

CAR TRIP TO MARBURY COUNTRY PARK – SUNDAY 11th OCTOBER 2020

Ten early birders met at 9am at Marbury Country Park, a country park in the heart of Northwich. It is part of former industrial land for salt mining. Robert volunteered to be leader for the day. Stuart reminded members of the Covid 19 regulations and a register of attendees was taken. Two groups of five were organised.



Western Cattle Egret

It was a beautiful morning with the leaves on the trees turning to golden and red shades of Autumn. The target birds for the day were a Western Cattle Egret and Black-necked Grebe. Robert set off on a mission to see these two birds, a pace that would have been admired by Mo Farah, with group A in hot pursuit.

Following the old road, we saw Blackbird, Nuthatch, Woodpigeon, Robin, Mallard, Crow, Long-tailed Tit, Canada Geese, Magpie. Group B reported they had also seen Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Dunnock, Goldcrest

and Kingfisher. Trying to find an opening to see across the meadow Robert beckoned from a small gap in the hedge, and there it was, the Western Cattle Egret, feeding by following the cattle in the field. Beautifully erect and white showing in the sun, we all had good sight of this short yellow-billed bird. Two large formations of Pink-footed geese flew over. Moving on, Speckled Wood and Comma butterflies flitted around and a Rabbit rested in the sun.

Arriving at Neumann's Flashes Lapwings flew over. Here was our second target of the day, Black-necked Grebe, a dumpy bird with a distinctive red eye. Also on the water, Shoveler, Mute Swan, Coot, Lesser Black-backed Gull, a dabbling Pintail Duck in the distance, Little Grebe and Wigeon were spotted. Cetti's warbler was heard calling in the reeds.

Walking down Marbury Lane, a boom with Neumann's Flashes on the right and Ashton Flashes on the left Water Rail was heard. A stately Grey Heron standing at the edge of the water holding lunch in his bill. Looking across Neumann's Flashes from another screen hide we spotted Moorhen, Cormorant, Teal, Herring Gull. A Jay flew over and a mewling Buzzard soared above.



Western Cattle Egret

Onwards to Ashton Flashes. All the flashes are developed from salt mining, this one was fully flooded with recent rains but no birds here. Woodland has regenerated from the mining waste. Lunchtime.

Haydn's Pool was the next stop. Totally overgrown with bull rushes, reeds, saplings, thistles and other weeds. Cheshire West and Chester Council manage the country park, it is a shame they seem to have neglected some of the areas; the waterfowl and waders no longer visit this pool as it has dried up.

Budworth Mere was the last port of call. Many Great Crested Grebes preening and diving, some juveniles still with their humbug patterned heads. Canada, Greylag and Pink-footed Geese seen in the distant meadow. A Kingfisher flashed past and on the feeders Great Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit enjoyed a feast of seeds.



Western Cattle Egret with cattle

We had a brief review of the day, it was agreed the day had been an enjoyable success, with a good field count. Comments from the group were welcomed and minor problems will be addressed for the next car trip. We hope you will join us.

Photos by Robert D

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