

Visit to Farlington Marshes, Hayling Island and Oysterbeds, November 2015

This full day trip to the coast with Bob Lyle leading, proved to be a real winner. A small party of stalwarts met up at the entrance to the Farlington Marshes NR at around 9.30am and set off on foot around the reserve. The weather was dry, wind bearable and light good. In fact it only took a minute of scanning to appreciate what goodies lay in store.

The mudflats were positively heaving with waders and various duck species. We were presented with excellent views of a flock of some 30+ Avocet – and that was just a taste of what was to follow. The tide was just at the right stage for waders such as Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Oystercatcher, Dunlin and Redshank – too many to count. Also paddling about on the wet mud were dozens of those elegant Pintail ducks (or should I say Drakes, as regrettably the females are not in the same class). Scores of Wigeon and Teal too, with hundreds of Brent Geese everywhere. It was hard to know where to look first, worried that one was going to miss something. On the lake edge we picked out a scarce Spotted Redshank, but just a singleton.

Following the perimeter path around the reserve, and looking out to sea, we had a very distant Black-necked Grebe, a much closer Little Grebe and quite a few Red-breasted Mergansers bobbing about on the not too choppy water

Turning to our left and inland we were entertained by one (or was it two) Short-eared Owls, hunting low over the grassland, and seemingly un-phased by our close presence. What a treat, and it wasn't even lunch-time.

After having an extremely rewarding morning, we moved on east to Hayling Island, stopping for a quick lunch of rolls, sandwiches and suchlike at the Eastney-Hayling Ferry Crossing, but seeing little in the way of birds. Maybe we had been spoilt by the morning's highlights – it was certainly going to be hard to better. A quick stop at The Kench provided more Grey Plover, a few Turnstone and possible Knot, but parking was difficult so we decided to head on.

Next stop was the Hayling Oysterbeds. At first glance the harbour looked pretty empty apart from more Red-breasted Merganser, but it wasn't long before those sharp-eyed telescopers picked up a cruising Great Northern Diver. HOW'S THAT FOR A FINALE !!!

With a grand total of 55 birds species for the day, don't you just wish you had been there? These mid-week forays are a great idea and a wonderful addition to the regular week-end trips. I strongly recommend them to anyone who has the time.

JPM