

RSPB OTMOOR

I visited this RSPB reserve, north of Oxford near the M40, at the weekend for the first time and was impressed at the scale of the place. It is a large reserve, with several trails around the reedbeds and wet meadows. There are viewing screens and a large centrally located hide. Early spring arrivals were there with chiffchaffs, blackcaps, willow warblers, whitethroats and lesser whitethroats singing well. We saw a number of red kites soaring overhead with buzzards and saw a ringtail hen harrier patrolling across a meadow. There was a marsh harrier over the reedbeds. A common crane was present at the far end of the reserve. There are plenty of farmland species including yellowhammers, skylarks and linnets. The reedbeds have resident bitterns although we did not see any during our visit.

If you are in the area or driving down the M40 it is definitely worth a visit. Unfortunately the approach road is not suitable for coaches or else I would propose a coach trip to it.

COACH TRIP TO WHISBY NATURE PARK- LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Sunday 7th May

Our next coach trip is to Whisby, the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve, near Lincoln.

The lakes at Whisby are surrounded by grassland, marsh, scrub and willow carr. Elements of the original landscape, from before quarrying also remain, with fragments of heathland, old hedgerows and a small oak woodland. There are six waymarked trails around the reserve and six hides.

In spring and summer, flocks of tits and finches are joined by warblers. The lakes attract feeding sand martins and swallows, and terns nest on the islands. Chiffchaffs, reed and sedge warblers can be heard. Whisby Nature Park has also become famous for nightingales.

We have chosen this date to coincide with the best time to hear singing nightingales.

There is a visitor centre with a café providing hot and cold food.

Therefore please reserve your place with Heather tonight.

Cost for this trip will be £17 per head and the coach will leave the B&M car park at 7.30am. It is just over 70 miles to Whisby and will take about 1 ½ hours to get there.

NEXT MEETING: 9th MAY

A digital year – Geoff Trinder

Geoff is returning to talk to the group about his birdwatching in 2015. He is chairman of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and is well known for his photography and work in Nature conservation.

OCTOBER COACH TRIP TO RSPB DEE ESTUARY -BURTON MERE WETLANDS

Sunday 15th October

We are going to visit the RSPB Dee Estuary reserve on the Wirral, about 10 miles from Chester.

Birds include a variety of waders through the winter and migration seasons including significant numbers of black-tailed godwit, spotted redshank, greenshank and ruff. Many scarce migrant birds have been seen in previous years, including little stints, green, curlew and wood sandpipers. Winter also brings many ducks and geese including pintail, shoveler, teal, wigeon, and pink-footed geese. Birds of prey can be seen over the marsh, from the reserve, including short-eared owls, hen harrier, marsh harrier, merlin, kestrel and peregrine falcon. There are large numbers of little egrets and in October 2016 they were joined by a number of Great White Egrets and Cattle Egrets.

There is a small visitor centre with toilets and where you can get a hot or cold drink and a snack. There are two main hides: the reception building and Marsh Covert hide. Also a smaller hide: the Inner Marsh Farm hide – and several viewpoints. There are five nature trails through woodland, reedbeds, pools and grazed pasture land. The Hillfort trail provides views over the Dee estuary and back across the Wetlands.

Please reserve your place with Heather tonight.

Cost for this trip will be £17 per head and the coach will leave the B&M car park at 7.30 am. It is approximately 100 miles to Burton Mere and will take about 2 ½ hours to get there.

There is free admission to Burton Mere for RSPB members, otherwise £4 for adults and £3 for concessions.

LOCAL BIRDWATCHING WALK: FRIDAY 21st APRIL

Brandon Marsh

This is the headquarters of the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, near Coventry. This reserve contains large areas of pools created by gravel extraction. It consists of reedbeds, willow carr, grassland and woodland. There are seven bird hides throughout the reserve. It holds a good variety of birds and the warblers have started to arrive.

Membership is free for Wildlife Trust members (you need to take your membership cards) or £2.50 for adults (£1.50 concessions). Meet at the main car park at 10am as usual.

It is just off the A45 to the south-east of Coventry. From the Toll-Bar Island where the A45 and A46 meet, follow the A45 away from Coventry for about 200 metres, then turn left just after a 'Texaco' filling station into Brandon Lane. The Nature Centre is about 1 mile along on the right hand side. Just follow the brown Tourist Signs for Nature Centre. Postcode is CV3 3GW.

I suggest we have a 3 hour visit rather than the usual 2 hours as it is a large reserve and a bit further than normal to travel to. There is a good café at the visitor centre.

LOCAL BIRDWATCHING WALK: THURSDAY 4th MAY

Cannock Chase – Seven Springs

Our May local birdwatching walk is at Seven Springs car park on Cannock Chase.

This is usually a good place to see newly arrived summer visitors. When we visited it in early May last year, common warblers were there and a wood warbler was singing in the trees near the car park. Hopefully they will be there again this year. We will be meeting at Seven Springs car park (postcode ST17 0WT) off the A513 about 1 mile west of Wolseley Bridge at 10am for an approximate 2 hour visit.

Please come along if you can and share your birdwatching skills with us. If anyone requires a lift from Lichfield please see me this evening or contact me either by phone on 0121 353 6886 or email (dennis.muxworthy@btinternet.com).