Whilst waiting to set off some of the ladies sitting on the bus saw the Osprey flying over. Unfortunately I missed it again but I did see a Buzzard in the trees by the motorway.

Ynys-hir is a beautiful reserve. I have never known the time go so quickly and to see so much. In total 70 species were seen. A fabulous day for the birds, the weather and the company.

Photos by Robert D

IRENE W

BURTON MERE WETLANDS RESERVE

The Birdwatching Group had an official summer car trip to Burton Mere on the Dee Estuary on the 5th of June. I had been there on a private visit a few week's earlier on 15th May. This report is a combination of both visits.



Cattle Egret



Cattle Egret with cow

Earlier in the spring the RSPB were excited to announce that 5 species of heron were attempting to nest at Burton Mere reserve. There is already a thriving colony of Grey Herons and Little Egrets at the site, and they were joined this year by a pair of Western Cattle Egrets, a pair of Great Egrets, and a pair of Eurasian Spoonbills. The Cattle Egrets had bred here successfully back in 2017 but neither Great Egrets nor Spoonbills have bred here before.



Spoonbill & Grey Heron

As well as the herons there were also several other "exotics" breeding on the reserve. At least 10 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls were reported to have joined the Black-headed Gull colony and there were a lot of Pied Avocets present. I didn't count them but there could well have been 20-30 pairs. Just a few years

ago both species were typically confined to the south and south-east of England but they have been relentlessly spreading their breeding range northwards in recent years. And for good measure the RSPB confirmed that 2 pairs of Bearded Tits were now nesting in the reedbed. So, a lot to look out for!

Unfortunately on the day of the Group visit the Cattle Egrets had disappeared. They were reported present on BirdGuides the day before and they were back again the day after. However no such problems on my first visit. Shortly after arriving at the reception area an egret flew in from the right (where the heronry is) across the scrape then out of sight on the left. We



Pied Avocets

immediately set off along the path in that direction and found 2 Cattle Egrets in the field behind the Bunker Hide. They were in the field with the cattle just as Cattle Egrets are supposed to do. The egrets were certainly showing breeding plumage with orange on the crown, breast and back. They were quite far down the field and stayed well apart so I couldn't get both in the same photo. The cattle were lying down so not actively disturbing insects and the egrets were going really close in and at times seemed to peck directly on the cattle.



Spoonbill



Mediterranean Gull

On the other side of the reserve on the path heading towards Inner Marsh Pool the RSPB had mown the long grass and fenced off a small area near the entrance to the Marsh Covert Hide to provide a viewpoint towards the heronry. On the way there on the first visit we saw a Spoonbill flying in towards the heronry with sticks in its beak, suggesting nest building. From the viewpoint a Spoonbill could be seen sitting in the trees but it wasn't possible to see if it was sitting on a nest or not. At times it was very close to a Grey Heron and Little Egrets could frequently be seen in the foreground. It was possibly not the same bird that we had seen flying – this one seemed to be roosting rather than nest building.



Great Egret

On the day of the Group visit no Spoonbill activity could be seen in the heronry from the viewpoint, in fact no heron activity of any kind there at all. But we did have very nice views of a Spoonbill out on the Inner Marsh Pool. It was standing in shallow water roosting for a while then went for a walkabout into the deeper water where it then enjoyed a very vigorous bath. There has obviously been an influx of Spoonbills into the area this year. I have noticed that a group of up to 9 Spoonbills have been reported on Parkgate Marsh over the summer.

On the first visit a Great Egret dropped in on the Inner Marsh Pool while we were in the hide. It didn't stay long though. It was immediately harassed by the Black-headed Gulls which constantly dive-bombed it since they were unhappy about it being so close to their colony. After a few minutes it soon

got the message and flew off elsewhere for some peace and quiet. There were no Great Egret sightings in the reserve on the Group visit. Paradoxically it now appears that Great Egrets were the only members of the trio of new nesters to successfully breed at Burton Mere this year. The RSPB announced that 2 juvenile birds had been seen begging food from the adults suggesting a successful fledging. As far as I am aware neither the Cattle Egrets nor Spoonbills fledged any young this year.



