**A year in the life of Sutton Coldfield u3a Birdwatching Group**

**The Group would like to share some short reports of where we have been and what we saw on recent birdwatching visits in 2022**

We had some very enjoyable trips to some lovely reserves whatever the weather and good company too. Lunch was either picnics or at a suitable venue on or near the reserves.

**January – Birds of Prey – talk by John Foulds.**

John gave a very interesting illustrated talk on birds of prey including Kestral, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine falcon and golden eagle. After coffee, owls were discussed – barn, tawny, little, long eared. We were also treated to photographs of some of John’s beautiful paintings of birds.

**February – Rutland Water**

We had to delay our visit by a week due to Storm Franklin! On a sunny windy day 12 of us met at Rutland Water Nature Reserve. Our bird list included Great White Egret, male and female Smew at the visitor centre and Gadwall, Oystercatcher, Wigeon, Dunlin, Little grebe, Great crested grebe, Shoveler, Common snipe, Song Thrush, Kestrel, Pintail, Long tailed tit at the various lagoons. At the dam end of the reservoir we were fortunate to see two Great northern divers together with Lesser and Greater black backed gulls. In all 54 birds seen and two heard including Cetti’s warbler.

**March – Park Lime Pits Nature Reserve and the Rushall Canal**

13 of us met at the carpark on a very nice sunny day. In the carpark we were treated to Chiffchaff singing and also Long tailed tits. Along the canal and we met our target bird, a Little owl, perched ready for us. Birds we saw in the nature reserve included Goldfinch, Common buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Lapwing, Grey heron, Blackbird, Greater spotted woodpecker, Wren, Ring necked parakeet, Green woodpecker (heard) , nuthatch, jackdaw and linnets. After lunch we walked to Little Aston sewage works where additional birds included Dunnock, Skylark, Pied wagtail, and Redwing, 34 birds seen and one heard. There were also a few butterflies – Comma and Small tortoiseshell

**April – Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve - Warwickshire Wildlife Trust**

The day was split between a morning walk around the pools and the afternoon walking around rough ground and fields. Lunch at the centre in between! 13 of us met for this visit. Birds seen included Great spotted woodpecker, Greylag goose, Grey heron, Cormorant, Blackcap, Shoveler, Gadwall, Crow, Lapwing, Oyster catcher, Stock dove, Common buzzard, Common snipe, Chiffchaff, Wren, Long tailed tit, Willow warbler, Green woodpecker (heard) and Garden warbler (heard) 39 birds seen and 4 heard. We also saw muntjac deer, and butterflies Peacock, Orange tip, Small tortoiseshell and Comma.

**May – Belvide Reservoir – West Midlands Bird Club and Doxy Marshes – Staffordshire Wildlife Trust**

The weather was mainly cloudy but 10 of us met for this visit. Bird seen at Belvide included Swift, Coot, Great crested grebe, Common tern, Goldfinch, Gadwall, Cormorant, Shelduck, Blackcap, Black swan, Tree sparrow, Reed warbler and Pochard. After lunch at Dobbies Gailey garden centre we moved to Doxey Marshes (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust). We were a little disappointed with the birding but birds added included magpie, Blackbird and Jackdaw. 38 birds seen and 2 heard.

**10th June 2022. Evening visit to Cannock Chase.**

11 of us met at Whitehouse Common car park on a breezy cloudless evening. We had to wait until about 9.45 pm to see our first target bird the Woodcock and a further 15 minutes to see our first Nightjar. Other interesting birds seen included Cuckoo, Stonechat and Tree pipit.

**17th June 2022. Rutland Water**

With the target bird being the Osprey. 10 of us met at the Manton Bay part of the reserve on a hot sunny day. We walked to the hide opposite the Osprey nest where we saw the male and female Ospreys, plus 3 juveniles on the nest. Other interesting birds seen in the bay included Little egret, Oystercatcher, Red kite and Common buzzard. We then moved on to the Egleton part of the reserve and after our picnic lunch we visited the various lagoons on the reserve. The best birds seen included Kestrel, Cuckoo, Avocet, Shelduck, We saw in total 48 birds and heard 3.

**25th July 2022. Visit to Shustoke Reservoir.**

12 of us met at the reservoir. The weather was fine. We walked the large and small reservoirs. The birding was quiet, typical for this time of the year. Best birds seen were Lapwing, Meadow pipit plus a selection of ducks. In the afternoon some of us went to The Broomy Croft part of Kingsbury Water Park starting with a light lunch at the Granary Cafe. Best birds seen were Oystercatcher, Common tern, Little egret plus more ducks and geese. Total number of birds seen on the day was 33.

**We do not have a meeting in August**

**September – Frampton – RSPB**

Our first coach trip of the year. Frampton is a freshwater reserve on the edge of the Wash. Weather forecast was a bit worrying but there was no rain in the morning and a short heavy shower in the afternoon when we were, fortunately, in a hide.

The morning walk included the sea bank with the Wash saltmarsh on the other side. Birds seen included Avocet, Ruff, Black tailed godwits, Shoveler, Curlew, Spotted Redshank, Shoveler, Yellow wagtail, Kestrel and Little ringed plover. After a picnic lunch, eaten on the coach as the visitor centre was being refurbished, we visited the 360 degree hide in the southern part of the reserve. Unfortunately, noisy management work was taking place which scared off most of the birds. At a nearby hide we had more luck and birds added included Pectoral sandpiper Goldfinch, Great crested grebe, Little stint, Dunlin and Knot. 32 different birds seen.

**October – Ladywalk Nature Reserve – also managed by West Midlands Bird Club**

A rainy day but 9 of us turned up. The morning was spent moving from hide to hide during pauses in the rain. Birds seen included Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Coal tit, Robin, Gadwall, Shoveler, Mute swan, Little egret, Nuthatch, Redwing, Great white egret and Stock dove. We did manage to see 36 birds and heard two.

An afternoon visit to Middleton Lakes was abandoned because of the rain and there is very little shelter at the reserve.

**November – Slimbridge**

Our second coach trip with 25 members travelling to Slimbridge which was the first reserve created by the artist and naturalist Peter Scott in 1946 and is on the estuary of the River Severn. It is now part of the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust.

It was a mainly sunny day and very enjoyable with many taking advantage of the restaurant and the shop.

Unfortunately, most of the collection birds were out of public view due to avian flu but there was still plenty to see in the rest of the reserve. Birds seen included Common redshank, Bewick’s swan, Barnacle geese, Golden plover, Water rail, Common buzzard Snow goose, Greylag geese, Common crane, White fronted geese, Common snipe, Peregrine falcon, Common teal, Cattle egret, Porchard, Sparrowhawk, Goosander, Marsh harrier, Raven (heard) and Great white egret. A total of 64 seen and 4 heard.

**December - Marsh Lane Nature Reserve – Berkswell**

The reserve is owned and managed by Packington Hall Estates on land that was once worked for aggregates which has left a number of pools

It was a cold frosty day and 13 of us turned out for this morning visit. From the various hides the birds we saw included Shoveler, Pochard, Goosander, Coot, Wigeon, Common teal, Common snipe, Little grebe, Little egret, Redwing, Linnets,

Jay. Bullfinch and Fieldfares. 36 birds seen and Cetti’s warbler heard.

**Information on our 2023 programme is on the website.**

**John Foulds, Peter Ford, John Bates, Wendy Burnett – organisers for SC u3a Birdwatching Group**