

Group visit to RSPB Titchwell Marsh - 24 March 202

RSPB Titchwell is a premier nature reserve on the North Norfolk coast between the villages of Titchwell and Thornham. It is one of several important reserves along this coast, all of which are important for significant numbers of wintering geese, waders, and wildfowl. The reserve consists of a range of different habitats including reedbeds, saltmarsh and several large freshwater lagoons. There is also access to a large sandy beach with extensive views over the sea.

Thirty members were on the coach from Lincoln, and several new people were welcomed aboard, which was very good to see. We arrived at the reserve at 10 am and made our way through the car park to the Visitor Centre and Café through a wooded glade where we heard Chiffchaff and Robin singing. The Visitor Centre has a Meet and Greet hut, gift shop and café.

Our first port of call was to the bird feeding viewing area where we saw Great and Blue Tits, Robin, Wood pigeon, Wren, and Dunnock. From there our party headed down the West Bank path which opened to vast areas of saltmarsh, reedbeds and freshwater lagoons. Looking out over the saltmarsh we picked out both Greylag and Canada Geese, a Little Egret, and a small Chinese Water Deer.

It was a partly sunny day as we walked down the path but there was a bitterly cold wind blowing which kept the temperature down!

Most of the birdlife was to be found on the freshwater lagoons. An RSPB volunteer showed us a pair of Garganey, which for some was their first ever sighting of these ducks. However, this sighting was soon overshadowed by the presence of over 100 Mediterranean Gulls amid thousands of Black-headed Gulls. These gulls are beautiful, having true black heads (unlike the Black-headed ones), red bill and red or black legs and a haunting call.



Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)

Mediterranean Gull

The lagoons also held many wildfowl and waders including both Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, Avocets, Redshank, Turnstone, Shelduck, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Brent Geese, Red-breasted Merganser, Coots and Moorhens. Flying overhead to the Mediterranean Gull consternation of the birds on the lagoons were at least four magnificent Marsh Harriers.

The West Bank path leads down to the beach where some members saw a flock of Common Scoter on the sea as well as many waders on the shoreline including hundreds of Oystercatchers, Sanderlings, Curlews, Ringed Plovers, and a solitary Grey Plover.

The afternoon saw our party heading down the Fen Trail and the East Trail where there were two viewing areas. We found two Snipe on the East Trail lagoon as well as a single Mute Swan. En route back to the Centre we were told of a Tawny Owl hiding in a densely ivy-covered tree. We located the tree, but most people were unable to see the bird although a couple said they saw it move its head!

Returning to the café meant a warm cup of tea and a lovely cheese scone before going to the coach. Even this threw up the sighting of a lovely Grey Wagtail in the car park which was the icing on the cake of a splendid day out. Many thanks are due to Mike for the original organisation of the trip and to Geoff and Graham for looking after us on the actual day.

During the day the group saw a total number of just under 70 birds, a record for recent years. These were as follows: Black-headed Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Herring Gull, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jay, Wood pigeon, Blackbird, Starling, Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Bearded Tit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Brent Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Red Kite, Tawny Owl, Cormorant, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Garganey, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Shelduck, Teal, Pintail, Wigeon, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Scoter, Coot, Moorhen, Little Grebe, Avocet, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Sandwich Tern, Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Knot, Sanderling, Snipe, Pied and Grey Wagtail, Mute Swan, Red-legged Partridge, Goldcrest and Firecrest.