Coot Chick



Little Grebe

Mediterranean Gulls could be seen in the main Black-headed Gull colony on the islands of the scrape on the first visit, but not easily. They seemed to occupy the centre of the islands in the longest vegetation. A head or two could occasionally be seen through the scope but too far away for any photos. No Mediterranean Gulls could be seen here at all on the Group visit, mainly because the vegetation had now grown even longer. I thought we were going to dip on this species but we were fortunate that a Mediterranean Gull flew in onto the Inner Marsh Pool while we were watching the Spoonbill from The Marsh Covert Hide. It landed on a small tussock of grass completely out in the open giving good scope views. After a quick spruce-up lasting less than 5 minutes it flew away. Reports of juvenile birds seen later in the summer indicate that the Mediterranean Gulls had a successful breeding season. There were lots of Black-headed Gull chicks, mostly very noisy and constantly begging for food, easily seen on the Group visit.



Black-tailed Godwit

Avocets were plentiful on the reserve on both visits. On the first visit many adults were out on the scrape fishing or roosting by the edge. But it appeared that many more were possibly sitting on nests. On the second visit this was confirmed by lots of Avocet chicks running around. Although mostly still at the downy phase with short bills, the start of an upturn in the bill could easily be seen.

Black-tailed Godwits were also plentiful at the reserve on both visits. Many were showing the orange rufous colouration of breeding plumage on the head, neck and breast and were possibly using the reserve as a stopping-off point to feed up on the way

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to their breeding grounds in Iceland and northern Europe. On the second visit there was a particularly large flock of over 100 in front of the Inner Marsh Hide which also contained a handful of Dunlins. A small flock of Dunlins was also seen on the mud at the edge of the pool.

Turning now to consider the reedbed, both Reed Buntings and Reed Warblers were seen here, the latter on the Group visit. However, the Bearded Tits were as elusive as ever with so signs seen at all on either visit. From the Marsh Covert Hide, looking out on the reedbed side, there was a very nice close-in Little Grebe on my first visit and also several Coot chicks – fluffy little black balls with gingery heads.



Whitethroat

During the second visit there were quite a number of Common Whitethroats present, particularly in the bushes down on the farm side of the reserve. They were actively singing and quite approachable with care. Also at this time there were a lot of Barn Swallows and Sand Martin flying over the reserve, and one or two Common Swifts in the air as well. Back at the Reception feeders we were entertained by several juvenile Great Tits and then a Great Spotted Woodpecker that came in for a feed.

For more photos from Burton Mere please visit Sandpiper's page on the Group website at <http://www.wgbwcopy.wikidot.com/sandpiper-s-page>

ROBERT D

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The Christmas meal this year is planned for Saturday 14th December. We will have our morning car trip to Chelford for some birdwatching followed by lunch at the Egerton Arms Pub at 1230pm.

There is a choice of 2 courses for £18.95 or 3 courses for £23.95. A copy of the menu for the Xmas Fayre is included with the October e-newsletter.

The address for the Egerton Arms is:
Knutsford Road
Chelford
Cheshire SK11 9BB

There will be no need for a deposit this year but full payment will need to be made and orders placed by the November meeting. Annette R will start collecting orders at the October meeting (cheques payable to Wilmslow Guild).

For any further information contact Annette.

Details for the morning car trip will be advised in the November newsletter.

CAWOS INDOOR MEETINGS 2018 - 2019

All meetings are held in the hall at St Vincent's Roman Catholic Church, Tatton Street, Knutsford, WA16 6HR on the first Friday of the month, **unless otherwise stated - please check the programme**. There is a large and free car park off Tatton Street close to the hall.

An entrance fee of £2.00 to members and £4.00 for non-members will be charged at all meetings except the AGM when there will be free admission. A coffee break is taken halfway through the evening. The doors open at 7:30pm for a 7:45pm start.

Details of the next meeting are as follows –

1st November 2019 FROM MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA' by Gary Jones

Gary will take us on a journey from the mountains of Wales down to the coastal fringes, showing many of the birds that occur on the way. Wales has a great variety of habitats and wildlife, so expect a selection of great images highlighting the delights of this country, which is of course, just on our doorstep.

CAR PARKING

Now that we are once again enjoying our coach trips, it seems an appropriate time to remind all our members about parking at the Guild on a Sunday.

Do not park in the car park in front of the Guild. Park in the rear car park or along the side. Avoid obstructing the yellow cross-hatched areas, which must be left clear for turning. You can also park on Bourne Street taking care to avoid obstruction of residents' driveways.

Do not park in the Quakers' car park.

Do not park on Windsor Avenue at any time.

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

Our next indoor meeting is on Friday 22nd November at 7:30pm when our speaker will be Pauline Greenhalgh with a talk entitled "A Shot at Wildlife". 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.

E-mail me

Deadline is the Friday before the meeting.