

CAR TRIP TO CHELFORD – 11th DECEMBER 2021

The annual December car trip followed by Christmas lunch is always a good date to have in the birding diary and none more so than this strangest of covid populated worlds we are currently experiencing. Lapwing Lane, Chelford followed by the Egerton arms were our chosen destinations.

Now before I go any further I have a confession to make. The previous two weeks prior to the visit had been exceptionally wet weather and for those not familiar with this site, it can prove to be very wet and muddy underfoot. Whilst we did choose a comparatively dry route I still managed to get my trousers filthy. Robert had kindly given me a small notebook to keep a record of the day's birding tally and I duly made a note of all the birds we had as group seen that morning before tearing out the two pages and returning the notebook to its owner. For safe keeping the two pages went into my back pocket and was zipped shut to ensure they were not lost. Well I think you can guess the rest. Yes you are correct. The dirty trousers went straight into the washing machine and yes, along with the bird list. Now luckily I have a reasonable memory and my recollection was a count of 35 birds seen in the morning. I stand to be corrected.



Lesser Redpoll



Siskin

Having made my confession now onto the report. Our first stop was at the head of Lapwing Lane with its viewpoint over the largest body of water on the site, Acre Nook Pool. Shelduck, Canada Geese, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Teal, Little and Great Crested Grebes, Cormorant and Pied Wagtail were all seen. A small group of about six male Mandarin Ducks was present, looking quite stunning in their colourful plumage. By contrast the surrounding woodland was still and quiet and a distinct lack of movement.

Retracing our steps we followed the Lane, bounded on both sides by thick hedges and punctuated by a small tree adjacent to the public footpath. There on the top of the tree was a group of five Lesser Redpoll. It's not a bird that I come across that often so I am always pleased to see them and this group were settled feeding high in the top of the tree on the crop of Birch seed. Sometimes they are found over wintering in mixed flocks along with Siskin and the less common Common Redpoll, a winter visitor from



Tree Sparrow

mainland Northern Europe. I admit I would not be able to distinguish the two apart although my Field guide tells me that the Common Redpoll is noticeably larger and the paler of the two.

Moving along the Lane, Tree Sparrows were noisily chattering away in the dense hedgerow adjacent to bird feeders in the garden of a farm cottage. There Blue and Great Tits were making the most of the available food. It was near opposite here that for me we had our best birding. From the Lane a gate opening onto fields afforded excellent views across rough pastureland bordered by established hedgerows and



Common Buzzard

small thickets of trees. Its these field edges with mixed vegetation cover that provide good viewing opportunities. In this instance we were not disappointed as a flock of birds were finding safety in numbers. Redwings, Goldfinches, Chaffinches and Blackbirds were all actively feeding whilst in the background a lone Buzzard was alternating from perching on a low tree branch to feeding on the ground. The movement of this group of birds in the winter farmland setting provide for me the essence of the birdwatching I enjoy.

I would never make a Twitcher. I understand the appeal of seeing some rarity to these shores, but standing perhaps some considerable time along with a large group of well equipped birdwatchers anticipating that tick, holds little appeal for me. That small group of Redpolls or the mixed feeding flock provides a pleasurable memory that will be with me for some time.

Walking on we cut across to the opposite side of the Lane to a good path flanked by young trees that skirted the flooded quarry to a spot that gave an excellent vantage point of the whole of lake.



Goldeneye (male)

Mute Swan, Canada Geese, Greylag Geese, Teal, Tufted Ducks, Wigeon, Mallard, Coots and Great Crested Grebe were all present. However in the very centre of the water was a black and white duck that as soon as I had it in my binoculars it dived underwater and disappeared for a seemingly long time only to pop up some distance from where it went down. It was a beautiful male Goldeneye, striking in appearance with its distinctive yellow eye and white facial patch. Whilst there is a

small breeding population of resident breeding pairs in the UK they are mainly seen in numbers overwinter as migrants from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Time was moving on and heading back to our cars we stopped for a last look over the Acre Nook area. From this vantage point we were able to spot a pair of Goosanders that we hadn't seen previously. By the side of the path was a fallen and twisted Canada Goose, a sad sight perhaps a victim of flying into an overhead cable.

There were other birds we saw, Black-headed Gulls, Grey Heron, Cormorants, Greater Spotted Woodpecker as well as Jackdaws, Magpie and Carrion Crows. There were some absences also that we could have expected to see, Wood Pigeons and Fieldfares although the later was heard but not seen.

My recollection was a bird count of 35 species.....I stand to be corrected. Please let me know what I missed out and I will add an addendum to the February Newsletter if the Editor allows!!



Pochard

It was a good morning made all the more so by good company.

Next came lunch at the Egerton Arms. For the WGBG it was an excellent end to a challenging year. Many thanks to Robert for setting up the trip and also Annette for organising our lunch.

Photos by Robert D

HAPPY 2022 BIRDING EVERYONE.

STUART M

PS My New Year Resolution: Always check every pocket, especially zipped trouser pockets before putting in the wash.