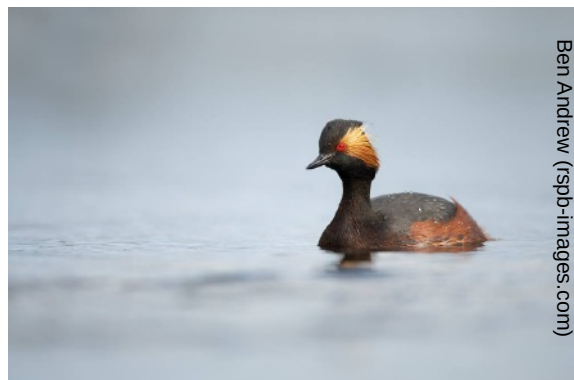
Pete Dryburgh
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

St Aidan's – 28 April 2024

Our field trip in April was to St Aidan's RSPB Reserve near Leeds. The area is bounded by the River Aire and was formed by mining subsidence. It consists of reedbeds, lakes with islands, scrapes, grassland, scrub and native trees. It attracts many interesting birds including Black-necked Grebes, which breed here.

When we left Lincoln, it was dismal and wet but at St Aidan's the rain was light for most of the time and it stopped by mid-afternoon. There were also some sunny periods. The Visitor Centre overlooks one of the lakes and there were many Sand Martins flying over the water. Among these birds there were some House Martins and one or two Swallows. A couple of Swifts were also seen later in the day. On the lake we spotted Great Crested Grebes, Mute Swans, Greylag Geese, Canada Geese, Coots, Tufted Ducks and Gadwalls.

We set off to explore the reserve and first of all we stopped at the trees near the enormous piece of mining machinery to see the resident Little Owl. However, we did need some help from one of the RSPB volunteers to find it. Further on in the reedbeds we spotted Lapwings, Black-headed Gulls, Shovelers, Mallards, Shelducks, a Kestrel, two Marsh Harriers, a Sparrowhawk, Little Grebes, Moorhens and a Spoonbill which flew over. A Redshank, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Little Egret and two Bitterns were also seen. I think that most of our group saw the Black-necked Grebes along with a Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting, Tree Pipit, Grey Partridge, Skylark, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Linnet and Meadow Pipit. Other birds seen were Woodpigeons, Magpies, Carrion Crows, Black-headed Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Cormorants, Robins, Blackbirds, Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Great Tits, Goldfinches and Starlings.



Black-necked Grebe

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Despite the weather we had a great time and we saw a total of 52 birds.

*Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

Bempton Cliffs – 19 May 2024

Our field trip in May was to Bempton Cliffs and 37 people were on the coach. The weather was cold but it remained dry throughout the day with an occasional glimpse of the sun. When we arrived at the parking area a Lesser Whitethroat was heard and it was seen in an adjacent area of bushes and trees. Other birds in this same area were Blackbirds, Goldfinches, Chaffinches and Woodpigeons. Also, there were excellent views of a Barn Owl in a nearby field.

We then headed for the cliffs and the feeders at Reception were attracting Tree Sparrows, House Sparrows, Great Tits and Blue Tits. As we walked along the footpath to the cliff viewing areas Swallows, House Martins and Sand Martins were flying around. There were a large number of Herring Gulls and we also spotted a Reed Warbler, Dunnock, Skylark, Linnet, Pheasant, Meadow Pipits, Magpies, Jackdaws, Carrion Crows and Starlings.

When we arrived at the cliffs the noise from the thousands of seabirds clinging to the cliffs, flying above them and on the sea was amazing. There were Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Gannets and Fulmars, a wonderful sight. After a couple of hours



Stonechat

Leslie Cater (rspb-images.com)

watching these birds, we returned to the coach and went further along the coast to North Landing. This is a distance of approximately four miles and the six people who decided to walk added Shag and Stonechat to our list. The only new bird we saw at North Landing was a Short-eared Owl, which was an amazing find by one of our group, flying over a stone wall in the far distance.

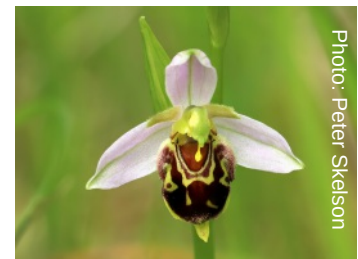
We had an excellent day and our total birds species seen was 34.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Trip to Wales - 21 to 24 May 2024

In May 33 people spent four days in Wales staying at the Royal Victoria Hotel in Llanberis. We left Lincoln at 7.30 am and despite three delays on the motorways and a compulsory break we arrived at Conway RSPB Reserve at 1 pm. This reserve is on the Conway Estuary so there is saltmarsh as well as reedbeds and wetlands.

