

Tuesday 14/01/14 0940-1300 WOOLSTON EYES*DRY COOL BRIGHT WITH ONE BRIEF ROGUE SHOWER!*

Our last visit to this area was one made during a bright sunny and warm June morn last year and to be fair this winters morn had most of those ingredients apart from the third element---warmth but plenty of layers seemed to easily override the cool and maintain the sunny dispositions of all as we wended our way around part of this large reserve.

Weir Lane had its offerings before we even touched on the reserve for first a pair of Collared Dove drew our attention as they were busily building a nest on a nearby drainpipe whilst a healthy flock of House Sparrow chirped away and overhead flew a Grey Wagtail thus giving three species before we had stepped away from our cars.

A drake Goldeneye then caught our attention and once we had admired his splendid black and white plumage which he displayed to good effect we also noted a female of the species who was keeping an even closer eye on his movements. Tufted Duck, Mallard and Mute Swan played supporting roles to this prince charming of a bird as he strutted upon his River Mersey stage.

Cormorant in breeding plumage, an elusive Little Grebe and a winter clad Great Crested Grebe next slowed our progress onto No3 bed (Woolston has 4 deposit beds originally created to take the dredgings from the Ship Canal with No3 not in use at present) but we eventually crossed the footbridge and locked ourselves into the delights of this tranquil spot which lies but three miles from Warrington.

A shower then pushed us quickly over to the shelter of the John Morgan hide and here 'Team Tuesday' soon settled into this comfort zone and took in the Reedbed/Open Water vista which was regularly punctuated by a mix of birds going about their daily lives in this wildlife haven.

Feeding stations drew in Reed Bunting, Greenfinch, and Great-Spotted Woodpecker etc whilst 'pootling' about on the water moved Teal, Shoveler and Shelduck giving all enough birds to satisfy our cravings for a 'big-day' list! A Snipe was even espied which was nice but even nicer was the fact that ALL got to see this cryptic wader. Then after a tussle with a few elusive Redpoll whilst we did a circuit of the bed we headed back to the bridge and off the bed our

mission completed to everyone's satisfaction. The call of lunch then moved us swiftly to base with appetites in full flow ready to do justice to lunch.

Dave Steel

Wea Sale group

S21314 Field Trip 02

Friday 17/01/2014

A field Trip Around Woolston Eyes 17/01/2014

Friday 17/01/14 0930-1310 WOOLSTON EYES

Dry and Cool with Bright Periods

Weir Lane seemed to be bursting at the brim with a bustling crowd of birdwatchers that was more than ready to break into our winter season of wanderings about Greater Manchester and beyond ---as with today's fieldtrip when we tripped over into the Warrington area to sample one of its wildlife gems.

House Sparrow, Coal Tit and Great Tit provided our processional music as we edged towards a loop of the Mersey to gain our pre-reserve viewings of Tufted Duck, Mallard and Goldeneye and after all had cast their votes the pied beauty of the latter species won outright and once he had taken his bow we moved onward for the distant No3 bed.

Cormorant in breeding plumage (pale head and white thigh patches) next called for our scrutiny but distraction soon lay elsewhere as a Buzzard came into view all the while the murmured whistling contact call of a hidden flock of Teal flowed through the still air pushing us onward to gain the bed and see these dainty ducks.

We then ignored one of the construction wonders of the last century (the Manchester Ship Canal) in our haste to cross the footbridge into the reserve 'proper' for we could now sense our proximity to an easily gained list of birds that must surely be 'hanging' out on this well managed reserve.

Views from the scaffold platform allowed all to appreciate the work that is required to maintain a healthy mix of reed/open water and willow for over the past six months a lot of the scrub that would have eventually enveloped the water and started the move to woodland had been removed keeping this mix of habitat just right to maintain the reserve as a Site of Special Scientific

Interest for its Wintering Wildfowl numbers.

Finally the John Morgan Hide was reached and once all were snugly shoehorned into this comfort zone the 'serious' work of digging out additional birds for our list began but this was no easy task on this visit for a combination of the mild weather and the 'lateness" of the hour (in the day's activities for birdlife noon is the 'siesta time) denied us easily viewable birds

Sharp eyes overcame shy birds gaining Shoveler, Reed Bunting and Snipe plus a few more hence holistically satisfied we made our retreat towards lunch.

Dave Steel

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