

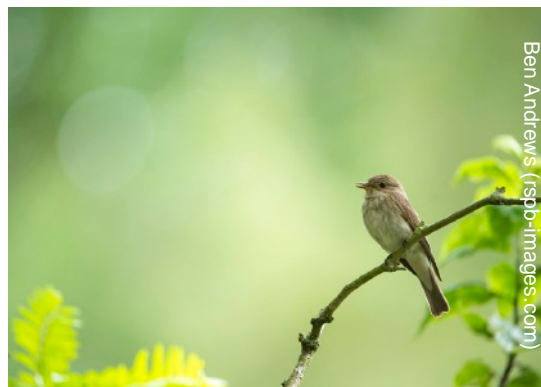
RSPB The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire - 11 May 2025

Thirty-six members and students left Lincoln to visit the Lodge nature reserve at Sandy on a lovely, warm sunny morning. The Lodge contains the RSPB Headquarters buildings, and the group had a sighting of these as our coach traversed the site before parking up.

The nature reserve consists of the largest area of heathland in Bedfordshire, extensive of both deciduous and conifer woodland and former quarries. There are also some small pools. Close to the main entrance there are the RSPB shop, café, toilets and information point.

The group then split up into smaller groups, some heading immediately to the café where there was an extensive range of teas, coffees and delicious cakes. The small party I was with decided to forgo this pleasure until later in the day!

We first visited the information point where a very helpful staff member told us what had been seen on the reserve. She pointed out where ravens were nesting in a tall tree about 200 metres from where we were standing. Almost immediately we looked up at the sound of 'Croink, Croink' to see one of the Ravens flying above us! This was followed by seeing a Red Kite and Buzzard soaring above us. We were then told that a Spotted Flycatcher had been seen earlier in some oak trees close to the bridleway through the site so we headed off to see if we could find it. We were very fortunate that a local, very helpful, birder had located the whereabouts of the bird and was scanning the canopy to try and locate it. The oak tree foliage was very dense, so it was very difficult to get onto the bird, but first one and later all of our party managed to see the bird. To most of us this was the bird of the day. This was closely followed by a sighting through the tree canopy of our first Hobby of the day.



Spotted Flycatcher

After this successful morning it was time for a return to the café for some very welcome coffee and cake/scone or ice creams! Suitably refreshed, we set out in the afternoon for two of the main trails over the Heathland and through the woodland. We had a chorus of warblers throughout the walk with many Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Whitethroats and a single Willow Warbler being heard but rarely seen. Also seen were a succession of Red Kites, another Hobby, a Sparrowhawk, a Kestrel and a pair of Sand Martins.

Return to the car park allowed us to identify some of the smaller tits and finches whilst enjoying a welcome rest after a very warm day. Return was at 5.30 pm after a great day's birding.

During the day we saw or heard the following birds: Jackdaw, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Goldfinch, Robin, Blackcap, Red Kite, Chiffchaff, Carrion Crow, Whitethroat, Buzzard, Raven, Garden Warbler, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Wren, Green Woodpecker, Stock Dove, Hobby, Pheasant, Rook, Sand Martin, Kestrel, Goldcrest, Sparrowhawk, Blue Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Woodpigeon, Spotted Flycatcher, Blackbird, Willow Warbler and Mistle Thrush.

Thanks to Geoff, Graham and Roger for organising an excellent day's birding.

Pete Dryburgh
RSPB Lincoln Local Group