We walked round the outside of the reserve and warblers were singing everywhere. We also saw Blackcaps, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Sedge Warblers and Reed Warblers. In the reedbeds and wetlands there were Canada Geese, Mute Swans, Mallards, Gadwalls, Lapwings, Tufted Ducks, a Little Egret, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe and Coots. On the estuary we found Herring Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Shelducks, Black-tailed Godwits, Curlews, a Grey Heron and Oystercatcher. Carrion Crows, Jackdaws, House Martins and Swifts were flying around and a Common Buzzard was also spotted. Other birds seen were Robin, Magpie, Greenfinch, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Blackbird, Siskin and Great Spotted Woodpecker. There were also butterflies on the wing including Red Admirals, Holly Blues and Speckled Woods. A good variety of wild flowers were in bloom and Marsh Orchids and Bee Orchids were quite common. After a pleasant few hours, we set off for our hotel at Llanberis.



Bee Orchid

The next day, Wednesday, we went to RSPB Ynys-hir which is near Machynlleth so we had quite a long journey through a mountainous terrain. Unfortunately, it was misty and drizzly therefore we were unable to enjoy the spectacular scenery. However, by the time we arrived at the reserve the weather had improved.

This reserve consists of peat bog, reedbeds, saltmarsh and woodlands. Also, there were feeders which were attracting a Robin, Siskin, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Great Tits, Blue Tits and Chaffinches. We decided to do the woodland trail first to hopefully find Pied Flycatchers and I think most of the group were successful. We also spotted a Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, two Red Kites, a Song Thrush and Jay. We then explored the other areas and we saw more new birds which included a Great White Egret, Cattle Egret, Redshank, Shovelers and two Ravens. A Cetti's Warbler was seen and a Grasshopper Warbler was heard.



Pied Flycatcher (male)

We then left Ynys-hir and visited the Dyfi Osprey Project. This is a fantastic place with a wonderful café and information centre where you can learn all about the Ospreys and view the nest on screens. Also, approximately a mile from the centre there is a magnificent, purpose-built observation tower where you can look at the nest through telescopes or view it on screens. While we were there the female was brooding one egg and two chicks were visible in the nest. The male bird was perched nearby. Soon it was time to return to the coach and when we came back along the board walk through the reedbed, we heard a Cuckoo and spotted two Ravens.

On Thursday we intended to go to RSPB South Stack on Anglesey but when we arrived at the Britannia Bridge it was closed because of an incident on the bridge. Unfortunately, the coach exceeded the weight limit on the Menai Bridge, therefore, we were unable to go. A quick decision was made to visit RSPB Burton Mere, on the Dee Estuary, instead and go to South Stack on Friday.

This small, compact reserve consists of freshwater wetlands, mixed farmland and woodland and it has an excellent café. There were the usual waders and wildfowl but we did add some new birds to our list. They included a Greenshank, Avocets, Greylag Geese, a Pintail, Wigeons, Moorhens, Black-headed Gulls and a Marsh Harrier. Other new birds were a Garden Warbler, Stonechat, Redstart, Swallows and Sand Martins.

All too soon it was our final day and with the improvement in the weather, particularly the wind, we were pleased we were visiting South Stack today. We arrived in good time and from the car park we headed towards the lighthouse across heathland where we saw our first Wren and Meadow Pipit of the holiday. When we arrived at the clifftops we spotted Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. We then went up to the lighthouse where we saw Choughs and Ravens and those who climbed down the 400 steps were rewarded with the view of a pair of nesting Puffins. Gannets and Cormorants were seen as well as Stonechats, Wheatears, Redpolls, Pied Wagtails, Linnets and a Common Whitethroat. In view of the long journey home, we decided to leave the reserve at 3 pm. We had achieved our main objective and seen the Choughs so after a final visit to the café we set off for Lincoln. We had a good journey home and we arrived back in Lincoln at approximately 8.30 pm.

