

Saturday 300405 Woolston Ringing TripGrey and wet at times

A trip with a difference as we were on a specific 'mission' to find a 'rarity' i.e. a bird in the hand!

The weather wasn't too promising for our intended trip but we pushed on from Weir Lane in our usual optimistic and positive style.

Although our aim was to get onto No1 bed and watch any ringing activity that may be taking place on such a changeable morning nothing could stop us from taking note of the birds we encountered along the way. Finding *Gadwall/Blackcap/Swallow/Great Crested Grebe/Kestrel and Stock Dove* along our route, which followed the North bank of the Ship Canal in an eastward direction.

The rain enabled one of our crew to take the stand in role for Mary Poppins as she twirled her way brolley in hand towards No1 bed (giving some lame excuse about having to prevent rain from getting on her glasses!)

We first encountered evidence of ringing activity at a group of Willows which had been set up as a feeding station creating that perfect symbiosis of Ringers provided much needed food for the birds whilst the birds repay the ringers by pausing a while in the mist nets and proffering up their legs for a nice BTO ring! The nets were 'furled' up owing to the rain as the welfare of the birds was as ever paramount but at least we were able to see how the ringers set up their nets in pathways through the trees known as 'rides'.

We then moved through No1 bed, which differs, from No3 bed, which we had visited the previous Tuesday, in its more open aspect and its drier habitat. Soon we met up with the Ringers Dave/Tom/Alan and Phil who had just finished processing a couple of interesting birds which Alan managed to get a couple of photographs of before the *Whinchat/Great Spotted Woodpecker/Chaffinch and Blackcap* were released.

The *Whinchat* was a fine specimen of a male and it simply flew into a nearby willow shook it's feathers and continued its journey to its breeding grounds. Soon we were returning to our cars but not before seeing a mist net in use—oh and finding and more importantly SEEING our own *Grasshopper Warbler*! Don't forget if you wish to return to see ringing in the summer just let me know and I'll arrange it with the Ringers. Dave