

## Three Counties Tour – June 2025

In June 29 people from our Group went on a four-day holiday to Somerset. We visited Avalon Marshes, Seaton Wetlands, Ham Wall Nature Reserve and Langford Lakes. We left Lincoln at approximately 7.50 am and despite a delay of an hour on the M5 we arrived at Avalon Marshes Centre at 2.05 pm. This is part of the Somerset Levels and consists of lakes, reedbeds, fens and woodland. It is steeped in history and parts of the Neolithic Sweet Track, the oldest man-made route way in Britain, still exist on the Reserve.

It was raining and we decided to visit the hide overlooking the Decoy Lake. The woodlands gave some shelter and we heard and saw Goldfinches, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Blackcaps, Robins and Blackbirds. On and around the lake we saw Mute Swans, a Black Swan, Mallards, Coots, Great Crested Grebes, Greylag Geese and a Great White Egret. Swifts were flying around and we also spotted a Cuckoo, Red Kite, Sparrowhawk and two Common Buzzards. Other birds seen were a Pied Wagtail, Jay, Pheasant, Magpie, Carrion Crows, House Sparrows and Long-tailed Tits. A Water Rail was also heard and after a pleasant couple of hours we returned to the coach and made our way to the Shrubbery Hotel at Ilminster.

The next day, Thursday, was a lovely sunny day and we went to Seaton Wetlands on the Devon coast. This reserve consists of marshland and reedbeds alongside the River Axe. Also, the Seaton Tramway runs alongside the River Axe and a day ticket was included so we were able to use the tram throughout the day to visit various parts of the reserve and the lovely town of Colyton. There are five hides and 4km of trails throughout the reserve and we saw many different birds from those seen the day before. On the river there were Oystercatchers, Cormorants, Herring Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Mallards, Shelducks, Mute Swans, Greylag Geese, Canada Geese, a Cattle Egret and Little Egrets. On various parts of the reserve, we found Swallows, House Martins, Chaffinches, Grey Herons, Avocets, Moorhens, Reed Warblers, Reed Buntings, Blue Tits, Jackdaws, Meadow Pipits, Dunnocks, Redshanks, Starlings, Woodpigeons and a wall with Sand Martin nests. Along the river near Colyford a Grey Wagtail, Dipper and Kingfisher were spotted and a Treecreeper was seen on an adjacent tree.



Sand Martins feeding young at Seaton Wetlands  
man-made Sand Martin bank

On Friday we returned to the Somerset Levels but this time we visited Ham Wall. On previous visits to this reserve, we have seen many Bitterns but on this occasion they did not fly. It was very windy and this could have been the reason but we did hear one booming and some people had a brief glimpse of a bird in the reeds. We did see a Hobby and we had good views of Marsh Harriers hunting over the reedbeds. We also spotted Black-tailed Godwits, Lapwings, Gadwalls, Pochards, Chaffinches, a Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Water Rail, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay and Garden Warbler. One person also saw a Grass Snake.

On our final day, Saturday, we vacated our hotel and set off for Lincoln but on the way home we stopped at Langford Lakes Nature Reserve near Salisbury. This is a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserve and it is located in the Wyle Valley between Salisbury and Warminster. There are five hides overlooking the lakes and we visited all of them. Most of the birds seen were the same as the previous three days but there were a few new ones to add to our list. They included two Common Terns, a Spotted Flycatcher, Stock Dove, Little Ringed Plover, Tufted Ducks and Common Whitethroats. This brought our total bird species seen during the four days to 74.

We had a wonderful four days and stayed at a very good hotel. The weather was fair and our thanks go to our trip leaders, Geoff, Jane and Graham for organising the holiday and looking after us all. We must also thank our wonderful driver, Keith, for safely taking us to some difficult places.

*Ray Daniels*  
*RSPB Lincoln Local Group*