It was a very enjoyable holiday despite the weather and we saw a total of 80 birds. The hotel was very good and our thanks go to our co-leaders Geoff and Graham for organising the trip and looking after us all. We must also thank our wonderful driver, Keith, who managed to get a large coach to some very difficult locations. Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)



Photo: Peter Skelton

Stonechat

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Weeting Heath – 16 June 2024

In June 33 people went on the field trip to Weeting Heath in Norfolk. It is managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and it is an area of sandy heathland and conifer forest. It was a fine, cloudy day with sunny periods later. When we arrived, we were told that the Stone Curlews were visible so we made our way to one of the hides.

We immediately found one in the rough grass but we needed to view it through a telescope to positively identify it. Eventually it started moving around and three more birds appeared and we had excellent views of all of them. Further out in the field there were Woodpigeons, Stock Doves, Lapwings, Carrion Crows and an Oystercatcher. A Skylark was singing and Herring Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Swifts were flying around. We also spotted a Red Kite and Kestrel in the distance.

After a short break for lunch, we decided to do the Woodland Walk. Around the Visitor Centre there were Chaffinches, Goldfinches, House Sparrows, a Wren, Marsh Tit, Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. On the heathland we found a Curlew and Swallows and House Martins were flying over. In the woodlands we saw Blackbirds, Blue Tits, Great Tits, a Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Stone Curlew

As we progressed along the track we met Steve, who is one of our group and he informed us that he had found a Nightjar. He very kindly took us to the area where it was perched on a branch a few yards from the footpath. We were able to obtain an excellent view of the bird and while we were watching it, a male Nightjar flew over us into the same wooded area. It is unusual to see Nightjars during the day; therefore, it caused a lot of excitement. It was definitely the highlight of the day and if Chris Packham had been there, he would have been "rubbing his thighs". Reluctantly we continued our walk and added Yellowhammer, Goldcrest and Green Woodpecker to our list. This brought the total bird species seen during the day to 33.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Saltholme RSPB Reserve – 15 September 2024

In September we went to the RSPB Reserve at Saltholme which is near Middlesbrough. We arrived at 10 am and the weather was cloudy but dry and remained the same throughout the day. Saltholme Reserve was officially opened in 2009 and although it is in the heart of industrial Middlesbrough it is a wonderful reserve. It has a good café, shop and reception, which overlooks a lake and from here we saw Stock Doves, Mallards, Gadwalls, Tufted Ducks, Pochards, Mute Swans, Lapwings, a Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Common Snipe, Greenshank and Little Egret. A Sparrowhawk also flew across the front of the viewing area and the adjacent feeders were attracting Blue Tits, Great Tits, Goldfinches and a Greenfinch.

We then moved on to the Pools Hide which is a good place to see water birds and we were not disappointed. There were Canada and Greylag Geese, Avocets, Little Stints, Ringed Plovers, a Curlew, Grey Heron and Common Sandpiper. Swallows were flying around and a couple of Pied Wagtails were flitting about on the water's edge. There was a flock of gulls consisting of Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Common Gull.

We eventually retraced our steps to visit the Wildlife Watch Point. On the way we spotted a Kestrel, Magpie, four Barnacle Geese, Black-tailed Godwits, Starlings, Linnets, Carrion Crows and two Pink-footed Geese flying over. At the hide we had an excellent view of a Water Rail, Bar-tailed Godwit and Teals. There were two Tree Sparrows on the feeders and we heard a Cetti's Warbler and Wren in the bushes.



Bar-tailed Godwit, RSPB Saltholme

Our next area was the wildflower walk and we added Blackbird, Robin and Marsh Harrier to our list. At the viewing area at Allotment Pool, we saw Shovelers, a Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, Sand Martins and Woodpigeons. One person also had a brief sighting of a Ring Ousel on a post on the far bank. When we returned to the Visitor Centre, we stopped at Paddy's Pool Hide and there were over a hundred Barnacle Geese.

We had a wonderful day and the total bird species seen was 54.

*Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

Summer Leys Nature Reserve – 13 October 2024

These worked-out gravel workings are managed by the Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire/Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. The reserve is located at Wollaston near Wellingborough in Northamptonshire in the Upper Nene Valley. It is 47 hectares in area and has a small range of facilities including a small shop/refreshment area and toilets as well as several hides. The site consists of a large lake as well as scrapes and woodland. Part of the route round the main lake consists of the line of a disused railway, now a public footpath.

The visit by the Group was the first this century so most people had never visited the reserve. Departure from Lincoln was at 8 am with further pick-ups at North Hykeham. Twenty-six Members made the trip.

Arrival at the reserve was at 10 am where we were met by the warden and a volunteer who were most helpful in giving information about the site and dispensing fortifying drinks. The sightings board revealed that there was a rarity on the reserve of which more later.

We split up into small groups and headed off into the reserve where our party spotted several small birds in the woodland including Robins, Great and Blue Tits, a Wren and a Dunnock. The hides on the east side of the lake included a double-decker hide and a feeding station. From these we were

able to see that there was a large gull colony with Black-headed, Common, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed present. There were also scores of Cormorants and Lapwings. The duck species were mainly of the dabbling sort except for Tufted Ducks. There were also substantial numbers of Greylag and Canada Geese both on the lake and adjoining fields. Wherever we go now we are sure to see egrets and this site was no exception producing several Great Whites as well as Little Egrets. There were also several Snipe.

The Feeding Station produced Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Dunnock, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Collared Dove, Woodpigeon and a single Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Moving onto the west side of the lake we spotted a large group of enthusiasts viewing one of the islands on the lake. We had been made aware that this bird was present, but then we homed in on a Glossy Ibis which was sitting amongst other birds - a very beautiful sight to see and for quite a few members their first sighting of this splendid bird. We spent many minutes watching it.

Suitably delighted by this sighting our party then headed off for a well-earned lunch!

After lunch we repeated the morning's walk but in the opposite direction. We viewed the island again, but the Ibis had gone. However, a lady pointed out to us that the bird had moved to an island on the other side of the lake. Using our scopes, we had some wonderful views of the Ibis feeding along the island's shoreline.

This is an excellent reserve, and our visit was very well-received by all. Departure was at 4.30 pm and arrival back in Lincoln was around 7 pm. Thanks are due to Geoff and Graham for organising another great day out and to Roger for sorting out the tech!

Birds recorded during our visit:

Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Wren, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Dunnock, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Lapwing, Snipe, Glossy Ibis, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Gadwall, Pintail, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Cormorant, Goldcrest, Blackbird, Coot, Moorhen, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Starling, Reed Bunting, Stonechat.

*Peter Dryburgh
Lincoln RSPB Local Group.*

Welney Wetland Centre – 17 November 2024

In November we went to Welney Wetland Centre in West Norfolk. There were 35 people on the coach and we arrived at the Reserve at 9.45 am. The weather was good and it remained dry until the journey home.

Welney covers 1,000 acres of the Ouse Washes which is Britain's largest area of seasonally flooded land. There is a heated Main Observatory, plus four hides and a magnificent Visitor Centre. In the winter you can watch the daily feeding of the Whooper and Bewick's Swans from the heated Main Observatory.

There is a bird feeding station which you can view from the Visitor Centre and it was attracting Blue Tits, Great Tits, House Sparrows, Tree Sparrows and a Blackbird. Access from the Visitor Centre to the hides is via a substantial wooden bridge and from this bridge we spotted two Cattle Egrets among the sheep. Also there was a hovering Kestrel and some Carrion Crows. We then



Glossy Ibis, Summer Leys



Cattle Egret taken at Welney

visited the Main Observatory and were astounded to see such a large number of wildfowl. Whooper Swans were in the majority and there were many Wigeons, Pochards and a large flock of Black-tailed Godwits. A few Mute Swans were among them as well as Greylag Geese, Canada Geese, Coots, Mallards, Teals, Shovelers, Pintails, Gadwalls, Shelducks and a single Tufted Duck. A couple of Marsh Harriers were quartering the marsh, a Sparrowhawk flew across and two Great White Egrets were seen in the distance. Other birds included Starlings, Lapwings, Jackdaws, Golden Plovers, a Cormorant, Lesser Black-backed Gull and an Egyptian Goose.

We then moved on to the Reedbed Hide where we saw Black-headed Gulls, White-fronted Geese, Moorhens, Magpies, Dunlins, Grey Herons, a Redshank, Common Buzzard and one person caught a glimpse of an American Wigeon. We then returned to the Main Observatory to see the feeding of the swans which was a fitting end to a great day.

Additional birds seen by some of the group were two Peregrine Falcons, a Water Pipit, Pheasant, Red Kite, Barn Owl, Short-eared Owl, Common Snipe and Long-tailed Tits. This brought the number of bird species seen to 53.

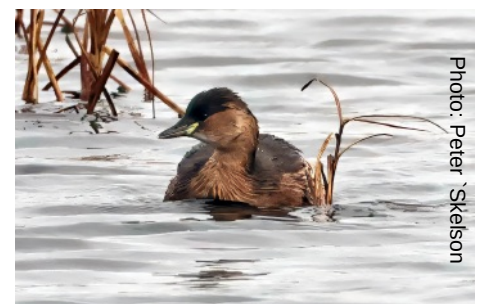
*Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group*

Gibraltar Point – 15 December 2024

Our final field trip of the year was to Gibraltar Point which is managed by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The reserve consists of two ridges, the East and West Dunes, which run roughly parallel to the sea. Between these dunes there are areas of fresh and saltmarsh. Also there are four artificial pools with hides and an excellent Visitor Centre and café.

We left the car park and headed for The Plantation where we saw a Robin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackbird and Wren. The Blue Tit was the only bird at the feeding station so we moved on to Jackson Marsh where there is an hide. On the water there were Mallards, Teals, Wigeons, Gadwalls, Shovelers, Black-tailed Godwits and three Little Grebes and the small island contained Lapwings and a Curlew. The surrounding fields were also attracting Lapwings and Curlews and in the distance there was a large mixed flock of Greylag Geese, Pink-footed Geese and Canada Geese.

Next we went to Tennyson's Sand where there are three hides and we spotted Mute Swans, Tufted Ducks, a Pintail, Cormorant, Carrion Crows, Jackdaws, Magpies, Starlings and Pheasants. A female Marsh Harrier also flew over the water and was soon being mobbed by the crows. We then crossed the road to The Mere and Fenland Lagoon. We again saw a Little Grebe and while returning to the car park we spotted a Little Egret, Great White Egret and Meadow Pipit. Also a Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen flying over the car park.



Little Grebe, Gibraltar Point

After lunch we made our way to the Wash Viewpoint and we found Shelducks, Herring Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Black-headed Gulls. From here we went to the East Dunes and on the Old Saltmarsh there was a small flock of Brent Geese. At the viewing point on the East Dunes we saw Redshanks, Turnstones, Dunlins and Oystercatchers.

Other birds seen were a Sparrowhawk and Hen Harrier which brought our total for the day to 43.

*Ray Daniels
Lincoln RSPB Local Group*

Photos from the 2024 field trips

A selection of photos taken on the 2024 field trips are available to view at:
<https://vimeo.com/1041773502>